



Skills Development Project – Phase IV

External Review

FINAL REPORT

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Chisinau/Tashkent, July 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- (1) The SDP was designed to capitalise on the success and achievements of three previous phases by replicating the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” approach to new occupations in the water sector and incorporate further training as a legitimate dimension of vocational education and training. The main SDP effort was to make training at vocational colleges more relevant to the requirements of employment in the water sector, increase the skills development component of vocational education and thus improve employability of graduates, encourage the participation of companies in planning and implementing training and examinations, and introduce modular training courses for adults at Regional Competence Centres.
- (2) The strategy pursued by four phases of SDP involved project activities to improve vocational education for students and modular skills development for adults on local and regional level, and to use the results and experiences gained through these pilots for the modernisation of the *national* system of vocational education. The project was planned and implemented jointly by the Centre of Secondary Specialised Vocational Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the service agency “Uzkommunkhizmat” and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Partner ministries and agencies, companies and VET providers have learnt how to contribute to a demand-driven VET by defining and enacting their roles and responsibilities in the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle. 33 vocational colleges and RCCs as well specialized training centres have been supported with new curricula, modular training materials and technical equipment. Centre for Vocational Education has received capacity development and office equipment.
- (3) The SDP Phase IV continued to significantly contribute to the VET reform in the country. Most innovations piloted on local and regional levels have been legally approved by Centre for Vocational Education, disseminated to other colleges in the system and are thus binding. On the national level, about 5 project products have been embedded into government decisions. A labour market needs analysis methodology and tools have been developed and applied in two water-related sectors, the package is now ready to be replicated to other sectors. Partnerships between enterprises and colleges are well established: skills demand has been mapped for 2018-2022, modular training packages jointly developed with employers, companies have become more open to provide internships and eager to participate in skills assessments boards. The entrepreneurship training program “Know about Business” was developed in cooperation with the Chamber and implemented by VCs and RCCs on a national scale. A unified information system to collect information on VET providers and beneficiaries was developed and is now populated with existing data.
- (4) The external project review was conducted on 14-21 June 2018. The review team found that the project design and strategy were meaningful appropriate to the tasks. The team also concluded that the project has achieved its objectives to a high degree. However, some drawbacks related to skill acquisition in water occupations and regarding the performance of Regional Competence Centres were observed. Considering that the current phase is extended until December 2018, it is recommended that the project:
 - Organizes one round of teacher training for VCs and RCCs staff on student-centred approach, experiential learning (learning by doing), characteristics of adult learning etc. to expose teacher and trainers of pilot institutions to modern teaching methods.
 - Ensures that sufficient copies of the modular manuals developed are available to all interested parties. Consider printing of more hard copies of selected manuals, particularly to supply students with learning materials.
 - Coordinates and monitors feeding of data into the unified VET information system as well as finds ways to incentivize the IT company to provide training in database operation and maintenance to assigned CVE staff.

- Facilitates the exchange between the “experienced” and “new” line ministries and agencies involved in VET on the roles and responsibilities they have to assume within the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle.
- (5) The review team deduced that the project ends in challenging times due to the new wave of VET reform. The project context faces a temporary difficult situation accounted by: many administrative changes at the same time; many donors entering VET with different perspectives and approaches, timeframes and budget; current lack of donor coordination from the government side. In this line of thought, the review experts would like to suggest that with little funds SDC could provide support to donor coordination and ensure sustainability of project results. Due to high visibility and recognition among national stakeholders and international partners, the Swiss could temporarily employ a **Technical Advisor** or even better, maintain a **mini-team** with specific tasks for a time-bound transition period to proliferate project achievements and facilitate donor coordination. The proposed timeframe for Swiss support is 1 year (2019). This period could be seen as a bridging year to close the gap between the new reform wave and other donors joining in. This way the sustainability of the project developments could be increased and inputs of other donors leveraged. The result of this transition period should be clear commitment from the government to take over donor coordination and guarantee perpetuation of the Swiss contribution.

Abbreviations / Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BC	British Council
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CSSVE	Centre for Secondary Specialised and Vocational Education
CVE	Centre for Vocational Education (former CSSVE)
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
LogFrame	Logical Framework
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoHCS	Ministry of Housing and Communal Services
MoELR	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDP	Skills Development Project
ProDoc	Project Document SDP
RCC	Regional Competence Centre
VC	Vocational College
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the External Review

Currently, the economy of Uzbekistan is rapidly transforming in line with ongoing reforms of all sectors and technological progress, which requires introduction of new professions due to novelty and complexity of work processes. Moreover, about 39% of the population are below 16 years old and over 60% of the population are less than 25 years old, making youth employment a real concern for society. The official unemployment rate for graduates from vocational colleges and higher education institutions fluctuates between 1.2% and 4%.

In this context, a coherent system of workforce training, advanced-training and job placement addressing the economic and demographic challenges is needed. However, the existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) system is poorly linked to the labour market and is unable to provide youth with the skills needed to meet market requirements in Uzbekistan. The labour market challenges mostly affect young people aged from 15 to 25 years old who struggle to complete the transition from VET institutions to actual employment. In this regard, it is important to introduce a demand-based educational system including the various types of training and ensuring the access to gainful employment and income.

