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ANALYSIS
CONSULTING
EVALUATION

External evaluation of the African Cities Lab in urban development project

Report

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Abbreviations

ACC	African Center for Cities (of the University of Cape Town)
ACL	African Cities Lab
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
BoD	Board of Directors (of the ACL)
CAHF	Center for Affordable Housing Finance Africa
CHF	Swiss Franc
EPFL	Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Federal University of Technology in Lausanne)
EQ	Evaluation question
EUR	Euros
EXAF	Excellence for Africa Center (of the EPFL)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ISTEUB	Institut Supérieur des Technologies de l'Environnement, de l'Urbanisme et du Bâtiment (de l'Université de Carthage, Tunisie)
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana)
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD / DAC	Organisation for economic co-operation and development / development assistance committee
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
ToR	Terms of Reference
UM6P	University Mohammed VI Polytechnic (Morocco)
UN	United Nations
WRC	Water Research Commission (South Africa)

Executive Summary

Introduction: The African Cities Lab in Urban Development (ACL) project started in November 2020. After a first phase of the project which was implemented over an initial 2.5 years of implementation, one cost extension and one no-cost extension, SECO decided to commission an external evaluation of the ACL project.

Scope and purpose: The evaluation of the ACL project, covering its activities from the start until mid-2024 aims to provide insight for project steering. Since SECO had limited direct contact with the project partners, the evaluation results shall support SECO in better understanding whether the intervention logic has worked and the partners' perspective on to what extent the project has been helpful to fulfil their mandate. Additionally, SECO seeks to get an opinion on how the collaboration between EPFL and the partners is perceived. The evaluation results shall support SECO's decision on financing a second phase and may also help EPFL, partner institutions and / or other stakeholders for future project improvement.

Methodology: The evaluation was conducted by KEK – CDC between May and July 2024. The evaluation used a 'mixed methods' approach comprising desk research, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with a range of stakeholders (SECO, EPFL, African ACL partners, third parties MOOCs developers, participants in courses, and an external expert). 29 persons were consulted through online semi-structured interviews and 11 course participants through short interviews and FGDs.

Overall assessment and conclusions:

Relevance: The ACL project is relevant in addressing the needs of professionals and professionals-to-be in accessing more knowledge in an open, free online access. The logic of intervention of the project is suited to contribute to the accessibility of a platform with digital education content in the form of MOOCs but lacks consistency in targeting aspects of financial sustainability and networking among practitioners and institutions.

Coherence: The ACL project is coherent with SECO strategies and interventions. It complements bilateral engagements in the field, create synergies with project through the conduction of hybrid trainings and complement traditional educations offered by universities. Other stakeholders and funding partners are engaged in this field and interests concurred which have led to some co-founding and funding of connected activities, showing thus good prospect for the future.

Effectiveness: The development of the platform (website) and MOOCs was a massive undertaking and the core part of the activities and budget of the first phase of the project. On those activities, the ACL project has shown to be effective leading to a platform with currently 10 quality MOOCs providing an interesting package to disseminate knowledge on selected topics from various angles and perspectives. The platform is innovative in the sense that it provides training resources from Africa for Africa, offering a shift in the traditional way of searching of education opportunities in the Global North. The establishment of the platform is an essential milestone without which nothing would have been possible. It does not only offer a place to post and store all knowledge, but also supports the visibility of partners and third parties as well as communication.

The platform has attracted more than 5000 persons to enrol in the courses in one year. To better assess the meaning of that number, more data on participation is required. Some MOOCs seem to have attracted more students than practitioners. The average of 7% of certification, for the eight MOOCs launched between mid-2023 and early 2024 is rather low. This percentage increased when MOOCs are combined with in-person training providing motivation to complete. From the little feedback on the post-training questionnaire and the consultations as part of this evaluation, participants seem satisfied with the course, having learnt but not yet demonstrated much use of the new skills in their practice.

The platform has the potential to be used beyond posting of MOOCs to support networking and exchanges among practitioners and institutions in Africa; potential that has yet to be tapped.

Efficiency: The project worked within a very ambitious timeframe of an initial 2.5 years (twice extended) and has experienced delays and challenges in its implementation. Technical and IT issues had to be solved as a matter of urgency, and the development of the MOOCs was, from all sides, a huge enterprise, which was underestimated by partners, third parties and EPFL. While it is recognised to be difficult to anticipate all challenges prior to the implementation of a new project, a thorough assessment of needs and capacities of concerned and potential stakeholders as well as more engagement of and consultation with them prior to and in the initial stage of the project would have been beneficial. An overview of the entire process and various guidelines on how to develop MOOCs to ensure availability of information at the right time for ACL partners and third parties would have saved time.

With a few exceptions, such as BoD meetings, bilateral exchanges between ACL partners, ACL Summit, multi-stakeholder interactions were largely absent during the first phase of the project. The primary work dynamic was characterised by bilateral exchanges between EPFL, partners, and third parties (MOOCs developers). Valuing diversity and individual efforts, fostering multi-stakeholder exchanges, collaboration, and mutual learning should be given priority in a second phase of the project.

Impact: The ACL platform with MOOCs has the potential to impact sustainable urban development, providing key elements are integrated in a second phase of the project and beyond. A platform with MOOCs is a first step and it will require strong communication to ensure that professionals visit the platform and enrol in courses. The offer needs to remain valid and be complemented by in-depth training opportunities as well as modules for policymakers. A community or network of practitioners and institutions will also be a key element to sustainably improve practices

Sustainability: At this stage, sustainability is not assured, and the platform is likely to collapse gradually should no funding for a second phase be made available and be used to ensure continuous operation and establishment of a sustainable ACL structure. All of these require a sustainable structure for the ACL with a network of institutions owning the ACL platform, the MOOCs and the advancing of skills development on urban development in Africa.

Recommendations:

The evaluation team is proposing 11 recommendations to SECO when considering funding a 2nd phase of the project. The recommendations are built on the capitalisation of the 1st phase, further developments in the first two years and a consolidation of changes in the last two years of the project to ensure sustainability beyond the project and SECO's funding.

In the design of the 2nd phase of the ACL project:

Recommendation 1: If SECO remains committed to supporting sustainable urban development in Africa, it should co-finance a 2nd phase over a four-year period to build on the achievements and lessons learnt of the 1st phase, in particular on the establishment of the platform and production of the MOOCs. However, when considering future funding, SECO should carefully review the proposed recommendations to ensure that its support follows an approach that sustains long-term results beyond SECO's financial contribution.

Recommendation 2: When considering future funding SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes a logic of intervention (theory of change) co-developed and co-owned by the ACL partners.

Recommendation 3: When considering future funding SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes a budget differentiating budget lines for the establishment of a sustainable structure (recommendation 5), for implementing the individual activities related to recommendations 6 to 10, for training (new MOOCs, update of MOOCs, in-persons training) and for the 2nd phase project management.

Recommendation 4: When considering future funding SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes refined and agreed roles for EPFL, ACL partners and third parties MOOCs developers in the 2nd phase of the project and an inclusive approach to collaboration.

For the first 2 years of implementation of the 2nd phase:

Recommendation 5: SECO should only consider future funding if the proposal for a 2nd phase clearly sets out a process and concrete steps to achieve a sustainable structure for the ACL in which partners co-act and co-own the work, exchange and learn from each other. SECO should re-consider its funding if this is not given the required space and / or the approach is not sufficiently developed in the project proposal.

Recommendation 6: SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes to establish a suitable communication and moderation function for the ACL platform, based on existing efforts.

Recommendation 7: SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project provides for an inclusive process for defining a strategy for the development of MOOCs, including clarified property rights.

Recommendation 8: SECO should assess whether the proposal for the 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes to consolidate an approach towards hybrid and executive courses.

Recommendation 9: SECO should assess whether the proposal for the 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes to re-conceptualise the scientific committee.

Recommendation 10: SECO should assess whether the proposal for the 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes actions for improving the structure of the ACL website.

For the last 2 years of implementation of the 2nd phase:

Recommendation 11: SECO should only consider continuing funding the last two years of the 2nd phase if the sustainable structure (recommendation 5) has been successfully established as its funding should support the effective piloting of the established structure.

1 Introduction

The African Cities Lab in Urban Development (ACL) project started in November 2020 with the signature of the agreement between SECO and EPFL; the activities started in the first quarter of 2021¹. It is co-funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO and implemented by the Federal University of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL).

After a first phase of the project which was implemented over an initial 2.5 years of implementation (1.11.2020-30.04.2023, total budget of CHF 3.44 millions, SECO contribution of CHF 2.65 millions), one cost extension (02.05.2023-30.04.2024 additional SECO contribution of CHF 670'000 ² and one no-cost extension (01.05.2024-31.12.2024)³, SECO decided to commission an external evaluation of the ACL project. Despite some conditions and milestones having been partly met, SECO is exploring the possibility of financing a second phase. Therefore, an external view to understand better the project and its added value to partners and stakeholders is needed.

SECO commissioned the evaluation to KEK – CDC, who conducted the evaluation from May until September 2024. The ToR are in Annex 1: and the work schedule in 0

2 Scope and purpose

The evaluation focuses on the ACL project from its start until mid-2024, covering all its activities.

The evaluation aims to provide evidence of the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact and sustainability. It also aims to assess the platform's suitability to reach the project objective and how partner institutions perceive the added value of the project and platform in delivering their mandates.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to gain knowledge and insight for project steering. Considering that SECO had only limited direct contact with the different partners involved in the project, the evaluation results shall support SECO in better understanding whether the intervention logic has worked and the partners' perspective on to what extent the project has been helpful to fulfil their mandate. In addition, SECO wanted to get an opinion on how the collaboration with EPFL and the partners was perceived. Ultimately, the evaluation results shall support SECO in the decision on its financing of a second phase. The results may also be helpful to EPFL, partner institutions and / or other stakeholders in learning from this project and better steering it in the future.

¹ SECO (2020, Credit Proposal, African Cities Lab, 14.10.2020

² SECO (2023), Avenant au contrat, African Cities Lab, 03.05.2023

³ SECO (2024), Avenant numéro 2 au contrat, African Cities Lab, 21.05.2024

3 Description of the development intervention

The African Cities Lab project's overall objective is to contribute to sustainable urban development in Africa. It started the implementation in January 2021.

Its first phase, being in its last months of implementation, has been primarily oriented around the setting up of a digital education platform on urban development in Africa, offering Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for the current and next generations of professionals working on urban development in African cities.

The outputs of the first phase are the establishment of a platform for information sharing, training and networking opportunities on urban development (output 1), the development of digital educational content on urban development (output 2) and the availability of continuing education through training programmes and partnerships (output 3). The outcomes of the first phase of the project are: (1) a financially sustainable platform (outcome 1), (2) an expanded knowledge and information sharing (outcome 2), and (3) an improved access to relevant and quality continuous education (outcome 3).

A second phased has been in the pipeline from the start of the project in order to consolidate the achievements of the first phase. In a subsequent phase, under the project's overall objective above-mentioned, the project strives to contribute to 'more urban development experts with relevant, innovative knowledge on urban development', and 'to improved, more standardised digital training formats on urban development and better-connected network of universities and professionals active on urban development in Africa'. The project also seeks to contribute to positioning Switzerland and SECO as forerunners of one of the widest Africa-based online training networks and to strengthen the presence of Switzerland in Africa through education and outreach of Swiss expertise in academic and professional circles.⁴

The ACL platform has 6 African partners across leading English and French-speaking institutions: five partner universities (UM6P in Morocco, African Centre for Cities of the University of Cape Town in South Africa, the ISTEUB of the University of Carthage in Tunisia, KNUST in Ghana and the University of Rwanda) and a governmental agency in Benin, the Semè City Development Agency. The ACL platform operates under the initial supervision of the EPFL.

The end beneficiaries of the ACL project are practitioners and policymakers involved in urban development in Africa at the national authorities' level, local government and municipality level, operational and policymaker level, or private companies. The professionals-to-be, namely university students, are indirectly also targeted by the ACL project. The intermediary beneficiaries are the African universities and, in particular, the ACL partners in their capacity to develop online educational content and train professionals and professionals-to-be.

The first phase of the project is implemented by EPFL through the ACL project team composed of a project manager and technical support staff on the platform and MOOCs, which are supervised by the director of the Excellence for Africa Centre (EXAF). The project is steered by a Board of Directors (BoD) composed of representatives of SECO, EPFL and the African partner institutions. Moreover, a scientific committee supports thematic aspects and the

⁴ SECO (2020), Credit Proposal, African Cities Lab, 14.10.2020. The document includes a description of the project, a logframe and theory of change.

content of the MOOCs. Six local consultative bodies composed of key stakeholders in partner countries ensure adjustments to local needs and linkages with local stakeholders.

The project is principally funded by SECO (81% of the total budget) with planned partner contributions (EPFL 13% of the total budget, six African ACL partners 5% of the total budget). The French Development Agency (AFD) contributed EUR 50'000 to the project.

The activities started in early 2021. The platform, which is accessible through a website, is in place, and the first series of eight MOOCs was launched between mid-2023 and early 2024. Additional MOOCs are being finalised and launched when available (currently, two new MOOCs are available on the platform). Hybrid training and advanced courses are recent developments of the project.

The open call and selection process led to the development of MOOCs by ACL partners and third parties. Out of 10 MOOCs posted on the website, four were developed (some more are in the finalisation process) by three ACL partners (EPFL, UM6P, ISTEUB),⁵ and six were developed by third parties, including NGOs, an African university (not ACL partner), a consultancy firm and a UN agency. Currently, five MOOCs are in French and five in English, with subtitles in another language. The development of the MOOCs was accompanied by technical and pedagogical support by the EPFL as well as financial support (about CHF 50'000 / MOOCs was budgeted).

4 Evaluation process and methods

The evaluation is based on a mixed-methods approach, primarily combining qualitative data as well as primary and secondary data from various sources to ensure triangulation of evidence. Data collection is based on a document review, semi-structured interviews and FGDs. The range of stakeholders consulted was selected to ensure the integration of all relevant perspectives (SECO, EPFL, African ACL partners, third parties MOOCs developers, participants in courses, and external expert). Interview / FGDs guides were used to gather data and to record and analyse the information collected systematically.

The document review relied primarily on the following documents to provide relevant information and secondary data: (i) SECO documents: Projects documents (credit proposals, contracts, progress reports), (ii) EPFL / ACL documents: ACL documents related to its establishment and structures (e.g. Board of Director), operational reports on platform and MOOCs data analyses, reports on training and minutes of meetings), (iii) third party reports on the development of the MOOCs. The list of reference documents is presented in Annex 4:

A total of 29 key informants were consulted through online semi-structured interviews (including two scoping interviews) and 11 course participants through short interviews and FGDs. The key informants for interviews were selected based on lists provided by SECO and EPFL. The course participants were randomly selected from participants having obtained MOOCs certificates, ensuring a gender and profile balance. The table below presents an overview of the main groups of interest consulted. The list of persons interviewed forms part of Annex 5: All consultation-used guides are outlined in Annex 6: and Annex 7:

⁵ One partner has developed online course content not in a MOOC format and discussions are ongoing on a potential posting of these materials on the ACL website.

Table 1: Overview of persons interviewed

Group of interest	Number of persons consulted
Semi-structured interviews with key informants	29
SECO (including HQ and SECO staff in Swiss cooperation offices)	7
EPFL	4
African ACL partners (including BoD members, focal points and MOOC leader)	9
Third parties (MOOCs developers)	8
External expert	1
Short interviews and FGDs with course participants	11
Course participants in general MOOCs	3
Course participants in hybrid courses	8

Qualitative content analysis was the primary method used on the data collected to highlight key topics of interest and concern from the perspective of the various stakeholder groups consulted, highlighting trends, strengths, challenges and areas for improvement. The collected data was triangulated with the various stakeholders consulted and reviewed documents. Course attendance and course assessment data were used to the extent available during this evaluation. All prospective insights from interviews were consolidated to support learning and improvements to be considered for the future of the ACL project and platform.

