



Fact Sheet

Evaluation of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy Central Asia 2012 – 2015

1. Evaluations at SDC

The Evaluation and Corporate Controlling Division is responsible for the execution of independent thematic and institutional evaluations, country and regional strategy evaluations with participation of peers and for drafting effectiveness and accountability reports.

2. Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation analyses Switzerland's cooperation with the Central Asia Region (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan) as defined in the related Swiss Cooperation Strategy (CS) 2012 - 2015. Switzerland's cooperation with Central Asia promotes peaceful social and economic transition, through projects that support public and private institutions to deliver better services equitably and effectively. Gender equality, conflict-sensitive program management, and governance are transversal themes. During the period 2012–2015, the overall Swiss Cooperation planned disbursements amount to approximately CHF 195.5 million.

The main objectives of the cooperation strategy evaluation are to assess the relevance and coherence of the Swiss development cooperation with regard to national development priorities and the Parliamentary Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation.

3. Methodology

The strategy evaluation is in line with SDC's evaluation policy and its related concept.

The evaluation report is structured according to the four Evaluation Areas (EA): EA1 Context analysis, EA2 Relevance and appropriateness of program portfolio, EA3 Implementation of the CS and its portfolio, and EA4 Results of the CS in relation to the results at the country level. The terms of references define 11 standard questions which are addressed in all cooperation strategy evaluations.

Additionally, the Embassies/Swiss Cooperation Offices and the Cooperation with Eastern Europe suggested priority questions related to the way out of fragility and poverty towards inclusive socio economic development.

4. Main Results of the Evaluation

EA1: Major geopolitical developments took place since the Central Asia Strategy was drafted. China has increasingly become a key economic and thus geopolitical transformer in Central Asia, challenging Russia's role while the role of the EU and the US noticeably reduced.

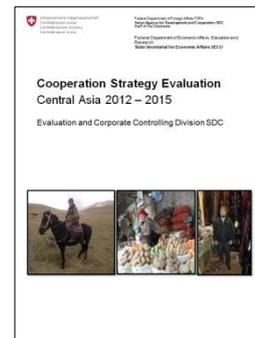
The recent economic growth in the Central Asian region proved to be not sustainable in view of its reliance on commodities, reinforced by the parallel decline of the also commodity based Russian economy — on which Central Asia is heavily dependent for remittances, investment and trade. Consequently, poverty has re-emerged in the region.

The thematic orientation of the CS and the respective national portfolios are highly relevant for "out of poverty out of fragility" approaches as potential entry points for inclusive policies.

EA2: Switzerland continues to be acknowledged throughout Central Asia as a long term committed and credible partner in key sectors as echoed in the five domains plus the regional water resources management programme.

There is a high degree of consistency between the projects and programme objectives and the results frameworks of the domains and a high level of coherence between the project outcomes and the respective domain objectives can be observed.

The three country portfolios are relevant with regard to the CS's overall goals and with respect to the context in the respective countries.



EA3: All three Swiss Cooperation Offices (SCOs) are operating well. CS monitoring is excellent and in place in all three SCOs, albeit to a varying degree of formalization.

With respect to human resources, the motivation and performance of the staff despite the challenging environment is excellent. It is crucial to maintain the highly skilled personnel constellation in the SCOs. Cooperation between SECO and SDC is operating remarkably on the field level.

The excellent management performance at the level of the national SCOs is in contrast to the limited efforts to integrate the activities of the three SCOs through a common regional agenda.

EA4: Major results have been achieved in all domains which were implemented at the national level. A number of approaches such as the Swap programme of the health domain in Kirgizstan have the potential to be scaled up in other sectors and in other national programmes. Also approaches such as the integration of activities in certain regions, for example the Rasht Valley in Tajikistan, a particularly fragile region, are exemplary.

The regional water resource programme was ambitious from the outset and has achieved limited results in a difficult context

5. Main Recommendations

The evaluation concludes with the following main recommendations:

The domains of the national programmes of the current regional strategy provide a sound base for the forthcoming CS.

The change of the donor landscape suggests a need to further increase efforts in donor coordination. It is recommended to seek proactively the dialogue with emerging new donors to share Swiss experiences and to identify win-win situations for joint activities.

Addressing the gender dimension of what has been recommended above deserves a special effort, but will contribute to broadening and deepening the results envisaged in the next strategy.

A stronger geographical focus, as exemplified in a fragile context in the Rasht Valley, should be applied to other countries.

It is suggested that lessons learnt during the current CS cycle in peace-building activities be more prominently addressed in the next strategy. It is also crucial that the Swiss efforts to-

wards the abolition of the death penalty and human rights dialogue in Central Asia continue.

The aspect of regional cooperation and support towards a further integration of the Central Asian region should be strengthened and - in view of Switzerland's role in the Bretton woods institutions - a more balanced approach between national and regional activities be pursued. The underlying concept of "think regionally and act nationally" should be expanded to "think regionally and act both regionally and nationally".

Efforts should be made to create a critical mass comprising the national water resource components of the regional water programmes, and related activities of the Global Programmes. Such a process could then also revert back to the original idea of addressing the water-energy nexus.

6. Implication for SDC

The Deputy head of the Department Cooperation with Eastern Europe and SECO's head of operations – Economic Development appreciate the evaluation process and report. In general all recommendations of the evaluation report will be addressed in the new Cooperation Strategy. Especially the identified weaknesses of the regional programme will be addressed in the new cooperation strategy.

The concerned operational units, under the lead of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Division, will be tasked to develop the new cooperation strategy taking into account agreed recommendations of the evaluation report.

7. Evaluation Team

Henry Wyes (external consultant) and the two peers Giancarlo de Picciotto (SDC) and Benjamin Frey (SECO) conducted the evaluation.

The evaluation has been published in the Swiss federal administration's database of external studies

(<https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentat ion/studies.html>).

The publication of the evaluation report is intended to account for SDC's activities and share experiences with other development actors.