Since 2004, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been supporting the development and implementation of labour-market relevant Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes in Uzbekistan. The first two Skills Development Projects (SDP 2004-2010) were acting at college level, focusing on the development of the cooperation models between colleges and enterprises and building up the capacities of colleges' management and teachers/masters for occupations in automation technology. In the third Phase of SDP, within the Water Management Skills Development Project (2011-2015), the successful approach of these projects was expanded and replicated for occupations in the water management sector. Under the leadership of the CSSVE, modern vocational pathways in the water sector relevant for the labour market were developed and implemented mainly at the level of vocational colleges and local offices of CSSVE.

Only within the SDP's fourth Phase, the project focused at national level and cooperated with the relevant key project partners: the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education with its CSSVE; the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection; the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services; and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Project Phase IV supports the further development of the VET system through the following:

- Cooperation of key Ministries and Agencies in the "Demand-Training-Job Placement" cycle for water-sector professions is improved
- The training framework for two professions of the drinking water supply sector is adopted and required specialists are trained both in the secondary specialized education system and the adult further education system.

1.2 Objectives of the External Review

The External Review had four main objectives, namely:

1. Review the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the SDP over the Phase IV (2015 – 2018).
2. Review the impact of the project over its whole lifecycle (2004 – 2018) and identify intended or unintended outcomes achieved.
3. Demonstrate the program's achievements, challenges and lessons learned including governance and gender.
4. Provide feedback on sustainability of project interventions and recommendations on the policy dialogue approach.

1.3 Methodology and Schedule of Activities

Prior to the start of the mission in Uzbekistan, the members of the review team studied the project documents. The field phase of the evaluation began on June 14th and ended June 21st 2018. A schedule of activities of the review is given in Annex 1.

During the review mission in Uzbekistan, the main approach was:

- Interviews with beneficiaries in Tashkent (college directors, teachers, entrepreneurs, relevant ministries' officials, representatives of SDC and other donors);
- Visits to 2 colleges in Samarkand region and interviews and group discussions with beneficiaries and local stakeholders.

On June 21st, the review team presented their findings and recommendations in a debriefing with the Swiss Ambassador and the national programme officer at Swiss Embassy.

2. Recent Changes in the Project Context

Currently, large-scale changes are reshaping VET in Uzbekistan. This is confirmed by several important presidential decrees and government decisions adopted only in the first half of 2018, namely:

- Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PD-5313 on January 25 "On Measures for the Basic Improvement of the System of General Secondary, Secondary Special and Vocational Education";
- Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PD-3504 on February 3 "On Measures for the Basic Improvement of the System of General Secondary, Secondary Special and Vocational Education";
- Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 391 on May 25 "On approval of the regulations of the Vocational Education Center of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan";
- Draft version of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to improve the system of vocational training and create a unified system for assessing the professional qualifications of employees" (under discussion).

These documents determine the general strategy for VET development in the coming years. Some of the major changes affecting the system are:

- Compulsory general secondary education will be implemented on the basis of a continuous and free 11-year cycle;
- Admission to vocational colleges will be carried out from among graduates of 11th grades of general education institutions on a voluntary basis with a period of study from 6 months to 2 years on a fee-contract basis (new formula is 11+2);
- Optimization of vocational colleges on two dimensions:
 - ✓ transfer of a number of vocational colleges to the line ministries and large enterprises;
 - ✓ creation of universal vocational colleges, specialized in training of personnel for the needs of small companies and private businesses.
- Transition to the training system based on professional / occupational standards, which will be developed taking into account employers' requirements;
- Development of a national system for skills assessment and certification.

In view of the above VET system changes, most of the project's activities and results maintain high relevance, such as:

- labour market needs analysis approach, methodology and tools;
- the practice of introducing new professions (in demand on the labour market) into vocational education and training;
- development of competence-based educational standards;
- development of modular curricula and training material;
- (re)training of adults in new professions and advanced training of sector specialists in the RCCs;
- mechanism for improving interaction of key ministries and agencies involved in the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle.

Moreover, these results will contribute to solving the most important tasks that VET system currently faces, such as development of occupational standards based on international benchmarks; development of modular curricula, adult training programs and training manuals reflecting latest trends and technologies; transformation of VCs into training providers that meet the needs for lifelong learning of adult population.

3. Project Rationale

Project design and approach are described in the Skills Development Project Document, Phase IV (ProDoc) and are further detailed in the LogFrame. The ProDoc is well structured, justified and aligned to national priorities and SDC support in Uzbekistan. It clearly describes the *Overall Goal*, *Outcomes* and *Outputs* to be achieved.

The project strategy focused on three intervention levels as described in the ProDoc:

- **macro level** (actors: CSSVE, Methodical Centre of the CSSVE, Ministry for Agriculture and Water Resources, “Uzkommunkhizmat” Agency, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection).
- **meso level** (actors: Regional branches of the CSSVE, regional employment bureaus, regional departments of Ministry for Agriculture and Water Resources and “Uzkommunkhizmat”, regional branches of the Chamber of Commerce, regional business associations).
- **micro level** (actors: VCs, RCCs, other training institutions and centres’ management, students, employed and unemployed adults, teachers and workshop instructors, water-sector institutions and companies and their managers and experts).