The evaluation encountered some challenges which were carefully considered and addressed in the evaluation work:

- **Recent launch and ongoing courses:** The fact that most MOOCs training activities, hybrid training, conferences and meetings took place in the last 12 months (or are still ongoing) has left little time and space to reflect and consolidate all data on those activities. This is an important aspect that has been considered in this evaluation work.
- **Limited responsiveness of course participants:** The responsiveness of participants to general MOOCs was very low and challenging, the responsiveness of participants to hybrid courses was overall better but varied significantly, with the more recent courses leading to more responses. This is not particularly surprising and provides information on the linkages of the participants with the courses and the ACL. Tailored follow up and adjustment of interviews to individual situation have enabled the conduction of short interviews and FGDs to the extent possible; however, no feedback could be gathered from the participants regarding the training in Tunisia. Overall, the feedback received was still highly valuable to the evaluation.
- **Diversity of ACL partners with various levels of responsiveness:** Consultations with two ACL partners (Benin and Rwanda) were not possible despite several follow-ups nor were FGDs with the local consultative bodies (one because the structure does not seem to exist any longer and the other due to lack of feedback from the ACL partner in the respective country). It was anticipated that the diversity of partner institutions on the African

continent may cause challenges. This also illustrates the reality of the engagement of partners in the project and thus is a valuable insight, too.

5 Findings

This chapter is based on the review of documents and feedback provided by stakeholders during interviews and FGDs. This chapter is structured according to OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The sections highlight the main themes identified during the data analysis.

5.1 Relevance

5.1.1 ACL project as a response to needs in developing skills in urban development

Needs of urban planning professionals (end beneficiaries): There is general recognition among interviewees that urban development in Africa needs to be tackled and that skills are missing in that field of work. The respective challenges are diverse and were illustrated by interviewees: Some countries have been experiencing an increase of junior professionals in urban development with a strong need for further skills. In other countries, local governments and municipalities have been given more power in the last couple of years despite their limited know-how on urban development. Therefore, partner universities and third parties recognised a need to both, raise awareness and train a range of professionals (at operational and political levels) and professionals-to-be (students) on that topic. The interviewees also confirmed this need. This differs from SECO's main focus on professionals only.

Needs of academic institutions and other stakeholders in developing educational content on urban development (intermediary beneficiaries): Some ACL partner universities have clearly confirmed their need to develop digital content on sustainable urban development to reach a wider audience and pursue their digital learning strategies, including the need to strengthen their technical and management capacities in the development of digital content. Other partners have less clearly indicated this need despite confirming that the ACL project was an opportunity to be seized to develop such content. Other stakeholders in the knowledge system (NGOs, private institutions, consultants) are not directly included as intermediate beneficiaries of the ACL project, even though they have also benefitted from capacity-building activities (see 5.3.4). They are playing a key role in meeting the needs of the end beneficiaries and saw an opportunity to develop MOOCs under the ACL project, which, for many of them, came at the right time and aligned with their priorities.

Response of the ACL project to the needs: The ACL project is a response to the needs, particularly to the needs of strengthening capacities of the end beneficiaries on sustainable urban development issues and of the ACL partners in developing digital content. The idea of a platform with MOOCs was proposed by the EPFL to support a broad outreach with knowledge on a range of topics related to sustainable urban development. The potential of a platform with MOOCs was and still is recognised by SECO as a relevant mean to pursue the goal of the SECO in enhancing the capacities of practitioners in urban development in Africa. Interviewees highlighted the relevance of open, flexible and free access to MOOCs to respond to the needs of practitioners and students in enhancing awareness and acquiring new knowledge. MOOCs were described as a powerful tool to reduce distances and costs for

education and training and as another piece of information provided in a structured way and complementing available education offers (rather than filling a gap) in a new format, while online courses became the new normal in education.

Logic of interventions of the ACL project: The outputs outlined in the logical framework of the ACL project are well aligned with the identified needs and the project's response particularly in developing an online platform with MOOCs. If these outputs are achieved, it is likely that the intermediate outcome 1, concerning platform's accessibility, and intermediate outcome 3, related to access to relevant, up-to-date and quality continuing education via MOOCs and some hybrid trainings, will be met. However, the financial sustainability of the platform is not adequately addressed in the outputs, making it unlikely that related activities have been planned or targeted effectively. Furthermore, intermediate outcome 2, which focuses on information sharing, exchanges, and fostering cooperation through a strong community, is only partially covered at the output level. This fragmented approach may pose challenges in designing coherent activities and in reporting them in a consolidated manner. The visual representation of the intervention logic, through a theory of change developed at the start of the project, remains unclear even after reviewing the logical framework in detail. It offers an incomplete perspective, as the expected contribution of activities to outputs and outcomes is missing

5.1.2 Limited stakeholder engagement in refining needs and assessing capacities

In identifying themes for the MOOCs: At the MOOCs level, the project planned to identify key themes based on initial analysis and surveys. In practice, the selection of MOOCs followed an open call for proposals (without specifying topics of courses as it was not an order for specific MOOCs but a call for the best MOOCs addressing relevant issues) and review by a Scientific Committee⁶. The committee was established based on Terms of Reference⁷, nominations done and one meeting took place in November 2021. The project planned to work with local consultative bodies that refine specific needs, thematic areas, MOOC approaches and contents and adapt courses to the local context⁸. In each ACL partner country, one consultative body seems to have been established, whereafter it was indicated that members were informed of their nomination/invitation to be part of a consultative body though lacking any further information on the process, except for three consultative bodies (in Tunisia, Ghana and Rwanda). A consultative body met once in Tunisia⁹ to guide the development of a MOOC and discuss hybrid training courses, but the respective process was not pursued after that. Subsequently, the ACL partner expressed doubts about the body's legitimacy and decided to establish a pedagogic team instead to support its work on the MOOC, stressing that they were not asked by the ACL project to pursue working with the consultative body. Another consultative body met in Ghana in February 2024¹⁰ to discuss the hybrid training on urban transport and in Rwanda in April 2024¹¹ to validate two proposed MOOCs and establish a roadmap for the ACL project in Rwanda, mainly around the meetings of the consultative body. Overall, the contributions of consultative bodies were reported to have been very limited.

In assessing the technical capacities to develop MOOCs: Except for UM6P (which worked with the EPFL on MOOCs in the past), the other ACL partners engaged in developing MOOCs

⁶ ACL (2021), African Cities Lab Scientific Committee 02.11.2021

⁷ ACL (undated), Terms of reference – Scientific Committee

⁸ ACL (undated), Terms of reference – Consultative Body

⁹ ACL (2021), African Cities Lab - Comité consultative Tunisie, 16.11.2021, procès-verbal.

¹⁰ Report of the meeting not yet available.

¹¹ University of Rwanda, EPFL (2024), Kick-off Meeting of the Local Consultative Board for the Africa Cities Lab Project in Africa, 16.04.2024.

stressed having had little to no experience planning and developing MOOCs. On their side, the EPFL expected the prerequisites of the call for proposal to be met by the MOOCs developers and found that all stakeholders (ACL partners and third parties) had overestimated their capacities to develop MOOCs. Overall, from the perspective of the MOOCs developers (ACL partners and third parties), all MOOCs' development were reported to have been underestimated in terms of time and resources. Additionally, many aspects were overlooked when consolidating the budget. The lack of knowledge, guidance and basic requirements for planning the work contributed to this situation. Therefore, for most stakeholders, it represented a huge undertaking which was not sufficiently planned both in terms of human and financial resources, leading to the necessity to bring significant additional financial resources (own budget, other funding partners) and rely more than expected on the technical support from EPFL. This required technical and pedagogical support from the EPFL was also underestimated by the EPFL at the beginning of the project and therefore, the planning and related resources needed to be adjusted accordingly.

In assessing the capacities to engage and support in the project: In addition to the capacities to develop MOOCs, some of the expectations by the EPFL on ACL partners to provide their support in targeted interventions were not met. As an example, a partner was not able to deliver its planned support to the project which required the IT infrastructure to be repatriated to the EPFL.

In addressing needs and challenges of ACL partners and third parties in developing MOOCs: Beyond the technical capacities in developing MOOCs, feedback from ACL partners and third parties suggests that some of their needs and challenges were not adequately considered by the EPFL when they came forward in the implementation of the project and the development of the MOOCs. Some of the issues highlighted include covering the salaries of their staff and experts, requirements regarding co-funding agencies and important timelines in academic years in some countries. Indeed, the financial needs of the partners to finance its workforce as well as external experts contributing to the MOOCs vary significantly (independently of the MOOCs developer being an academic actor, NGOs or consultancy firm). The contractual dimension was reported to be a limitation for many MOOCs developers, and EPFL's lack of understanding for the challenges was also an additional burden for the MOOCs developers. ACL partners and third parties also indicated that more multi-stakeholders consultations and exchanges both on the development process of the MOOCs, on the thematic areas and the production know-how would benefit the project. It would support the reality of stakeholders being more taken into consideration, increase their buy-in and ownership, support mutual learning complementing technical and pedagogical support from the EPFL and be a way to foster networking amongst stakeholders engaged in sustainable urban development in Africa. The EPFL worked under an ambitious work schedule to deliver the project as planned, including through two project extensions. Therefore, time constraints and pressure to show results were important drivers for the EPFL in deciding its approach and thus the main reasons for keeping the interactions and collaborations between MOOCs developers to a limited degree in the first phase of the project.

5.1.3 Advantage of the diversity of partners, stakeholders and experts

The ACL project is meant to be a partnership among academic partners, except for the partner in Benin which is a governmental agency. Having universities on board of the project was positively assessed, but some interviewees challenged the ability to adequately reach the target groups as universities are not always in contact with practitioners. The ACL project is seen as a potential way to facilitate the linkages between the academic world and practitioners.

In this constellation, some ACL partners recognised the importance of EPFL in bringing expertise, legitimacy and quality to the platform and the MOOCs.

Across the stakeholders interviewed, there is a generally positive assessment of the diversity of stakeholders involved in developing MOOCs for the ACL platform: There is a benefit in having different views brought by different academic institutions and partners, many of which represent the 'southern urbanism' perspective. Many interviewees emphasised the importance of having most MOOCs featuring inputs from a range of practitioners and views from various African countries. While this diversity was not strategically planned, the open call for proposals contributed to the range of stakeholders and the possibility of having MOOCs developed by non-academic actors (e.g. NGOs, consulting firms). Many expressed that more could be made on networking and fostering exchanges between this diverse group of stakeholders.

The initial idea of the ACL project was that each partner would contribute based on their strengths and capacities (e.g. Benin Seme city with technologies and IT and UM6P with technical support to MOOCs development), and MOOCs would have been developed using the expertise and research from the partners and third parties, and as required with punctual external expertise. While this all contributed to diversity, a mutual understanding of the respective realities, values and priorities was identified by some as a challenge encountered in the ACL project. South-South knowledge and cooperation were underlined as a strength of the ACL platform. Nevertheless, some questions about how to make the best use of future partners in Africa were raised.

Another question in connection with the diversity of stakeholders and their interests was the alignment of SECO and EPFL to the overall objectives of sustainable urban development in Africa. Indeed, on the one side, SECO aims at developing partners in Africa and strengthening capacities of practitioners. On the other, EPFL aims at building capacity in research and education, at leveraging the strengths and longstanding presence of EPFL on the African continent through the Excellence in Africa (EXAF) initiative with the ACL, Essential Tech and existing networks, at strengthening its relations with key partners and science diplomacy, and at facilitating the mobilisation, growth and collaboration with local talents¹². The difference in their objectives and priorities find their foundation on the mandate of their respective institutions. While this was not recognised to be particularly problematic, the question of where SECO and EPFL find common strategical lines in this project was raised by SECO.

The range of partners, stakeholders and experts involved further enhances legal discussions around the use of the MOOCs and property rights, which seems not to have been anticipated by the ACL project (e.g. for some partners, it is not conceivable to monetise the MOOCs, other would require to have other funding partners mentioned, other would like to be able to use some video outside of their MOOC).

5.1.4 Controversial helpfulness of technical and pedagogical support, challenging financial support

In general, MOOCs were already of interest, in the pipeline and / or planned by ACL partners or third parties who developed MOOCs before the project started. Both ACL partners and third parties recognised that the ACL project had made the development of the MOOCs possible due to the existence of a platform to host the MOOCs and the EPFL's technical and pedagogical support. On the latter, ACL partners and third parties show different levels of satisfaction but overall, all recognised having benefited from the EPFL's support. Despite

¹² EPFL (2024), International Affairs, inputs Evaluation ACL, 02.07.2024, Katharina Füglistner

agreed budgets on the development of the MOOCs and contractual conditions on that matter, all reported the financial support as necessary but insufficient to cover the effective costs, leading to the use of own resources and raising additional funding. Table 2 provides further details on feedback received from ACL partners who developed MOOCs and third parties in interviews.

Table 2: Consolidated feedback on technical, pedagogical and financial support

Area of support	ACL partners who developed MOOCs (ISTEUB, UM6P, ACC)	Third parties who developed MOOCs (GRET, CAHF, Urbaplan/Transitec, UNHabitat, WRC, SFCL Ain Shams University Cairo)
Existence of platform	The existence of a platform was essential to developing the MOOCs, and they could not have done it without a platform to host the courses.	The existence of a platform was essential to developing the MOOCs, and they could not have done it without a platform to host the courses.
Technical and pedagogical support	The level of helpfulness varies greatly among partners. One partner benefitted from EPFL's support on MOOCs in the past and had, therefore, more independence in their work. Another found the technical and pedagogical support helpful, leaving the required level of freedom to develop the MOOC. A third one found it little helpful due to a lack of documentation presenting the full approach leading to information being provided on an ad-hoc basis.	The initial online training on MOOC development was appreciated. EPFL's support was assessed from adequate to very good depending on the interviewee. The intense review process led to quality MOOCs in the perception of some. However, not all steps and aspects were planned from the start, and therefore, guidance was provided too late, leading, for many, to the duplication of efforts and negatively impacting motivation.
Financial support	Funding for staff at partner institutions and experts was a challenge highlighted by some. More guidance and clarity on budgetary considerations would have been useful. In the end, for some, the development of the MOOCs was only possible with additional financial resources.	Funding for structural, administration, staff and experts was a challenge highlighted by many (especially from the non-academic actors), and some also indicated that the maintenance of MOOCs has not been budgeted for. More guidance and clarity on budgetary considerations would have been useful to prevent unforeseen costs during the work. In the end, for some, the development of MOOCs was only possible with additional financial resources (own budget or funding partners).
General collaboration	Some partners are satisfied with the collaboration overall. Critical voices indicate that the communication from the EPFL in the first years of the project negatively impacted the collaboration. Comments also indicate a dynamic of work with the EPFL that was based on a service delivery approach for the	Some comments indicate that the significant investments and efforts were not always valued by EPFL.

	MOOC(s). This approach was perceived by a partner as not valuing the efforts engaged.	
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5.1.5 Added value of the project

For the ACL partners interviewed, being part of the ACL project has value, for some more than others, but overall, all conveyed added value aspects. The two added value areas mostly shared are the following:

- **Enhanced recognition, valorisation and credibility:** Many indicated that being part of the ACL project alongside EPFL, which has an excellent reputation, had a positive influence on their recognition as an institution and in their role, especially by partners in the French-speaking Africa. It supported the valorisation of their work and expertise. These are important for further collaboration and fundraising. The latter was also highlighted by third parties who developed MOOCs. Hybrid training with Swiss stakeholders was also mentioned of value. The EPFL also mentioned that having well-known institutions as partners is important for the platform and its credibility.
- **Access to an established international platform and visibility:** The existence and the international dimension of the platform were mentioned as an added value of the project. This is true not only for the ACL partners but also for third parties. As the platform existed, partners could focus on the content, knowing that their MOOC would be hosted, and support provided. Having a MOOC on the platform contributes to the visibility of the institutions, which is mutually reinforced by other key partners and stakeholders who have also developed MOOCs.

Moreover, some ACL partners indicated the following further aspects as added value to them:

- **Exposure to stakeholders in other African countries:** Some partners indicated that being part of the project has opened a window and exposed them to the work of other institutions in Africa, including in the other-language community, especially for the French-speaker vis-à-vis the English-speaking community in sustainable urban development.
- **Motivation and professional growth of young professionals:** The ACL project was also mentioned as a source of motivation for institutions and professionals, especially the younger generation of researchers.
- **Opportunity for collective reflection and learning:** The development of MOOC, while an intensive exercise, brought opportunities for collective reflection and learning, leading to improved teaching.

It is to be noted that for one of the partners, despite the added value of being part of an existing platform enabling the sharing of knowledge and growth opportunities for young researchers through their engagement in the MOOCs development, the collaboration and dynamic of work of the ACL project was not sufficiently satisfactory to ensure its continuous engagement due to challenges in the collaboration with the ACL project.

Third parties indicated that the added value for their engagement in the project was an opportunity to capitalise on their work and further deepen their training material with a MOOC.

5.2 Coherence

5.2.1 Coherent and complementary to SECO strategies and bilateral engagements

Overall, the ACL project was reported as being coherent with SECO strategy. Skills development is an integral part of SECO's project portfolio, and the ACL project was described as unique in the sense that it entails skills development as a core component of the project. The 'Swissness' of the project with the EPFL also represents an important element for the interviewees at SECO, including in the Swiss Cooperation Offices, e.g. in South Africa (support discussions and promote Swiss interests). For SECO, EPFL is the right Swiss partner for a 'from Africa for Africa' platform with its Centre for Excellence on the continent (EXAF).

SECO also highlighted that the ACL project complements the bilateral engagements in some contexts (e.g. on urban mobility in Ghana, between MOOCs and other projects in South Africa) while bringing a broader approach to urban development. Hybrid training based on an ACL MOOC with participants from other SECO projects in Tunisia also shows the complementarity of the approach at country level.

5.2.2 Complements other educational offers in countries; more linkages with other stakeholders required

As already briefly mentioned under 5.1.1, interviewees consider that the project complements other educational offers, it complements them rather than replacing them.

SECO, having few projects entirely focusing on skills development, recognised being less connected with other actors in this field of work and indicated that more outreach in those aspects would be helpful. Indeed, several interviewees mentioned actors, such as the World Bank, AFD, the UK, GIZ and the EU, as evolving in the field of urban development and skills development.

To note is AFD and AFD Campus funding engagements in skills development on urban development in Africa and its collaboration with EPFL. AFD funded in-person and hybrid training conducted in Tunisia (under the ACL project) and Algeria (outside of the scope of the ACL project). However, both activities were based on the ACL MOOCs and conducted by ACL partners and / or third parties who developed a MOOC. Some of those initiatives seem to have been funded through an 'accord de collaboration'¹³, others directly by AFD. AFD also co-funded the development of one MOOC (developed by the GRET) and is a main funder of a third party (CAHF).

5.3 Effectiveness

5.3.1 Africa-wide resource platform with free courses

Interviewees agree that the platform proposes a new resource 'from Africa for Africa' in sustainable urban development involving inputs from several African institutions and thematic experts. Some ACL partners indicated that they are mostly used to searching for information and resources in the Global North and that the ACL platform has offered an interesting shift to using resources put online by other African stakeholders.

¹³ Accord de collaboration entre EPFL l'AFD Campus, signé le 14.07.2022. The contributions are CHF 100'000 from the EPFL and CHF 50'000 for the AFD Campus, which aim at supporting MOOC development and hybrid trainings.

The ACL platform, with its thematic focus but content diversity, is also seen as having added value compared to other existing platforms. Indeed, many, including external perspectives, confirmed that the ACL selection of MOOCs makes an interesting package.

The platform as one place of storage for all MOOCs was highlighted by several interviewees as important for knowledge management as well as for course participants to be exposed to other available MOOCs on the platform. It was also recognised that more could be done to link the various MOOCs and promote sequences of learning to participants. The platform was indeed perceived as a good opportunity that needs further promotion and marketing, taking careful consideration of the challenges posed by languages.

The fact that the platform and courses are free of charge was also indicated as a significant advantage, contributing to the democratisation of knowledge and to the inclusiveness of not only practitioners but also students and municipalities, thus contributing to potentially broad accessibility. Technical aspects (e.g. internet connection) were mentioned by participants, and identified by the EPFL, to possibly limit the capacity to adequately follow MOOCs and an issue to be addressed by the ACL project.

The platform was also described as bearing the potential of fostering partnership, although this has not yet been fully exploited (see 5.3.5).

While the participants interviewed had no strong view on the structure and the user-friendliness of the platform, others, including an external perspective, found that the structure of the platform would benefit from search and filtering functions (per themes, learning interest, languages, etc.) to ease the navigation of the website. This was reported as having been discussed between SECO and EPFL, along with measures planned to be implemented by the end of the first phase of the project. External views suggested that the platform may benefit from organising MOOCs around the phases of work in urban development (e.g. planning, financing, construction) for persons visiting the website to easily locate their areas of activities and responsibilities and find commensurate MOOCs to complement their knowledge. Based on observations from the evaluation team, there is unclarity about the eight themes mentioned (are they referring to the eight original MOOCs? There are more than eight MOOCs currently on the website). Moreover, the homogeneity of the information provided in each of the MOOCs makes it hard to navigate and to make an informed decision on the course to follow (e.g. some provide information on the number of hours per module and, in total, the target group, prerequisite knowledge, lecturers of the courses, etc., and others do not provide such information). It seems to be a project governance issue, rather than a lack of guidelines on this, leading to this heterogeneity of information posted.

5.3.2 Quality MOOCs as information-sharing vehicles, awareness raising and learning

The MOOCs are considered of quality by the ACL partners, third parties and participants, and this is to be credited to the selection and review processes in place and the expertise brought by the EPFL in urban development and MOOCs development.

Interviewees agree that MOOCs support the sharing of knowledge with a broader audience across countries, which traditional university courses offer less. However, MOOCs are information sharing, mostly referred to as a means of raising awareness and a way to disseminate ideas rather than a real training tool. MOOCs are building the required awareness, leading to the interest and motivation to build more skills. Some of those traits were indicated to be related to constraints of MOOCs in general (e.g. duration of video), which makes the

courses an introduction rather than an in-depth course. Some participants interviewed indeed confirmed that the online course content was not sufficiently in-depth or could offer more details and examples to support implementation in practice.

The data available on course attendance is incomplete as none of the information is required to be provided at the time of registration, prior to the course and after the course (through an online questionnaire). Nevertheless, the available data at the time of writing this report (based on eight MOOCs and a limited response rate to the questionnaire presented in a short report dated April 2024¹⁴) show that a total of 5699 participants enrolled in the MOOCs (while a higher number is enrolled on the platform, namely 7368 enrolled on 14 March 2024)¹⁵. The enrolment statistics vary greatly, which can potentially be partly explained by the date the individual MOOC was launched (from July 2023 to January 2024). The most attended MOOC ('Digital governance for inclusive and sustainable African cities') counts 1183 registrations. While details on the completion rate for each MOOC are not available, all MOOCs offer a certificate upon completion, and the certification rates show that an average of about 7% of registered participants complete a course and get their certification. Participants indicated a weak internet connection negatively impacted their motivation to complete the course. Two MOOCs are far above the average with respectively 15 and 16% of certification ('Articulation urbanisme – mobilité pour une ville soutenable', 'La gestion des données urbaines: clé du développement des villes africaines plus intelligentes'). This can be attributed to the combination of regular live sessions in the MOOCs and further training linked to the completion of the MOOCs (see 5.3.3).

The MOOCs are often largely followed by participants from the country where the MOOC developers are from or where funding was made available for hybrid courses (see 5.3.3). That corroborates the fact that most participants have heard about the course through their personal network or LinkedIn. The ACL platform is mentioned in the top three information means to the course, implying that five out of eight participants heard about the MOOCs through the ACL platform. This suggests that more communication and outreach should be done in the future (see 5.3.6). On the participant profiles, two MOOCs seem to have been attended by a majority of students while the other are participants who indicated their involvement in environment, urban planning, building management and sciences. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the thematic areas apply to professionals' areas of work or could also be field of studies. Another report indicates that research and education are the primary fields of work for the trainees¹⁶. All MOOCs show more participation of men than women (the average is about 65% of men against 35% of women).

The creation of a pool of practitioners was reinforced as not being a target for the first phase of the project, and feedback received by MOOC providers and participants confirmed that this had not happened. However, insight received indicates that networking among MOOC participants is only possible if the course has synchronised cohorts and active facilitation, which is not the case for most MOOCs developed to date. MOOCs developers suggest that such features would imply additional costs to be anticipated and included in the budget, to provide proportional pedagogical approaches (e.g. case studies, group work, blog writing, live Q&A sessions). Those would be important elements, and potential improvements should be included in the MOOC to promote interactions among participants.

¹⁴ ACL (2024), Report Data (file name), one file for each of the 8 MOOCs, April 2024 (shared by EPFL)

¹⁵ ACL (2024), Rapport plateforme de MOOCs 01.01.2024 – 14.03.2024

¹⁶ ACL (2024), Rapport plateforme de MOOCs 01.01.2024 – 14.03.2024

5.3.3 Acknowledged added value of hybrid training to be further developed

The ACL project has piloted some hybrid courses. Other hybrid courses and webinars based on the MOOCs have occurred outside the ACL project. One executive master was recently launched based on ACL MOOCs and resources.

Many interviewees shared that using MOOCs as a gateway to advanced training combining online with in-person training or master classes is beneficial both from the trainers' perspective (standardisation of participants' initial knowledge) and for the learners who see it as a reward for having completed the MOOCs. The motivation to complete and to complete the MOOC faster was confirmed by participants in hybrid courses interviewed. Data shared on the level of certification per country show that in the case of one MOOC, a hybrid format increases the level of certification¹⁷.

The feedback of participants in the hybrid course is positive and highlights the importance of in-person training for further interactions and networking.

EPFL confirmed a high demand for in-person and hybrid training in countries based on online material and indicated that the ACL project is not in a position to respond to all demands. Thus, scaling up the hybrid courses is an important element of the next phase. Some partners suggest developing a prototype approach for easier replication. On the other hand, while the MOOC conventions state that the MOOCs are licensed under Creative Commons making their future re-use and modification possible (except for commercial purposes), many MOOC developers seem to be unclear on possible next steps and how to use the MOOCs, or part of them, for webinars or in-person training to deepen specific topics.

5.3.4 Significant contribution to building capacities in developing MOOCs

The ACL project intended to develop the technical expertise of ACL partners in developing MOOCs. Feedback confirmed that partners and third parties involved in MOOC development have strengthened their capacities to design and develop MOOCs, and the training and support received by EPFL have contributed to this. A missed opportunity identified by many is the lack of interaction and learning potential through exchanges with other partners involved or through peer-to-peer support. Some indicated that a kick-off and / or other meetings among MOOCs developers along the MOOCs development journey would have been excellent and supportive in the process, to get to know others working on MOOC development, to receive consolidated information and to discuss common challenges.

Partners and third parties confirmed that they had developed know-how and that it would be possible for them to further develop courses in the country / region and train others in developing MOOCs (for instance, in a train-the-trainer approach), which creates new development opportunities. The strengthened capacities form an important basis for more facilitation among African stakeholders in the second phase of the project, which SECO highlighted as an important milestone.

5.3.5 An expected extended role of the platform in connecting institutions and practitioners in Africa

SECO and EPFL recognised that the ACL platform could not do everything in the first phase of the project but that in a second phase, it will be important to ensure that the platform is used, beyond posting MOOCs, for sharing information and connecting institutions. Despite the good

¹⁷ Chart shared by Urbaplan by email in July 2024.

intention of the ACL project in ACL partners to support each other, feedback from partners and third parties confirmed that networking among institutions has not happened so far but would be of added value to create synergies and mutualisation of efforts and resources. The ACL platform has already opened a bridge between French and English-speaking Africa, which should be nurtured.

Beyond the individual MOOCs (as mentioned under 5.3.2), there has been a recognised need to create a community of learners and practitioners to share insights and experiences. The need for a moderator has limited the implementation of this initiative. Such moderation could also facilitate linkages among the various MOOCs.

The ACL partners are connected through the BoD, which occurred online with the possibility of meeting in person for some members in Lausanne in 2022 and in Benin in 2023 in connection with the ACL Summit. The Summit in its hybrid format with participants from 52 countries has been an opportunity for sharing information, communicating on the ACL platform and networking. However, the representation of participants from Benin (Seme City) and Morocco (UM6P) was the highest.¹⁸ The Summit was very little mentioned to the evaluators during the interviews.

5.3.6 Fragmented communication and marketing of the platform and MOOCs

ACL partners recognised that the main challenge in communication is to identify the potential audience and get it informed about the ACL platform and MOOCs. SECO indicated a need to do more in this direction with an enhanced involvement of the Swiss Cooperation Offices. Feedback indicates that the ACL project partly communicates and markets the MOOCs on social media and that each partner and MOOC developer reaches out to their audience to varying degrees. This is confirmed by the participation that occurred primarily from the country of origin of the MOOC developers. EPFL acknowledged that a communication strategy was only recently developed¹⁹ as the priorities were given to the setup of the platform and completion of the MOOCs until recently. The podcast African Cities Voices is considered by EPFL as their best communication tool (more than 100000 listeners)²⁰.

In the communication towards MOOC developers, many highlighted the challenge of getting information on participation in their courses. They rely on EPFL to provide them with information, preventing them from learning more from participation and certification in order to enable follow-up, improvement and more targeted communication.

5.3.7 Unforeseen results

Some results not foreseen by the ACL project were identified, and feedback suggests that some of the challenges encountered in developing MOOCs have had beneficial impacts.

- The project contributed to building capacities of partner universities not only at the technical level in developing MOOCs but also in project management and has supported the overall institutional development.
- The project contributed to developing the skills of young researchers, building their confidence and breaking silos between research areas. Indeed, the academic career

¹⁸ ACL(2023), Rapport d'activités, African Cities Lab – Summit 2023, Cotonou 23-24 mai 2023.

¹⁹ Unknown (undated), Plan de communication pour l'African Cities Lab

²⁰ ACL (2024), rapport plateforme de MOOCs 01.01.2024 au 14.03.2024.

depends on the professors, but with the MOOCs, the younger generation was empowered to build courses.

- The project contributed to the ability to speak in front of a camera, which also impacted other projects in creating short videos.

5.3.8 Further possible development

Interviewees from all sides shared ideas for development that would be of added value to the ACL project.

Continuation and intensification of activities in phase 1:

- Live online sessions to bring trainers and learners, researchers and students closer together and support more dialogue. Generalising group work to promote collaboration and support social learning in cohorts and within the professional community. Webinars and hybrid training as a follow-up to MOOCs planned.
- More ways to communicate and reach out to all target audiences.

New activities:

- Develop case studies to illustrate the results of projects and provide examples of successes and failures in urban development.
- Extension of courses for decision makers to raise awareness on the topic and existence of ACL and MOOCs. This shall ensure the participation of the right persons in the MOOCs and bring decision-makers into the picture, providing them with specific training. Specific modules in each MOOC targeted decision-makers to explain the issues and their impact in the various areas of public management (health, safety, social and economic development, etc.) as standard. Currently, this audience is free to follow the available MOOCs but the MOOCs on the platform are not designed for them. It does not seem sufficient to develop the skills of practitioners if decision-makers and policymakers do not understand what is at stake and the financial aspect of urban development. This is in line with the ACL website stating that hybrid training courses offer deep-dive training courses for key decision-makers; so far, they have only been provided to practitioners and students.
- Introduction of a review process of existing MOOCs to ensure continuous improvement and validity of content in future.
- Open the ACL platform to more academic and non-academic partners for more complementary inputs.
- Joint development of MOOCs and hybrid courses by various African partners (ACL partners, third parties and possibly other actors to be identified), which was not fostered in phase 1 due to time constraints to establish the platform and MOOCs.

5.4 Efficiency

5.4.1 Challenging project management

EPFL is the project's implementing agency and has held monthly meetings with the SECO in the last year. Partners perceive EPFL as carrying a key role in bringing expertise and facilitating the project rather than managing it. EPFL recognised that some unclarity emerged around their role as the project unfolded. The consultative bodies were expected to be

established by the ACL partners in their respective countries and to play a role which was not taken to date.

Most ACL partners appreciated having a project team on the EPFL side. While some partners are satisfied with the collaboration, more critical voices raised issues about the lack of leadership, understanding of context, and of co-production while accepting that it is difficult to separate the institution, and the persons involved. Consistency in project management was also a challenge during the first phase, with several turnovers of the project manager at EPFL. This contributed to various issues, including difficulties in establishing constructive working relationships with partners and ensuring a mutual understanding of realities and contexts. EPFL recognised that it is challenging to anticipate how this type of project will evolve and how all activities will develop. It also stressed that it had to take measures rapidly to find solutions to problems encountered, namely that ACL partners in Africa could not take the lead as planned in providing IT infrastructure for platform servers and MOOC development. Furthermore, EPFL reported that, from their perspective, achieving quick wins with concrete deliverables including both the platform and MOOCs in the initial years of the project was important to demonstrate their ability to deliver. Therefore, priority was given to finding solutions to problems and focusing on the development and posting of MOOCs on the platform before being able to plan the project further. This led to some discontinuities in the activities and created a challenging environment for managing the project and respecting the planned timeline. SECO confirmed that it is no surprise that such a project takes longer than the 2.5 years originally planned and that longer implementation phases are to be privileged.

Although the initial credit proposal included a section dedicated to risk assessment²¹, neither the contract nor the project document appear to adequately address the potential risks. EPFL felt that these risks did not need to be detailed in order to obtain SECO funding. This approach, which consists of neglecting an in-depth analysis of the risks associated with implementing the project, achieving results and, more importantly, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact, seems to have led to reactive or even crisis management, rather than the implementation of preventive mitigation measures.

Partners and third parties reported that EPFL has made guidelines and documents available along the way rather than at the beginning of the project, negatively impacting the timeliness of the development of the MOOCS due to late consideration of information and duplication of efforts. EPFL recognised that it had to create guidelines on the spot. This may have contributed to the shared impression of 'pilotage à vue' rather than guided by strategic planning and strong monitoring of information, including course participation.

5.4.2 Privileging bilateral relations rather than establishing multi-stakeholder collaborations

The six ACL partners in Africa were taken on board of the project based on EPFL's (and even more the director of the EXAF) contacts in Africa in urban development, taking into consideration SECO's presence in countries too. The collaboration agreement 'African Cities Lab' was concluded between the EPFL and the six partners. From its inception, the project aimed to integrate African partners and aimed at the platform being co-owned and run by the African partners who should contribute to it. There is an openness to include more African partners in the ACL. However, the reality to date has shown that EPFL manages the project and its funding in order to meet the deliverables agreed in the first phase of the project.

²¹ Assessing the risks from medium to low.

The Board of Directors (BoD) was established at the beginning of the project with the mission to be in charge of the strategical positioning of the Platform and its dissemination in Africa²². Members have been appointed gradually from 2021 until 2023²³. To date, the BoD has met six times between 2021 and 2024, its participation occurred to be mainly among French speaking members in 2021 to include also partners from South Africa, Rwanda and Ghana in 2022²⁴ ²⁵. Despite the BoD, the relationship has been mainly bilateral (EPFL with the individual ACL partner), and the EPFL confirmed that pursuing bilateral collaboration was necessary to move the project forward, especially during Covid.

The BoD meetings, while indicated by the EPFL to have been of more strategic nature at the beginning of the project, mainly consist of one-way communication with inputs from the EPFL (on topics to be discussed and updates on MOOC developments) to the other BoD members, with support from SECO for more controversial and sensitive issues. The other BoD members are informed through those meetings, but not much feedback and reactions are generated through the discussions. Some strategic topics were discussed, but they were described as remaining superficial, without common decisions taken and a lack of follow-up and communication after the meetings. For instance, the issue of ownership of the platform in the future was discussed at the BoD, and it became evident that not all partners have the same capacity to engage and fund. Monetising the MOOCs was also brought to the discussion without prior preparation, which led to controversial views on the topic and no decisions taken. On the update on MOOCs, some BoD members were rather positive that it is informative to know where others stand, while others felt more that the BoD was used to put pressure on the ones not having yet delivered their MOOCs. The language barrier seems to be a major challenge at the BoD and has created some tensions independently of the topic discussed. Overall, a positive evolution in those practices was also reported (e.g. according to SECO the BoD started saying 'we', thus showing a positive development). Interviewees indicated the possibility of having working groups to cover topics of interest to a limited number of partners.

The third parties felt like being service providers even though they all felt ownership of their course and considered the MOOCs as the results of a joint effort with EPFL. EPFL had the impression that the MOOC developers acted as if they were working on a mandate rather than perceiving the MOOC development as an opportunity for them. Between the third party stakeholders and EPFL, the collaboration was solely bilateral, focusing on the production of the MOOCs. Communication and other activities (e.g. webinars) were not undertaken between EPFL and third parties. It excluded all exchanges and collaborations in a multi-stakeholder dynamic under the ACL umbrella.

The issue of intellectual property, copyrights and who can do what with MOOCs or part of them appears to be unresolved and particularly challenging in situations involving direct co-funding of courses or funding agencies of third parties. According to partners and third parties interviewed, the MOOCs belong to EPFL, however many MOOC developers raised their concerns because they received co-funding or in-kind contributions from their own institution to develop their courses. This created some tensions. The observations made on the website show diverse practices in mentioning other partners in the presentation of the MOOCs. The agreements signed between EPFL and MOOCs developers as well as the contract between EPFL and AFD Campus state the principle of training material being attributed a '*licence under a creative commons copyrights*' ensuring that the right to other persons, project partners or

²² ACL (undated), Terms of Reference – Board of Directors.

²³ The last members to have joined are Ghana and Rwanda.

²⁴ ACL (2021), African Cities lab First Board of Directors, 03.11.2021, Minutes of Meeting.

²⁵ ACL (2021), African Cities lab Board of Directors, 17.02.2022, Minutes of Meeting.

not, to disseminate, adapt and use the content with the condition to clearly mention the author(s) and that this is not linked to commercial processes. There seems to be a discrepancy between the contractual basis and the understanding of the MOOCs developers on the intellectual property of the MOOCs.

The collaboration with Swiss Collaboration Offices and SECO officers in the field was limited, with reports indicating little to no communication from EPFL. This was already addressed by SECO, and more exchanges and integration of SECO field officers are considered of importance for a second phase of the project.

5.5 Impact

Despite the early stage of the project, some feedback received, and observations made indicate a potential for impact on sustainable urban development, provided that key elements are integrated in a 2nd phase of the project and beyond.

The focus on a platform with MOOCs was found adequate for training the next generation of urban planners with the ultimate goal of contributing to urban development in Africa. However, it was also recognised that MOOCs are not transformative on their own but contribute to disseminating knowledge and bridging gaps between various practitioners. A platform and MOOCs are first steps, important steps, but interviewees suggested that the project needs to evolve beyond just a platform with MOOCs.

Changes induced by the platform, MOOCs and training depend on a broad engagement with the platform, bringing people to consult, use resources, enrol in courses, complete them and use their knowledge. Strong communication strategies and support in the form of more active moderation are necessary to highlight the value of the platform. In addition to the use of the platform, the contribution of the project to sustainable urban development hinges on the continuous quality content of the platform and on establishing and maintaining connections with the end beneficiaries (e.g. local governments, municipalities). The project shows promise through building a network that fosters exchanges between practitioners, researchers and their respective institutions. The co-development of future MOOCs by several institutions, combining academic and other partners, would support greater impact. The ACL project being Africa wide was also seen as an advantage with a potential to reduce the language barriers in the long term.

Based on the above, much still needs to be considered in a 2nd phase and beyond to contribute to the expected impact. Both the design and management of the 2nd phase are essential success factors. The project in a 2nd phase would benefit from a clearer theory of change while mirroring feedback on fostering collaboration and ownership among partners; integrating ACL partners in the refining of a theory of change is crucial for an inclusive and co-owned process.

5.6 Sustainability

Interviewees from all perspectives agree that sustainability has not been achieved so far, but also stressed that the project is not intended to be fully sustainable after the first phase of the project, stressing that phase 2 shall consolidate it. In the view of many, the platform would gradually collapse if no further funding to develop a sustainable structure were made available. EPFL also recognises that the platform server cannot be hosted at EPFL in the long term. The

present hosting of the server by EPFL is a temporary solution taken because of the issues with the partner in Benin. There is a need to find a sustainable structure for the ACL.

The project's primary challenge is, therefore, the sustainability of the platform, but the issues are broader and need to go beyond the technical aspects and include aspects of the continued interest of partners to be part of and contribute to the ACL, as well as the possible structure for the ACL. On running the platform, EPFL estimated 2.5 full-time equivalent staff per year to maintain the platform, troubleshoot and support any new features or contents, which in Switzerland would require about CHF 0.5 mil. Some find that African solutions will ensure more ownership and reduce the overhead costs of running the platform and the activities.

On the options of monetising the MOOCs, most consider of utmost importance that the MOOCs remain free for broad access. The option of other education offers, e.g. executive education offers with fees, were recently developed by some ACL partners, others are interested, and others indicated that this would not be possible under their academic institution. Additional suggestions were made on options to generate revenues on the MOOCs: contribution by training institutions when MOOCs are used as part of their curriculum or when hosting the MOOCs on their own platform, selling MOOCs production capacities to other institutions.

On the funding, interviewees raised the importance of integrating local governments and local stakeholders in defining the needs and orientating the academic world for commensurate courses and tackling the issue of getting African partners to fund (e.g. African Union, African Bank for Development, Regional Economic Communities, e.g. ECOWAS) in addition to SECO other actors that have previously shown interest in the ACL and / or urban development in Africa (e.g. AFD Campus, World Bank, GIZ). Targeting the awareness of policymakers as potential actors to make funds available for in-depth training (hybrid or master's) for their civil servants was mentioned. Associations of municipalities or intercommunal bodies often have specific budgets for capacity building, too (e.g., the association of French-speaking city mayors whose General Assembly was last held in Lausanne in June 2024).

The issue of intellectual property rights was also highlighted as important for sustainability purposes in connection with the rights to manage, edit and update the content of the MOOCs.

6 Conclusions

The conclusions are the evaluation team's assessments based on the findings.

The ACL project is relevant in addressing the needs of professionals and professionals-to-be in accessing more knowledge in an open, free online access. The logic of intervention of the project is suited to contribute to the accessibility of a platform with digital education content in the form of MOOCs but lacks consistency in targeting aspects of financial sustainability and networking among practitioners and institutions. As a matter of fact, the project was effective in establishing the ACL platform with MOOCs of quality, on a range of topics, in various languages and involving a range of expertise.

EPFL played an important role in achieving those results: it brought the idea of the project, a recognised expertise in urban development in Africa and a long-lasting experience in developing MOOCs. The excellent reputation of the EPFL boosted the recognition and

valorisation of the work of ACL partner institutions and third parties, though more for some than others.

The establishment of the platform (website) is an essential milestone without which nothing would have been possible, not only because it offers a place to post and store all knowledge but also because it supports the visibility of partners and third parties, as well as communication.

The development of the MOOCs was a massive undertaking and the core part of the activities and budget of the first phase of the project, which resulted in not only quality MOOCs being launched but also in capacities of partners and third parties being strengthened in the development of MOOCs. Unforeseen results are increased capacities of partner universities in project management, young researchers have improved their communication skills and be empowered to share their research topics. The MOOCs provide an interesting package to disseminate knowledge on selected topics from various angles and perspectives. The platform has attracted more than 5000 persons to enrol in the courses in one year. To better assess the meaning of that number, more data on participation is required. Some MOOCs seem to have attracted more students than practitioners. The level of certification is rather low, about 7% on average, for the eight MOOCs launched between mid-2023 and early 2024. The percentage increased when MOOCs are combined with in-person training providing motivation to complete. From the little feedback on the post-training questionnaire and the consultations in the framework of this evaluation, participants seem satisfied with the course, having learnt but not yet demonstrated much use of the new skills in their practice.

The project has experienced challenges in its implementation. Technical and IT issues had to be solved as a matter of urgency, and the development of the MOOCs was, from all sides, a huge undertaking, which was underestimated by partners, third parties and EPFL. While it is recognised to be difficult to anticipate all challenges prior to the implementation of a new project, a thorough assessment of needs and capacities of concerned and potential stakeholders as well as more engagement of and consultation with them prior to and in the initial stage of the project would have been beneficial. The identification of the ACL partners relied on personal contacts rather than on a thorough exploration of potential partnerships, assessments and agreements on needs and capacities to be part of the project and to develop MOOCs. Multi-stakeholder exchanges, with a few exceptions (BoD meetings, bilateral exchanges between ACL partners, ACL Summit), have not been a reality in the first phase of the project. Bilateral exchanges between EPFL, partners, and third parties have formed the primary work dynamic. Valuing diversity and individual efforts fostering multi-stakeholder exchanges, collaboration, and mutual learning should be given priority in a second phase of the project. These should also be considered when thinking about opening the ACL to more academic and non-academic members, developing modules for policymakers, new MOOCs and hybrid training, showcasing success and failure through case studies or examples of urban development, in ensuring more feedback loops for continuous validity of course content.

The ACL platform with MOOCs has the potential to impact sustainable urban development, providing key elements are integrated in a second phase of the project and beyond. At that stage, sustainability is not assured, and the platform is likely to collapse gradually should no funding for a second phase be made available. A platform with MOOCs is the first step and requires strong communication to ensure that professionals visit the platform and enrol in courses. The offer needs to remain valid and be complemented by in-depth training opportunities as well as modules for policymakers. A community or network of practitioners and institutions will also be a key element to sustainably improve practices. All of these require

a sustainable structure for the ACL to pertain beyond the project phases. This needs to be established and piloted during the second phase of the project.

Answers to the individual evaluation questions are provided in Annex 8:

7 Lessons learnt

The evaluation highlighted some lessons learnt from the project first phase design and implementation. They would be important to reflect on and be taken into consideration when design the second phase.

- **The requirements and capacities for developing MOOCs and supporting the ACL project were underestimated and lessons learnt be capitalised for the future:** The EPFL, the ACL partners and the third parties have underestimated the required capacities to develop MOOCs as well, to the extent applicable, their capacities to support the project. There are lessons to be learnt to ease the planning of the development of future MOOCs and those may include to define and prepare a set of documentations supporting the capacity and needs assessment of institutions in developing MOOCs as well as documents guiding the process of MOOCs development, to establish a working group on MOOCs development to support capacity assessment and MOOCs development planning, mutual learning and problems solving, and / or to open a space for exchange and mutual assistance leaving the collaborative process entrusted to the players engaged.
- **The investment in fostering collaborations is important and should be given more space:** This was set a little aside in the first phase of the project with the justification that the focus was on the establishment of the platform and development of MOOCs. More attention should be given to those activities as essential pillars of a sustainable ACL structure for the future. It should not only come once all technical requirements are fulfilled as a top-up but be integral part of the process and be in itself a result which will contribute to a co-creation dynamic for the good of the project, the quality of the courses and the sustainability of the project. Successfully established partnerships and collaboration are not a time consuming activity but may have a good return on investment.
- **The diversity of partners is a strength but also a challenge which requires adequate management:** Not all ACL partners need the ACL in the same way, nor have the willingness or have the capacities to engage in the same manner. More sharing of experience and mutualising of resources among MOOCs developers in producing MOOCs can also increase efficiency. Peer learning.
- **The role and engagement of ACL partners and third parties beyond the launch of the course were not sufficiently considered and they should be given more opportunities to engage:** MOOCs leaders do not have access to data on their MOOCs and rely on the EPFL to consolidate and share those data. A co-ownership with ACL partners and an onboarding of third parties as owner of the MOOCs would ease that process. Furthermore, adapting the platform to give them direct access to this information would enable them to provide more agile monitoring, management and communication to their participants and potential audience.

- **The idea of a business model leads to a restrictive perspective on sustainability:** The idea of a business model that potentially generates profits, leads the discussion in a challenging direction where partners quickly have shown divergent views on monetisation of knowledge, MOOCs and their production, as well as being in various situations when it comes to be able to get financial contributions from students in some universities. The ACL requires to identify a sustainable structure that leave the flexibility to their partners to further spread ACL knowledge through MOOCs and in-depth training (e.g. advanced, in-person, executive masters) in line with their institution's internal rules and values.
- **There is an inconsistency in the discussion around finding a sustainable economic model for the ACL platform and it should be resolved:** There is a discrepancy between the injunction asking to find a viable economic model that involves the participation of other donors in development, EPFL's expressed need to retain exclusivity over MOOCs, and SECO's interest in retaining a 'Swissness' with a strong Swiss partner in the project funded. The establishment of a sustainable South-South development requires these inconsistencies to be resolved.
- **Roles and objectives in partnerships have many influences, including on the attitude of the partners, the role of the EPFL should be clarified:** Like in any partnerships and networks, the objectives, roles and attitudes of partners are critical success factor. The position of the EPFL among ACL partners in a second phase is therefore key to be redefined. It would be important to answer questions like: What is the mission that EPFL has set itself by committing to ACL in the context of sustainable urban development in Africa? What will be its unique and irreplaceable contribution to the success of the project? Why EPFL and not another / others Swiss or non-Swiss institutions?
- **MOOCs cannot meet the immense capacity-building needs of African urban planning professionals and additional investment in training will be required:** SECO funding alone cannot meet this challenge. Only an ACL platform supported by a broad coalition of funding partners with a coherent strategy can contribute to lasting change. In defining the second phase, there is a need to consider what role the ACL platform and the commensurate structure could play in strengthening and anchoring the momentum generated by the first phase. What structure would be needed to ensure the support of African stakeholders and enable the emergence of a robust knowledge system capable of responding to the needs for initial and continuing training in the urban planning profession.

8 Recommendations

The evaluation team is proposing 11 recommendations to SECO when considering funding a 2nd phase of the project. The recommendations are built on the capitalisation of the 1st phase, further developments in the first two years and a consolidation of changes in the last two years of the project to ensure sustainability beyond the project and SECO's funding.

In the design of the 2nd phase of the ACL project:

Recommendation 1: If SECO remains committed to supporting sustainable urban development in Africa, it should co-finance a 2nd phase over a four-year period to build on the achievements and lessons learnt of the 1st phase, in particular on the establishment of the platform and production of the MOOCs. However, when considering

future funding, SECO should carefully review the proposed recommendations to ensure that its support follows an approach that sustains long-term results beyond SECO's financial contribution.

Recommendation 2: When considering future funding, SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes a logic of intervention (theory of change) co-developed and co-owned by the ACL partners. In other words, it is expected that the ACL partners agree on the expected outcomes of the 2nd phase of the project and define the key inputs as well as activities and outputs necessary to reach those outcomes. The role and responsibilities of partners shall be an integral part of the intervention logic (who brings what and who does what) and expected changes of target groups' behaviour and practices clearly presented. This needs to be done in a participative manner for all partners to be on board and have the necessary understanding and ownership of the ACL project.

Recommendation 3: When considering future funding, SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes a budget differentiating budget lines. Distinction should be made between costs for the establishment of a sustainable structure (recommendation 5), costs for implementing the individual activities related to recommendations 6 to 10, costs for training (new MOOCs, update of MOOCs, in-persons training) and costs for 2nd phase project management (project manager salary and travel). After two years of the ACL project implementation, the budget should be integrated in a budget for the sustainable structure (to be established under recommendation 5).

Recommendation 4: When considering future funding, SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes refined and agreed roles for EPFL, ACL partners and third parties MOOCs developers in the 2nd phase of the project and an inclusive approach to collaboration. A code of conduct may be a relevant way forward and a good basis when considering the establishment of a sustainable structure under recommendation 5.

For the first 2 years of implementation of the 2nd phase:

Recommendation 5: SECO should only consider future funding if the proposal for a 2nd phase clearly sets out a process and concrete steps to achieve a sustainable structure for the ACL in which partners co-act and co-own the work, exchange and learn from each other. This should be a core activity of the project's 2nd phase to ensure sustainability of efforts and investments and to provide a framework around the ACL platform/website. SECO should re-consider its funding if this is not given the required space and / or the approach is not sufficiently developed in the project proposal.

It is essential that the ACL has its own structure for co-ownership and sustainability purposes. This should by the end of the 2nd phase replace the current project structure having the EPFL as implementation entity of the project. The reflexions should go beyond strengthening exchanges and knowledge and a business model, which were the planned outcomes of the 1st phase. The 2nd phase should conceptualise the creation of a structure for the ACL with its own legal identity and budget, establish it and pilot it.

It is essential that the structure has clear leadership roles (e.g. a board with a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and a permanent secretariat all elected or appointed among and by its members) and a well-structured governance model that ensures accountability and strategic decision-making. A governing body or board should guide the platform's direction.

For smooth transition from the current project structure, the EPFL could host the secretariat of the new structure for the first years and hold a permanent seat in the board, however other scenarios should also be explored to empower African ACL partners. Additional bodies could be created for various functions: scientific committee, pedagogical committee, technical committee. Working groups could support specific thematic, e.g., AI in urban development, or functions, e.g. MOOCs development, hybrid training curricula.

Members of the structure may have various status, such as statutory members (e.g. universities engaged in urban development) and observer members (e.g. international organisations, NGOs, consulting firms, associations of mayors), enabling thus to broaden its member base and work inclusively with relevant partners in Africa, while having an adequate engagement. Membership accession should follow clearly defined criteria and ensure inclusive participation.

A sustainable structure must have a clear financing model, whether through membership fees, partnerships, donations, and / or other sources of revenue. Diversifying funding sources reduces dependence on a single entity and ensures financial stability.

A membership fee should ultimately be collected to ensure the financing of a permanent secretariat and for running the platform / website. Those functions should be located on the African continent. The added value of being a member (and thus of paying a membership fee) should be defined and clearly communicated (e.g. opportunity to meet other institutions, generate new collaborations, get information, participate in working groups and annual meeting, post their MOOCs on the platform, co-develop future MOOCs). The other costs at the expenses of the members depending on their engagement should also be clearly stated (e.g. participation in annual meeting or working groups). In addition to membership fees, the ACL structure should develop a strategy on raising additional funds for the development of MOOCs, in-person training, etc.

The goal should be to have established and piloted this structure by the end of the 2nd phase under the SECO funding. Setting up this type of structure requires investment in time, exchanges and formalisation of documentation and should be a core activity of the 2nd phase of the project.

This design and implementation of those activities and processes may require to be accompanied by external actors to the ACL project and its partners bringing professional experience as facilitators in organisational development and establishment of governance processes.

Recommendation 6: SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes to establish a suitable communication and moderation function for the ACL platform, based on existing efforts. There should be clear roles and responsibilities, targets and commensurate budget. Ultimately this should be one of the roles of the permanent secretariat of the sustainable ACL structure to be established.

Recommendation 7: SECO should assess whether the proposal for a 2nd phase of the ACL project provides for an inclusive process for defining a strategy for the development of MOOCs, including clarified property rights. This should review the process of MOOCs development, the existing MOOCs and learn from the participation in the MOOCs to set required actions for a 2nd phase, namely if / how many / which new MOOCs should be developed, which MOOCs may require to be updated, implement an approach supporting the gathering of all required information on participation on a systematic manner.

Ultimately some of those questions should be addressed by a working group of the sustainable structure to be established.

Recommendation 8: SECO should assess whether the proposal for the 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes to consolidate an approach towards hybrid and executive courses. This should include the development of guidelines for planning and conducting such training using MOOCs as a basis to encourage the ACL partners but also other to make the best use of the available resources. Ultimately some of those questions should be addressed by a working group of the sustainable structure to be established.

Recommendation 9: SECO should assess whether the proposal for the 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes to re-conceptualise the scientific committee. It should oversee not only the selection for new MOOCs but the validation and peer review of MOOCs and training resources. As with scientific publications, it can play the role of an editorial board. This group would be responsible for managing the peer review process, ensuring the quality and integrity of publications and making final decisions on the relevance and currency of MOOC content. Ultimately this should be one of the committees of the sustainable structure to be established.

Recommendation 10: SECO should assess whether the proposal for the 2nd phase of the ACL project proposes actions for improving the structure of the ACL website. This should include the possibilities of getting a better overview of MOOCs, easy to navigate and possibly to search and filter information and courses. The website should also provide space for other sources of knowledge such as publications, case studies, toolboxes, and provide an opportunity for ACL members to interact through online discussion groups. Ultimately the website will be maintained and moderated by the sustainable structure to be established and have a person appointed among member as web and platform master.

For the last 2 years of implementation of the 2nd phase:

Recommendation 11: SECO should only consider continuing funding the last two years of the 2nd phase if the sustainable structure (recommendation 5) has been successfully established as its funding should support the effective piloting of the established structure integrating all new functions, working groups and documents established (recommendations 6-10).

Annex 1: Terms of Reference



Terms of Reference

for

External Evaluation

of

the Afican Cities Lab in Urban Development project

in

Africa

SAP: UR-01298.01

ACTA NOVA ID: SECO-522.1-5/6

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Prepared by:	Document Version:	Template Version:	Date:
SECO/WEIN, skn	3	5.0	13.03.2024

1 Purpose of the Evaluation

SECO is commissioning this external evaluation in order to guide the decision making for financing a second phase of the African Cities Lab in Urban Development project (ACL). The project decision making document of the current phase includes conditions and milestones for the continuation. It is evident already at this stage, that they will only partially be reached by the end of this project phase. Yet, SECO is exploring possibilities for a next phase and would like to receive an external view on the reasons for not reaching the targets as well as what could be done better. Moreover, SECO would like to receive clear recommendations what would need to be adapted with regard to the project design in a potential second phase.

In addition, SECO had only limited direct contact with the different partners involved in the project. Feedback on the collaboration with ACL as well as the implementing partner has been mixed. Therefore, SECO would also like to receive a third-party opinion on this topic and in addition consolidated feedback on views of the partners with regard to the continuation of the project.

On this background, the **main objective of this external evaluation is learning for project steering.**

Description of the Intervention

The ACL project implemented by the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) is setting up a digital education platform on urban development in Africa. The aim is to allow training the current and next generation of urban planners, decision makers and academics across the continent. The platform offers Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and online learning for professionals. Six African universities are partners of the EPFL and shall ultimately co-own the platform. The expected impact of the platform is that African cities benefit from more sustainable urban development thanks to effective planning, management and monitoring in urban development in Africa.

The platform can be found on the internet under the following link: [African Cities Lab](#).

The main outcomes of the program were identified as follows:

1. Improved, more standardized digital training format on urban development. This will be achieved through setting up a digital education platform, that is accessible and financially sustainable for effective pooling and dissemination of continuing education on African urban development.
2. Better-connected networks of universities and professionals active on urban development in Africa. This will be achieved through developing a community of leaders, teachers and researchers leading to expanded information sharing, exchange and cooperation on innovative approaches and initiatives among professionals, between academics and professionals in the public and private sector, and between countries.
3. More urban development experts with relevant, innovative knowledge on sustainable urban development available to work on African cities. This will be achieved through developing educational content (improved access to relevant, up-to date quality continuing education on African urban development).

The project was planned originally for a period of 2.5 years with a budget of CHF 2'700'000. But it was cost extended until initially end of April 2024 and finally until the end of 2024 with a

budget top up of CHF 620'000. Thus, the overall budget available for project implementation amounts to CHF 3'320'000.

The extension of the project time became necessary because of delays in the implementation of planned activities. The additional budget allowed to add important activities, such as the inclusion of third-party MOOCs into the platform, new webinars, the creation of an additional Certificate of Open Studies, and additional hybrid training.

The program contains an option that SECO contributes to the financing of a second phase to upscale results provided that the outcomes of this first phase are positive, particularly in terms of the platform's finance strategy. In this context the following milestones have been defined:

- Mobilization of other donor resources
- Technically functional platform
- 8 MOOCs developed, 4 deep dive MOOCs developed and 2 hybrid training sessions conducted, and 2 continuing training courses packaged

Scope and Focus of the Evaluation / Evaluation Questions

The evaluation shall look on one hand at the platform, more specifically at its suitability to reach the project's purpose. On the other side, SECO would like to better understand the direct beneficiaries' side and to what extent the support has been helpful to fulfil their mandate (especially partner institutions). The evaluators shall concentrate on output as well as outcome level. Source of information shall be all main partners the project had activities with since the beginning of this first project phase. The evaluation does not need to look into technicalities of the platform.

The evaluation questions are structured along the OECD DAC criteria for evaluations. Whereas all criteria are relevant for the envisaged outcome of the evaluation, focus is set on relevance, effectiveness and sustainability as these criteria are expected to provide new information that are most needed in order to structure and agree upon a next project phase. In terms of efficiency, for example, SECO has already quite a good overview and rather clear ideas for the future.

The evaluator may add further evaluation questions in case these are even more suitable to achieve the desired evaluation outcome.

3.1 Relevance

1. How well-suited is the project approach to foster urban development on the African continent? Is the platform an appropriate measure to reach practitioners?
2. How relevant has the support of the project been for partner universities and institutions in order to fulfil and advance their mandate to promote urban development as well as to educate urban development practitioners? What kind of support was most relevant? What worked well and what not so well (e.g. support to set up a MOOC, financial support, support concerning content, networking with other institutions).
3. To what extent has the project contributed to the positioning of the institutions on the topic?

4. How relevant was the expertise, reputation and standing of the EPFL compared to other possible partners?

3.2 Effectiveness

5. How effective has the platform approach been to connect different urban development institutions on the African continent? What is the role of the platform to exchange best practices on the continent? How would this role likely need to be adapted in a possible next phase?
6. How effective (and innovative) is the platform's content?
7. How effective was the project (e.g. through MOOCs) in spreading urban development education and supporting practitioners in their concrete work?
8. Are there other ways, tools, instruments, platforms and channels available that could potentially be more effective to share experiences and/or provide education to build capacities in the fields of urban development or others on the African continent?

3.3 Impact

9. Can it be expected that the platform contributes to urban development? If yes, how? If no, why not, i.e. what would need to be changed?
10. Is it realistic that the platform affects partners and practitioners so they get active, implement learnings, and thus contribute to urban development?

3.4 Sustainability

11. Which activities are likely to continue after this current project phase has ended independently of further SECO funding? If the SECO support phases out, is it likely that the platform continues to operate? If yes, how? If no, why not?
12. What measures are missing in the current phase or what measures would need to be realized in a potential second phase to positively affect sustainability of the activities?

Evaluation Methods and Process

4.1 Process

SECO will be in charge of the contracting as well as the steering and guiding of the evaluation. It will be the main point of reference. EPFL has been informed of the evaluation and SECO will also inform all partners involved in the program of the evaluation and request their participation as appropriate.

Throughout the process close contact and collaboration between the EPFL and the evaluators is expected. No field visit is envisaged.

SECO expects to have a first (online) meeting with the evaluators in order to clarify the mandate and the evaluation method as well as process. EPFL is welcome to join. As a next step, the evaluator shall present an inception report including evaluation methodology and questionnaire for the interviews. The findings of the evaluation including clear recommendations shall be summarized in a draft evaluation report, which SECO commits to comment. Comments by EPFL are welcome. The final report shall be presented to and

discussed with SECO. SECO will share the final report with the EPFL and invite them to the presentation of the final report by the evaluators to SECO.

SECO will establish a management response on the evaluation findings. Upon request, the evaluation report may be made available to interested third parties, according to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FolA).

4.2 Method

SECO expects the evaluation to adhere to SEVAL and DAC standards. The evaluation method shall include the following aspects:

- Analysis/desk study of project documents and external secondary data (study before writing the inception report): The evaluators are expected to study relevant available documentation, such as credit proposal, contracts including program document, progress reports as well as the online platform. This desk-study will allow to establish in a first step a matter-of-fact assessment on what was planned and what achieved. It will also allow to structure the questionnaire for the interviews.
- Qualitative data collection using purposive sampling strategy: interviews of key internal and external stakeholders. The goal is to get in-depth feedback from involved partner institutions. The interviews are to be done online. The sample should also include external stakeholders who can give a neutral opinion about the project.
- Evaluation matrix linking evaluation questions with data sources, data collection methods, data analysis procedures and main findings. Findings are to be based on several data sources (triangulation).
- Complete in the SECO assessment grid (annex I).

The Consultant shall propose the detailed methodology (including to be used evaluation matrix, sample, data collection tools and methods, data analysis procedures etc.) in the inception report.

Deliverables

The evaluators are expected to provide the following deliverables:

1. An offer with a fine-tuned evaluation methodology and process including a timeline and budget
2. Kick-off meeting with SECO
3. Inception Report (max. 5 pages) detailing out the methodology, data collection tools, questionnaire for interviews, detailed implementation plan and timetable, team composition, etc.
4. A draft report (including assessment grid see annex I) with findings, conclusions, lessons learnt as well as clear recommendations for the way forward
5. Presentation and discussion of the main evaluation findings during a joint meeting with SECO and EPFL (online presentation is an option)
6. Finalized evaluation report of 15 up to 20 pages max excluding annex in pdf and Word format; structure as indicated in annex II; the assessment grid presents one of the annexes of the final report

6 Schedule

- Expected contracting in April 2024
- Kick-off and clarification meeting: mid-April 2024
- Inception report: end of April 2024
- Draft evaluation report beginning mid-June 2024
- Presentation of results mid-July 2024
- Final report by mid- August 2024

7 Evaluation Team / Qualifications

The evaluation team needs to provide the following experiences and qualifications:

- Solid knowledge of best evaluation methodologies and a robust track record in evaluating international development cooperation projects; substantial track record in the conduct and evaluation of semi-structured interviewing
- Solid general knowledge of the African continent context including work experience on the continent; experience in the field of skills development and experience with education systems on the African continent
- Expertise in urban development
- Excellent English writing and communication skills, good French communication skills

Annex 2: Work schedule

Table 3 proposes a work schedule starting at the end of May with a data collection phase in June until early July and indicates the number of working days required for each phase of work.

Table 3: Work schedule

Phases		Numb er of days of work	2024															
			M ay	June					July				August.					Se pt
				22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	
1	Inception	6	a)	b)	b)													
2	Data collection and analysis	12																
3	Draft reporting and presentation	5								c)				d)				
4	Final reporting	2															e) f) g)	
a) Kickoff: 22.05.2024 b) inception report: 07.06.2024, comment by Seco and EPFL: 14.06.2024 c) draft report: 19.07.2024 d) discussion draft report: 22.08.2024 e) draft report incorporating comments received: 06.09.2024 f) presentation of draft report incorporating comments received: 10.09.2024 g) final report: 17.09.2024																		

Annex 3: Methodological approach and evaluation matrix

The evaluation approach complies with the SEVAL and OECD DAC evaluation standards. The evaluation was conducted in close collaboration with key staff at SECO and EPFL, who facilitated access to documents and key persons to be interviewed. The detailed methodology was presented in the inception report, discussed and approved by SECO (inception report dates 12 June 2024).

The consultations with stakeholders during the data collection were conducted through semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to gather in-depth insights. Furthermore, the interviews sought not only to generate feedback but also to trigger reflections on the added value of the project and the platform, potential required changes to the project approach and suggestions to improve the future of the project and the platform.

To complement the reflections on the relevance of the project approach and the platform to develop skills on sustainable urban development in Africa, consultation with a subject matter expert, not involved in the ACL project and the courses but engaged in urban development in Africa, was also conducted.

The evaluation matrix combines the specific evaluation questions, as per the ToR with the SECO assessment grid to ensure that the grid can easily be filled in and rate justified based on the findings and conclusions of the report. Some evaluation questions have been slightly reformulated to consistently refer to the project and its platform and not solely to the platform. Some data sources have been updated based on the applied methodology as presented in chapter 4.

Table 4: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation criteria	Key evaluation questions	Data collection	Data sources	Analytical methods / tools	Criteria or indicator used to form judgement
Relevance					
Responsiveness to needs and quality of design:	EQ1. How well-suited is the project approach to foster urban development on the African continent? Is the platform an appropriate measure to reach practitioners?	Documents Interviews	Documents: credit proposal, logframes, progress reports, training course data and reports Interviews with SECO (HQ, field), EPFL, ACL project Board, training	Qualitative content analysis to highlight needs analysis and responses provided Analysis and refinement of logic of intervention / theory of change	Responsiveness of the platform to the needs in advancing urban development in Africa

			courses focal persons, external stakeholders		Suitability of the platform to reach practitioners Evidence of outreach of the platform to practitioners Comprehensiveness of project design to reach its objectives
Sensitiveness and responsiveness to the context and capacities of the beneficiaries:	EQ2. How relevant has the support of the project been for partner universities and institutions in order to fulfil and advance their mandate to promote urban development as well as to educate urban development practitioners? What kind of support was most relevant? What worked well and what not so well (e.g. support to set up a MOOC, financial support, support concerning content, networking with other institutions)?	Documents Interviews	Documents: summit report, training course reports Interviews with ACL project Board, training courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties	Qualitative content analysis to identify successful support measures and areas for improvements / gaps	Adequacy of support to capacities of partners <i>Otherwise, descriptive in identifying good practices and gaps</i>
	EQ3. To what extent has the project contributed to the positioning of the institutions on the topic? How relevant was the expertise, reputation and standing of the EPFL compared to other possible partners? What are the added values of the project for the EPFL and partners?	Documents Interviews	Documents: progress reports Interviews with ACL project Board, training courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties	Qualitative content analysis to highlight key elements of reputations and positioning gains / use, and added value (or lack of gain and added value)	Evidence of reputation / positioning gain of partners Evidence of added value
Coherence					
Internal coherence:	EQ4. To what extent fit the project with the wider policy framework of the SECO	Documents Interviews	Documents: Swiss IC strategy, credit proposal, other project documents Interviews with SECO (HQ, field)	Qualitative content analysis	Degree of alignment of project with strategy and other projects

	and other interventions of the SECO in Africa and the specific countries?				
External coherence:	EQ5. To what extent the project is compatible with interventions of other actors on urban development in Africa (complementarity, synergies, added value...)	Documents Interviews	Documents: EPFL research for development strategy and documents, other stakeholders' strategies Interviews with training course focal persons from third parties (e.g. UNHABITAT), external stakeholders	Qualitative content analysis to highlight complementarity, synergies or gaps	Evidence of complementarity and synergies with interventions by other stakeholders
Effectiveness					
Achievements of objectives:	EQ6. How effective (and innovative) is the platforms content? (outcome 1)	Interviews FGDs	Interviews with ACL project Board, training courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties, external stakeholders FGDs with courses participants	Qualitative content analysis to highlight innovative aspects, good practices as well as potential gaps	Evidence of quality and innovative content
	EQ7. How effective has the platform approach been to connect different urban development institutions on the African continent? What is the role of the platform to exchange best practices on the continent? How would this role likely need to be adapted in a possible next phase? (outcome 2)	Documents Interviews FGDs	Documents: summit report, progress reports, other activities reports Interviews with ACL project Board, training courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties, external stakeholders FGDs with courses participants	Qualitative content analysis to highlight opportunities and limitations of exchanges through the existence and use of the platform	Intensity and quality of exchanges supported by the platform between project partners and institutions in Africa <i>Second question is prospective, therefore no criteria</i>
	EQ8. How effective was the project (e.g. through MOOCs) in spreading urban development education and supporting practitioners in their concrete work? (outcome 3)	Documents Interviews FGDs	Documents: training course data and reports Interviews with training courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties, external stakeholders	Qualitative content analysis to highlight areas of the project which supported learning of practitioner's and use of acquired knowledge in their work	Evidence of acquires knowledge Degree of use of acquired knowledge in their work (e.g. new position, promotion,

			FGDs with courses participants		involvement in new projects, integration of new ideas)
	EQ9. Are there other ways, tools, instruments, platforms and channels available that could potentially be more effective to share experiences and/or provide education to build capacities in the fields of urban development or others on the African continent? (outcomes 1 + 2 + 3)	Interviews FGDs	Interviews with ACL project Board, training courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties, external stakeholders FGDs with courses participants	Consolidation of ideas and suggestions from interviewees.	<i>Prospective, therefore no criteria</i>
Efficiency					
Economic efficiency:	EQ10. How cost efficient the project has been in reaching its results?	Documents interviews	Documents: progress reports, budget and financial reports Interviews with EPFL and SECO project managers	Quantitative and qualitative analysis of projects data, budgetary information and interviews data	Adequation of implementation rate (spent budget / planned budget) with achievements
Timeliness:	EQ11. To what extent the project delivered the results in a timely manner?	Documents interviews	Documents: progress reports, budget and financial reports Interviews with EPFL and SECO project managers	Quantitative and qualitative analysis of projects data, budgetary information and interviews data	Timeliness of activities
Operational efficiency:	EQ12. To what extent the management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation?	Documents interviews	Documents: progress reports Interviews with EPFL (project level and hierarchy), SECO (HQ, project level and hierarchy), ACL project Board	Qualitative content analysis to draw and assess the strategic and operational governance of the project	Evidence of clear governance and processes
Impact					
Contribution to potential	EQ13. Can it be expected that the project and its platform contribute to urban development in Africa? If yes, how? If no,	Documents Interviews	Documents: credit proposal Interviews with SECO (HQ, field), EPFL, ACL project Board, training	Qualitative content analysis to highlight contribution and potential contribution	Evidence of contribution of the project and platform to urban development in Africa

intended impacts	why not, i.e. what would need to be changed?	FGDs	courses focal persons at partner universities and third parties, external stakeholders FGDs with courses participants	Analysis and refinement of logic of intervention / theory of change	<i>Otherwise, prospective, therefore no criteria</i>
	EQ14. Is it realistic that the platform affects partners and practitioners, so they get active, implement learnings, and thus contribute to urban development?	FGDs	FGDs with consultative bodies and platform users / students	Qualitative content analysis to highlight ways of influencing change / improvement of practices through the platform Analysis and refinement of logic of intervention / theory of change	<i>Descriptive, therefore no criteria</i>
Sustainability					
Capacity and resilience development, and financial sustainability:	EQ15. Which activities are likely to continue after this current project phase has ended independently of further SECO funding? If the SECO support phases out, is it likely that the platform continues to operate? If yes, how? If no, why not?	Interviews	Interviews with EPFL, ACL project Board	Qualitative content analysis to highlight options and scenarios considered and developed Assessment of feasibility of potential scenarios for sustainable financing of the Platform	Existence of a business plan to ensure financial sustainability of the Platform Evidence of sustained practices of practitioners
	EQ16. What measures are missing in the current phase or what measures would need to be realized in a potential second phase to positively affect sustainability of the activities?	Interviews	Interviews with EPFL, ACL project Board	Qualitative content analysis to highlight gaps in current projects and activities	<i>Prospective, therefore no criteria</i>

Annex 4: List of references

Presented in chronological order:

SECO (2020), Credit Proposal, African Cities Lab, 14.10.2020

ACL (2021), African Cities Lab First Board of Directors, 03.11.2021, Minutes of Meeting.

ACL (2021), African Cities Lab – Comité consultative Tunisie, 16.11.2021, procès-verbal.

ACL (2021), African Cities Lab Board of Directors, 17.02.2022, Minutes of Meeting.

ACL (2021), African Cities Lab Scientific Committee 02.11.2021

EPFL (2022), Accord de collaboration entre EPFL l'AFD Campus, signé le 14.07.2022

SECO (2023), Avenant au contrat, African Cities Lab, 03.05.2023

ACL(2023), Rapport d'activités, African Cities Lab – Summit 2023, Cotonou 23-24 mai 2023.

ACL (2024), Rapport plateforme de MOOCs 01.01.2024 – 14.03.2024

ACL (2024), Report Data (file name), one file for each of the 8 MOOCS, April 2024 (shared by EPFL)

ACL (2024), rapport plateforme de MOOCs 01.01.2024 au 14.03.2024

University of Rwanda, EPFL (2024), Kick-off Meeting of the Local Consultative Board for the Africa Cities Lab Project in Africa, 16.04.2024.

SECO (2024), Avenant numéro 2 au contrat, African Cities Lab, 21.05.2024

EPFL (2024), International Affairs, inputs Evaluation ACL, 02.07.2024, Katharina Füglistner

ACL (undated), Terms of Reference – Board of Directors.

ACL (undated), Terms of reference – Scientific Committee

ACL (undated), Terms of reference – Consultative Body

Unknown (ACL ?) (undated), Plan de communication pour l'African Cities Lab

Annex 5: List of stakeholders consulted

This table presents the details of the persons consulted through semi-structured interviews. They are grouped per type of institutions without specific order.

Table 5: List of persons interviewed

Institution	Role in ACL project	Name
Funding partner		
SECO	HQ, ACL project manager	Anne Schick
SECO	HQ, former ACL project manager	Silvio Giroud
SECO	HQ	Philipp Keller
SECO	SCO Tunisia	Karima Kefi
SECO	SCO Morocco	Nathalie Marville-Dosen
SECO	SCO South Africa	Gerhard Pienaar
SECO	SCO Ghana	Andrew Asare
Implementing partner		
EPFL	ACL project management	Armel Kemajou
EPFL	Excellence for Africa center, ACL BoD member	Jérôme Chenal
EPFL		Katharina Füglistner
EPFL		Andreas Mortensen
African ACL partner		
ISTEUB	ACL BoD member focal points, MOOCs leader	Sabra Halbi Olfa Benmeidien
KNUST	ACL BoD member focal point	Helen Essandoh Charles Adams
ACC	ACL BoD	Andrew Tucker
ACC	MOOC leader	Nokukanya Mncwabe
UM6P	ACL BoD member	Khalid Baddoun
UM6P	focal point, MOOC leader	Rida Azmi
UM6P	MOOC leader	Hanane Ait Ousaleh
Third party (MOOCs developers)		
CAHF	MOOC leader	Kecia Rust
WRC	MOOC leader	Cara Tobin Cheryl Hicks
UN Habitat	MOOC leader	Leandry Jieutsa
Ain Shams University of Egypt	MOOC leader	Samah Elkhateeb
Urbaplan - Transitec	MOOC leader	François Laurent Julien Allaire
GRET	MOOC leader	Sarah Lecourrt
External expert		
ISD Foundation	External stakeholder	Benjamin Manfield

This table presents further information on the number of short interviews and number of participants per FGDs, as well as the country of the participants.

Table 6: Details of short interviews and FGDs with course participants

Type of course	Short individual interview or FGDs	Country	Number of persons consulted
General MOOCs	Short individual interview	Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco	3
Hybrid	FGD	Ghana	5
Hybrid	FGD	Cameroon, Togo	3

Annex 6: Interviews guide

This is a general interview guide, which was tailored to the interviewee's role and experience with the ACL project. See the evaluation matrix for further information on expected contribution of the various interviewees target group to the evaluation dimensions.

What has been your engagement with the ACL project so far?

Relevance

- How would you describe the purpose of the ACL project? What are the needs that the project should bring a response to?
- In your view, how fit for purpose is the ACL project (with platform, sharing of information, MOOCs and continuing training) to advance urban development in Africa? Is working through a platform and MOOCs the adequate approach in doing so?
- Is the pursued approach through MOOCs commensurate to the capacities and needs of partner universities and institutions?
- What were the most / least useful support measures?
- What is the added value for (your) institution(s) to be part of the ACL project? How has the project influenced the positioning of (your) institution(s)? What has been the influence of having the EPFL on board and implementing the project?

Coherence

- Is the ACL project in line with Swiss IC strategy and other SDC/SECO interventions in research for development and urban development? Are there any aspects that could be strengthened to make it more aligned?
- Looking at the bigger picture of urban development in Africa, how well fit the ACL project with other interventions of your organisation /of other organisations? What are the other main drivers of this agenda? Are the interventions complementary or built in synergies? If yes, which synergies are of particular importance? If not, why, where are the gaps and how could this be improved?

Effectiveness

- Based on your technical expertise or engagement in urban development in Africa, what are the strengths of the platform / having the MOOCs available on a platform? Is it particularly innovative in comparison with other resources available? What could be improved?
- How do you see the role of the platform in connecting institutions and practitioners in Africa and sharing knowledge and practices? Is it happening with the ACL platform? How could this be improved?
- Are the MOOCs so far building a pool of trained professionals involved with urban development? Are the MOOCs transferring the requiring knowledge to support practitioners in their concrete work? How would you qualify the interactions existing among the pool members?
- What would be other / complementary approaches, tools, instruments to build capacities and foster cooperations and sharing of experiences in the field of urban development?

Efficiency

- How could you describe the management, monitoring and steering of the ACL project? Is it overall efficient? How could it be improved?

- Do you consider the project implemented in a timely manner? Were the resources used in an efficient manner to reach the results? What were the relevant success (and bottlenecks) in terms of implementation and monitoring?

Impact

- Thinking longer term, what is the potential of the project and its platform and courses to positively contribute to sustainable urban development in Africa? Are they in your view any adjustments required to ensure a higher impact of the project on sustainable urban development in Africa?
- Does the logic behind the project make sense, in other words: Will a platform with MOOCs enable practitioners on sustainable urban development in Africa to get more active and engaged and thus positively contribute to sustainable urban development on the continent?

Sustainability

- What is likely to be pursued by (your) institution(s) in the future independently of SECO future funding to the ACL project?
- What would still be required to ensure sustained practices in the future?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Annex 7: Short interview and FGDs guide for training participants

The short interviews / FGDs with the platform users and trainees focused on the effectiveness of the project, the platform and the training courses, and touched on the logic of intervention and potential impact.

Effectiveness

- **Training course:**
 - Has the MOOC / training course you participated enable to build capacities and a pool of trained professionals involved with sustainable urban development?
 - Was the level of details of the course adequate to your knowledge, needs and expectations?
 - Has the course enabled the acquisition of the required knowledge to support you in your everyday work / studying path?
 - Can you provide any concrete examples of use of acquired knowledge in your work / studies, or any changes that occurred as a consequence of your participation?
- **Platform:**
 - What are the platform resources you have particularly used so far? What would you need more / differently done?
 - Based on your technical expertise or engagement in sustainable urban development in Africa, what are the strengths of the platform?
 - To what extend is the platform being innovative in comparison with other resources available? What could it be improved?
- **Sharing of experiences:**
 - How do you see the role of the platform in connecting institutions and practitioners in Africa and sharing knowledge and practices?
 - Is it happening with the ACL platform? How could this be improved?
- **Other possible approaches:**
 - What would be other / complementary approaches, tools, instruments to build capacities and foster cooperations and sharing of experiences in the field of urban development in Africa?

Impact

- **Logic of intervention:**
 - What do you know about the ACL Project? How do you understand it intention?
 - Does the logic behind the ACL project make sense, in other words: Will a platform with MOOCs enable practitioners on urban development in Africa (you) to get more active and engaged and thus positively contribute to urban development on the continent?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Annex 8: Answers to the evaluation questions

Relevance

EQ1. How well-suited is the project approach to foster urban development on the African continent? Is the platform an appropriate measure to reach practitioners?

The ACL project respond to needs in developing skills in urban development. The logic of intervention of the project is suited to contribute to the accessibility of a platform (outcome 1) with digital education content in the form of MOOCs, also used in hybrid training formats (outcome 3). The aspects of financial sustainability (and sustainability of the project in general) as well as of networking among practitioners and institutions on urban development in Africa is approached in a fragmented manner thus unlikely to be adequately addressed in the design and implementation of the project and contribute to the full achievements of the outcomes (specially 1 and 2).

The ACL project through the platform and MOOCs supports a wide outreach with knowledge on a range of topics related to urban development and thus respond to needs of professionals evolving in the field of urban development in Africa. Moreover, the open, flexible and free access to MOOCs ensure a potential inclusive participation across practitioners and students. However, MOOCs are rather a mean to raising awareness and disseminating ideas and knowledge than a real training tool. A platform with MOOCs is not transformative in nature but establishes an important basis for further interest and motivation to build more skills, through in-depth education and training opportunities, some of which are part of the design of the ACL project.

The project with a Board of Directors and the involvement of committees (scientific committee and local consultative bodies) to support identification of needs and capacities and overall provide guidance to project activities constitutes a relevant design. Moreover, the platform aims at fostering exchanges among institutions and practitioners. However, in the reality of the design and initial stages of the project the engagement of and consultations with stakeholders have been limited to few BoD meetings and three consultative bodies meetings in three partner countries. Furthermore, other stakeholders in the knowledge system (NGOs, private institutions, consultants), some of which selected to develop MOOCs later in the process, were not directly included or consulted even though they are also targeted by some support measures in the development of the MOOCs and are playing a role in meeting the needs of the end beneficiaries. The diversity of partners and stakeholders, while not clearly anticipated in the project design, brings the advantage of various perspectives and of potential increasing the outreach to professionals and students. The project design could have better integrated the requirements for, and opportunities offered by, more networking among stakeholders.

EQ2. How relevant has the support of the project been for partner universities and institutions in order to fulfil and advance their mandate to promote urban development as well as to educate urban development practitioners? What kind of support was most relevant? What worked well and what not so well (e.g. support to set up a MOOC, financial support, support concerning content, networking with other institutions)?

The diversity of ACL partners and third parties brings a diverse range of needs and capacities and while some support measures were more helpful for some, they were less to others.

Overall, the existence of a platform was essential for all as this was the enabling factor to start developing a MOOC. For both the ACL partners and third parties the helpfulness of the support measures varies. On a positive side, the MOOC on how to develop a MOOC, the availability of the technical staff and their expertise were acknowledged. The main challenge encountered relate to the fact that the entire MOOCs development process and support documentation was not planned in advance and consolidated but provided on an ad-hoc basis and some information came too late leading to duplication of efforts. The financial support, while important, was in most cases not sufficient and partners and third parties had to complement with own funding or other external funding. More guidance and clarity on budgetary considerations would have been relevant.

The capacities to develop MOOCs were overestimated from all sides and led to huge undertaking for the ACL partners engaged in MOOCs development as well as for the third parties. The support from the EPFL also had to be adjusted to meet the demand and to support the completion of MOOCs, creating thus a challenging situation in the project management.

EQ3. To what extent has the project contributed to the positioning of the institutions on the topic? How relevant was the expertise, reputation and standing of the EPFL compared to other possible partners? What are the added values of the project for the EPFL and partners?

Some partners see more added value than other but overall, the project has contributed to an enhanced recognition, valorisation and credibility of the institutions, as well as visibility through an established international platform, and this area also relevant to third parties. Being part of the ACL platform alongside the EPFL, with its reputation, and other renown institutions had a positive influence, this was specially reported in the French speaking Africa. It also had a positive influence on further collaborations and fund raising. Exposure to stakeholders from other African countries, motivation and professional growth of young professionals, opportunity for collective reflection and learning and opportunity for capitalisation on their work were some of the advantages perceived by some partners but did not meet consensus based on the individual experiences of individual stakeholders.

Despite added value mentioned, it is to be noted that one partner confirmed that the value is not sufficient to continue its engagement in the project due to challenges in the collaboration with the EPFL. On the other side, an academic third party MOOCs developers indicated its interest in playing a more active role in the ACL project.

Ensuring added value for a range of diverse partners require a careful assessment and understanding of the individual contexts, going beyond reputation and standing of institutions.

Coherence

EQ4. To what extent fit the project with the wider policy framework of SECO and other interventions of SECO in Africa and the specific countries?

Overall, the ACL project is highly coherent with SECO strategies and interventions. It complements bilateral engagements in the field, creates synergies with project through the conduction of hybrid trainings and has a 'Swissness' component with a strong Swiss partner (the EPFL and its Excellence in Africa centre).

EQ5. To what extent the project is compatible with interventions of other actors on urban development in Africa (complementarity, synergies, added value...)

ACL MOOCs complement tradition educations offered by universities in countries. Other stakeholders and funding partners are engaged in this field of work. Interests concurred with

other partners and have in the case of the AFD led to synergies in funding of connected activities and in co-funding of the ACL. This shows a good potential for more synergies and linkages in the future.

Effectiveness

EQ6. How effective (and innovative) is the **platform's** content? (outcome 1)

The platform is innovative in the sense that it provides training resources from Africa for Africa, offering a shift in the traditional way of searching of education opportunities in the Global North. It has a thematic focus, while ensuring diversity of contents and perspectives, this makes the MOOCs an interesting package. Having all MOOCs on one platform is essential for knowledge management and accessibility. More could be done though to ease visitors to the website to navigate and filter training options based on their profile, interests and language. More interactivity through the presentation of the MOOCs along the timeline of urban development phases of work (e.g. planning, financing, construction) as well as linkages between MOOCs (e.g. with a note 'to learn more see MOOC x or y') could support more effective use and learning potential of the platform.

The free nature of MOOCs is important aspect to the democratisation of knowledge and inclusiveness of participation, while technical aspects (e.g. internet connection) does often limit capacity to adequately follow MOOCs.

The platform has the potential to be used beyond posting of MOOCs and support networking and exchanges among practitioners and institutions in Africa. This potential of the platform is not yet achieved and should be given priority in the future.

EQ7. How effective has the platform approach been to **connect** different urban development institutions on the African continent? What is the role of the platform to **exchange** best practices on the continent? How would this role likely need to be adapted in a possible next phase? (outcome 2)

It was recognised that the platform could not do everything in an initial phase and thus those functionalities have not been developed yet. Beyond the platform, the project activities (development of MOOCs, hybrid training, meetings of the BoD and committees) have not fostered exchange of best practices, information and more broadly promote collaborations. Creating a network of institutions and practitioners was not part of the activities undertaken in the first phase, nor were such networking promoted when the opportunities arose or on punctual occasions, e.g. a joint kick off to start developing the MOOC for all partners and third parties.

A primary requirement is to ensure a dynamic of partnership and collaboration as an integral part of the project (moving away from bilateral relations). An important aspect is to shift the mindset focusing on a platform to introduce the idea of a network of institutions and practitioners using a platform as a base for sharing information, disseminating free MOOCs and offering other educational material for further training opportunities. Only subsequently the platform will have to be adjusted to enable more interactions. Be it online on the platform and in-person meetings, networking requires moderation of exchanges to ensure that the quality and dynamic remain at a certain level.

EQ8. How effective was the project (e.g. through MOOCs) in **spreading** urban development education and **supporting practitioners** in their concrete work? (outcome 3)

Primarily the project supported the learning of ACL partners and third parties in developing MOOCs, providing thus a know how basis for the future of the project.

MOOCs support sharing of knowledge. Little information is available on the outreach to practitioners and students and their level of completion of MOOCs once enrolled. The ACL pre and post training questionnaires are not compulsory to fill and cover only very general questions of course satisfaction. The eight MOOCs launched between mid-2023 and early 2024 have attracted more than 5000 enrolments, showing thus a clear interest for those topics. An average percentage of 7% have completed and obtained certificates, which is relatively low and can be explained by a range of reasons, some of which being the challenges with internet connection, lack of live sessions bringing and interaction with other participants all contributing to a decrease in motivation. The MOOCs combined with in-person training have increased the motivation to complete the MOOCs in a short time and thus see higher percentage of certification.

Based on information available, participants show satisfaction to the course followed. However, the use of newly acquired knowledge in practice is highly dependent on the professional position of the participants. Teachers at university confirmed trying to use the MOOC material in their teaching, practitioners had less strong statement on the use of the acquired knowledge.

The communication and marketing of the MOOCs occurred to be fragmented, partly done by the ACL project and partly by partners and third parties in various way. The fact that MOOCs seems mainly followed by participants from the country of origin of the MOOCs developers may well concur with this observation. The provision of data and information on course attendance is heavily dependent on the EPFL preventing MOOCs developers to follow up or take corrective measure in their communication on the MOOC.

A creation of a pool of learners or practitioners was not the objectives of the first phase and thus has not happened. Networking among course participants is dependent on the course functionalities and design. More interaction requires more complex design as well as moderation outside of the MOOCs.

EQ9. Are there other ways, tools, instruments, platforms and channels available that could potentially be more effective to share experiences and/or provide education to build capacities in the fields of urban development or others on the African continent? (outcome 1 + 2 + 3)

In addition to improvements mentioned in response to the earlier questions, a range of possibilities exist to further expand ACL activities. This is the essence of proposals that can bring the ACL project to a next level. On one side intensify online live sessions, targeted communication and feedback loop to ensure continuous validity of course content in the future. And on the other, to develop communication around case studies and examples of urban development in Africa (to show case success and failure), to extend courses with modules for policy and decision makers, to open the ACL partnership to more academic and non-academic partners and to develop MOOCs and hybrid courses in collaboration with various African partners.

Efficiency

EQ10. How cost efficient the project has been in reaching its results?
EQ11. To what extent the project delivered the results in a timely manner?

Two and a half years was a very ambitious period to deliver the first phase of the project, and it is not surprising that extensions were requested. The project has experienced delays due to

urgency to be dealt with in early stages of the projects and the significant support to be provided to the development of the MOOCs. Those could have been partly saved, and adequate budget planned, if a thorough and inclusive initial assessment of needs and capacities would have been conducted. The approach of quick wins to show case capacity to deliver on EPFL have created a dynamic of work focusing on delivering MOOCs, leaving to in a marginal position stakeholders' engagement and networking, which in turn may also have cost efficiency effects (mutualising resources, learning from each other).

Another aspect that contributed to delays is the lack of preparedness to support partners in developing MOOCs. Indeed, an overview of the entire process and various guidelines to ensure availability of information at the right time for each partner and third party would have saved time. This support also the perception of a lack of strong leadership and management of the project.

EQ12. To what extent the management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation?

The implementation of the project is the responsibility of the EPFL. However, unclarity around the role of the EPFL (implementor or facilitator) and the lack of engagement of the local consultative bodies in supporting reflections, relaying information and communication have led to a complex situation, worsen by a high turnover of project managers. The BoD is rather a body for the EPFL to share information and push on the development of MOOCs than playing a steering role for the project. Overall, the project can rather be characterised by 'pilottage à vue' than guided by strategic and strong monitoring of information. The situation seems to have improved in the last months and thus provides promising prospects for the future, shall a multi-stakeholders approach be put in place for sustainable partnership.

Impact

EQ13. Can it be expected that the project and its platform contribute to urban development in Africa? If yes, how? If no, why not, i.e. what would need to be changed?

The ACL platform with MOOCs has a potential for impact on sustainable urban development, providing that key elements are integrated in a second phase of the project and beyond. As mentioned earlier, a platform with MOOCs represents a first step. Impact will be subject to the engagement with the platform thus requiring strong communication strategies and moderation are required. Community of practitioners and institutions will be an essential element for more outreach, learning and impact. This needs to be nurtured in a second phase.

EQ14. Is it realistic that the platform affects partners and practitioners, so they get active, implement learnings, and thus contribute to urban development?

It is realistic, however the impact on sustainable urban development hinges on continuous quality content of the platform and the MOOCs, the extension with relevant in-depth courses and modules for policy makers that meet needs and capacities of practitioners, local government, municipalities. A close consultation with those actors is essential.

Sustainability

EQ15. Which activities are likely to continue after this current project phase has ended independently of further SECO funding? If the SECO support phases out, is it likely that the platform continues to operate? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Sustainability of the ACL platform was not expected at the end of phase 1 and thus is not achieved so far. It is clear that the platform would gradually collapse if a second phase of the project is not funded as it requires maintenance, troubleshooting as well as some communication to promote courses and inform partners. However, a second phase should not only consider a sustainable model for the running cost of the platform but establish a sustainable structure for the ACL beyond a second phase.

EQ16. What measures are missing in the current phase or what measures would need to be realized in a potential second phase to positively affect sustainability of the activities?
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The sustainability of the ACL platform and its activities rely on a sustainable structure for the ACL, including the platform but not limited to it. It requires a network of institutions owning the ACL platform, the MOOCs and the advancing of skills development on urban development in Africa. See recommendation 5.

Annex 9: Assessment grid

This assessment grid is a mandatory annex to external evaluations (and internal assessments in the case of SECO) of SDC and SECO financed projects and programs (hereinafter referred to as an 'intervention'), be they commissioned by SDC, SECO or external partners. It is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria and guidance.²⁶ Its purpose is to help make results of evaluations more transparent and quantify them (transform the qualitative information in the evaluation reports into quantitative scores) in a standardized manner. This serves accountability purposes and helps for the aggregate reporting, steering and learning.

How to use this assessment grid:

- Evaluators should provide the filled assessment grid in **Word**.
- All *applicable* sub-criteria should be scored and a short explanation provided. If the evaluation ToRs explicitly exclude some DAC criteria, they should not be filled in the assessment grid. To guarantee coherence, it is advised to match each evaluation question in the ToRs to a sub-criterion in the assessment grid.
- The 20 sub-criteria shall not be modified, however additional sub-criteria may be added to reflect specific objectives and learning interests of the commissioner.
- If specific results are not yet measurable at the time of the assessment, it requires analysing the likelihood of achieving those results (in particular for the criteria effectiveness, impact and sustainability). Please mention this in the dedicated section (evaluability assessment on p. 2).
- There are hyperlinks on each evaluation criterion in the assessment grid, which lead to the OECD guidance on each specific criterion. The guidance also includes information on the interlinkages and differences between the DAC criteria.
- When applying a gender and climate lens, evaluators are expected to use the relevant guidance.²⁷
- To rate each sub-criterion, select your rating (0-4, kindly only use integers) in the column "score":

²⁶ Two guiding principles were set out by the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation alongside the definitions of the six criteria. These are:

- a. Principle One: The criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high-quality, useful evaluation.
- b. Principle Two: Use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation.

The OECD guidance [Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully](#) (2021) explains these principles and provides advice as well as examples for the use of the criteria.

²⁷ See for instance [Applying a Human Rights and Gender Equality Lens to the OECD Evaluation Criteria](#)

	Relevance / coherence / efficiency	Effectiveness	Impact	Sustainability
1= Highly satisfactory	There were no shortcomings in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency.	Objectives at outcome level were (or are likely to be) fully achieved or exceeded.	The intervention had (or is likely to have) a significant positive impact.	All of the intervention's benefits (will) last. <i>Note: for this rating, clear evidence is required (not only assumptions).</i>
2= Satisfactory	There were moderate shortcomings in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency.	Objectives at outcome level were (or are likely to be) largely achieved.	The intervention had (or is likely to have) an overall positive impact.	A majority of the intervention's benefits (will) last.
3= Unsatisfactory	There were important shortcomings in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency.	Objectives at outcome level were (or are likely to be) only partially achieved (at a rather low level). <i>Note: if outputs are achieved, but do not result in the expected outcomes, consider rating effectiveness as unsatisfactory.</i>	The intervention had (or is likely to have) no impact.	A minority of the intervention's benefits (will) last.
4= Highly unsatisfactory	There were very severe shortcomings in relation to the intervention's relevance/ coherence/ efficiency.	Objectives at outcome level were not achieved (or are unlikely to be achieved).	The intervention had (or is likely to have) an unexpected negative impact.	None of the intervention's benefits (will) last.
0= Not assessed	The criteria statement cannot be assessed. Please explain in the justifications section.			

Along with the assessment grid, please also fill in this table with data on the evaluation, on the evaluated intervention and on the evaluability of the intervention.

Evaluation data			
Title of the evaluation report	External evaluation of the African Cities Lab in urban development project		
Evaluation mandated by	SECO	Evaluation dates (start – end)	22.05.2024 to 17.09.2024
Evaluation carried out by: Name of lead evaluator (If relevant) Name of company	Magali Bernard, Niels Rump KEK – CDC	For external evaluations: Total evaluation budget (including all fees and costs) and currency	40'000 (including reserve) CHF
Has any member of the evaluation team been involved in the intervention?	No	If yes, how?	N/A
Evaluated intervention data			
Name of Project (including phase number)	African Cities Lab in urban development		
Project ID (if available) Datasheet Nr.:	UR_XXXXX-XX 10000XXXX	Dates of the evaluated phase (start – end)	01.11.2023 to 30.06.2024

Is it the final phase?	No	Total budget for the evaluated phase (incl. other donors); Approved SECO funding	CHF 3.32 mio SECO funding Contribution
Evaluability²⁸ assessment by evaluator			
To which extent do you consider that the intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion?	2 - reliable		
If applicable, please select the type of limitation(s) to the evaluation and provide a brief explanation <i>Note: when assessing evaluability also consider the representativeness and participation of specific stakeholders/groups involved in the evaluation as well as the influence of conflict/fragile context on the quality and validity of the data and access to target groups (if applicable)</i>	☐ Objectives are not adequately defined (e.g., weaknesses in intervention design, lack of baselines and targets) ☐ Results are not verifiable (e.g., too early to tell, lack of sufficiently robust data and evidence) ☒ Other limitation(s) Presented in the report under chapter 4.		

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
1 <u>Relevance</u>: Is the intervention doing the right things? Summary: The extent to which the intervention's objectives <u>and</u> design (at the time of design and at time of evaluation) respond to beneficiaries' and involved stakeholders' needs and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. <i>Note: Understanding gendered power dynamics and reflecting on the SDG commitment to "leave no one behind" are crucial in understanding relevance.</i>	<i>Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.</i>	Click here to enter text.

²⁸ See definition of evaluability in OECD (2023), Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management for Sustainable Development (Second edition), OECD Publishing, Paris <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/632da462-en-fr-es.pdf?expires=1690787009&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=ED10CC16AE8370653438B9C7A52688E0>

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
1.1 Responsiveness to needs, policies and priorities: the extent to which the objectives (at output, outcome and impact levels) of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries (target group), involved stakeholders (involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention) and, when relevant, to indirectly affected stakeholders (e.g., civil society, etc.). <i>Note: A particular emphasis should be placed on beneficiaries. If there are trade-offs, please describe them in the justification.</i>	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ1, Annex 8 of the report.
1.2 Sensitiveness and responsiveness to the context and capacities of the beneficiaries and involved stakeholders: the extent to which the context was considered in the design of the intervention (e.g., economic, environmental, equity, social, cultural, political economy and last but not least capacity considerations). <i>Note: Evaluators are encouraged to describe which contextual factors are most pertinent to the intervention.</i>	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ1, Annex 8 of the report.
1.3 Quality of design: the extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as objectives and their related indicators, logframe, theory of change including related assumptions, choice of services and intervention partners, exit strategy) reflect the needs and priorities of the target group, are appropriate, realistic, clearly defined, measurable and feasible (technical, organisational and financial feasibility). <i>Note: the exit strategy should be planned from the outset of the intervention to ensure the continuation of positive effects as intended, whilst allowing for changes in contextual conditions.</i>	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ1, Annex 8 of the report.
1.4 Adaptation over time: the extent to which the intervention has meaningfully adapted to changes over the course of its lifespan (e.g., evolving policy and economic contexts, change of funding, new opportunities, outbreaks of conflict or pandemic, etc.).	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ2 and EQ11, Annex 8 of the report.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
2 Coherence: How well does the intervention fit? Summary: The compatibility of the evaluated intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution, i.e., the extent to which other interventions (in particular policies) support or undermine the intervention and vice versa.	<i>Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.</i>	Click here to enter text.
2.1 Internal policy alignment: the extent to which the intervention aligns with the wider policy frameworks of the Swiss Development Cooperation, including the most recent Swiss international cooperation strategy overall and at country level, as well as to relevant international norms and standards to which Switzerland adheres (international law, international agreements, etc.).	1 - highly satisfactory	See response to EQ4, Annex 8 of the report.
2.2 Internal compatibility: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country/region and thematic field (consistency, complementarity, synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts, subsidiarity). <i>Note: if feasible, evaluators are encouraged to also take into account compatibility with the interventions of different levels / departments of the Swiss government in the same operating context (e.g.: development, diplomacy, trade, security, etc.)</i>	1 - highly satisfactory	See response to EQ4, Annexe 8 of the report.
2.3 External compatibility: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity, synergies, overlaps and gaps, value-added, use of existing systems and structures for implementing activities, harmonization, coordination, etc.).	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ5, Annexe 8 of the report.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
3 Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives? Summary: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.	<i>Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.</i>	Click here to enter text.
3.1 Achievement of objectives: The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs <u>and outcomes</u>) as originally planned (or as modified to cater for changes in the environment), including its transversal objectives (e.g., gender, climate) <i>Note: If some – but not all – of the objectives were achieved the evaluators will need to examine their relative importance to draw conclusions on the effectiveness.</i>	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ6, EQ7, EQ8, EQ9, Annex 8 of the report.
3.2 Unintended effects: The extent to which the intervention has responded adequately to the potential benefits/risks of the positive/negative unintended results.	2 - satisfactory	Some unintended positive results are presented in chapter 5
3.3 Differential results: the extent to which the intervention results (outcomes) were inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation.	0 - not determined	
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
4 Efficiency: How well are resources being used?	<i>Please do not write anything</i>	Click here to enter text.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
Summary: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.	<i>here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated.</i>	
4.1 Economic efficiency: The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (inputs □ outputs; inputs □ outcomes) in the most cost-efficient way possible (including allocation of resources between target groups and time periods; available options for purchasing inputs according to market conditions, etc.).	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ10 and EQ11, Annex 8 of the report.
4.2 Timeliness: The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (outputs, outcomes) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and the extent to which efforts were made to mitigate delays. <i>Note: in case timeliness was unsatisfactory for reasons outside of the intervention's control, the rating should still be unsatisfactory and explanation provided in the justification field.</i>	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ10 and EQ11, Annex 8 of the report.
4.3 Operational efficiency: The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.)	3 - unsatisfactory	See response to EQ12, Annex 8 of the report.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
5 Impact: What difference does the intervention make? Summary: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness	<i>Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic</i>	Click here to enter text.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
criterion. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment. <i>Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual impacts (i.e., already evident) and foreseeable impacts.</i>	<i>mean of sub-criteria.</i>	
5.1 Intended impacts: The extent to which the intended (planned and, where applicable, revised) 'higher-level effects' (i.e., lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention were (or are expected to be) achieved. <i>Note: also consider the extent to which the intervention contributed to “holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms” and transformational change (addressing root causes or systemic drivers of poverty, inequalities, exclusion and environmental damage).</i>	0 - not determined	Not assessed.
5.2 Contribution to intended impacts: The extent to which the intervention actually contributed (or is expected to contribute) to the intended higher-level effects. <i>Note: results of contribution analysis, etc.</i>	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ13 and EQ 14, Annex 8 of the report.
5.3 Unintended impacts: Has the intervention brought about (or is it expected to bring about) any unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results? If yes, to what extent have these higher-level effects been positive (or are likely to be positive)? <i>Note: consider here any kind of unintended effects such as escalating or deescalating effect on a conflict or context of fragility, effect on the legitimacy of the state or non-state actors, effect on the inclusion or exclusion of vulnerable groups, unintended pollution, etc. If there wasn't any noteworthy unintended impact (higher-level effect), mark this question as non-applicable (n/a) and do not give a rating.</i>	0 - not determined	Not assessed.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
5.4 Differential impact: the extent to which the intervention's intended and unintended higher-level results (impacts) were (or are expected to be) inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation. <i>Note: Keep in mind that positive impacts overall can hide significant negative distributional effects.</i>	0 - not determined	Not assessed
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
6 Sustainability: Will the benefits last? Summary: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue. Includes an examination of the enabling environment for sustainable development, i.e., financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analysis of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs. <i>Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual sustainability (i.e., the continuation of net benefits created by the intervention that are already evident) and prospective sustainability (i.e., the net benefits for key stakeholders that are likely to continue into the future)</i>	<i>Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.</i>	Click here to enter text.
6.1 Capacity and resilience development: The extent to which the beneficiaries and development partners have strengthened their capacities (at the individual, community, or institutional level), have the resilience to overcome future risks and external shocks that could jeopardise the intervention's results and have improved their ownership or political will.	2 - satisfactory	See response to EQ15 and EQ16, Annex 8 of the report.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification (Please provide a short explanation for your score or explain the reason why a criterion was not assessed)
6.2 Financial sustainability: The extent to which development partners have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g., increased national (and where applicable subnational) financial or budgetary commitments).	3 - unsatisfactory	See response to EQ15 and EQ16, Annex 8 of the report.
6.3 Contextual factors: The extent to which the context is conducive to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g., policy or strategy change; legislative reform; institutional reforms; governance reforms; increased accountability for public expenditures; improved processes for public consultation in development planning). <i>Note: It includes assessing the trade-offs associated between instant outcomes and potential longer-term effects as well as the trade-offs between financial, economic, social and environmental aspects.</i>	0 - not determined	Not assessed.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
7 General comments Summary: this section is only for free text (no score). The evaluator may provide an overall assessment of the evaluated intervention, explore and reflect on relationships and synergies between different criteria (this includes considering if and how they are causally related).		Click here to enter text.