Project Phase IV was meant to contribute to further development of the VET system by introducing a systemic approach to cooperation among the key Ministries and Agencies responsible for the training, retraining and advanced training of specialists of the water sector.

Focus on new professions in the water sector provided the project with the opportunity to scale up the previously built good practices of standards, curricula, training material development for college education and related training modules for further education.

Another important characteristic of this intervention approach was close cooperation and identification of synergies with other donors active in VET and the water sector in Uzbekistan.

The review team acknowledges and appreciates the logical project design and strategy, and considers it meaningful and feasible.

4. Achievement of Overall Goal

Overall goal: The project contributes to the reform of the vocational educational sector in Uzbekistan through the development of synergies between educational process and labour market demands (ProDoc).

Three **indicators** to assess achievement of the overall goal are provided by the LogFrame:

- (1) Training courses for further education of specialists correspond to standards and curricula of College Vocational Education.

- (2) Increased percentage of employers satisfied with the performance of graduates of VCs and specialists further trained.
- (3) Increased percentage of college graduates work in the professions for which they received training.

Achievements:

Regarding indicator (1) the two new training packages developed and applied for further training of water practitioners in RCCs and specialized training centres of the Ministry of Communal Services and Ministry of Agriculture (former Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources) are



based on the curricula methodologies and standards jointly developed with CVE (previously CSSVE), piloted in colleges and institutionalized in the previous project phases. The review team's discussions with the project stakeholders revealed that they all appreciate the courses offered and that they plan to make further use of them. Therefore, the indicator has been fully achieved.

Achievement of indicators (2) and (3) can only be assessed after the graduation of the first batch of students from colleges and training centres, which is due

to take place June 2018, at the time of the current external review. However, there is great probability that these indicators will be achieved. Tracer studies to provide the required evidence should be conducted towards end of 2018. As regards specialists that upgraded their skills in the two newly introduced water professions, the employers' feedback is positive. They emphasize the effectiveness of the training courses: modern contents based on companies' skills needs and advanced equipment used for practical training.

Despite limitations in assessing the quantitative and qualitative achievements (data is only available for trained adults in terms of numbers and quality, for young graduates data still needs to be gathered – numbers are available, however tracer studies would show their employment rate and employers' feedback on skills) according to the indicators at this point, **there is no doubt that the project contributed significantly to the reforms of the VET sector.** All innovations introduced and piloted on local and regional levels were communicated to and shared with stakeholders on national level.

Besides these achievements planned in the ProDoc and realised so far, the project triggered and facilitated close cooperation and a new sense of partnership and ownership among the main project actors: CVE, MoHCS, MoA, MoELR, CCI, colleges and enterprises. This higher quality of inter-institutional communication and collaboration among the actors is appreciated by all major partners as being vital and lucrative.



5. Achievement of Project Outcomes

5.1 National cooperation platform on demand-driven VET in the water sector

OUTCOME 1: Improved cooperation of key Ministries and Agencies in the cycle "Demand-Training-Job Placement" for water-sector professions is in place (ProDoc).

Main achievements:

- A model of labour market needs analysis incl. methodology and tools was developed and piloted in the water sector. It was a pioneering exercise for Uzbekistan as it incorporated the labour market, VET and the beneficiaries' perspectives. It had demand and supply as standalone dimensions. It was a quantity and quality analysis that included various categories of citizens. The survey focused on both, VET colleges and

universities, in the water sector. Findings showed a considerable mismatch of demand and supply in the water sector professions and little training available for the new water occupations that involve advanced technologies. Presently, the model is being applied in the communal services sector.

- A stakeholder cooperation model for a centralized process under the leadership of the CVE was developed and endorsed by the decision makers. Due to the new approach to the Uzbek system, characterized by the shift to decentralization of the “Demand-Training-Job placement” process, the model is no longer relevant. Within the reorganised VET system, every line ministry is responsible for its own demand-supply matching and employment. However, the underlying principles of the model are still valid and pertinent, and can be effective if systematically applied, for which purpose an organised exchange of experiences of the line ministries is most necessary.
- A unified information system was developed to set up a national inventory of VET providers, graduates’ study history and employment record. Data is currently being fed in by regions. The system launch is envisaged for autumn 2018. A web page was created on the official websites of the CVE (www.markaz.uz) and the Information and Methodological Support Service (www.metodm.uz). By September, detailed information on the "Skills Development Project in Uzbekistan" will be available on these web pages, including the innovative results achieved by the project.

Issues:

- Training in operational issues and optimisation of the unified information system will exceed the project duration. The IT company in charge should be incentivized to hand over the database to the CVE and provide training in operation and maintenance of the appointed CVE staff.
- Taking into account the latest reform wave, the national conference on “Cooperation opportunities for the cycle ‘Demand-Training-Job Placement’ in all sectors of the Uzbek economy” as planned in the ProDoc, will have to focus on different contents than envisaged. It can only be held if the line ministries and the CVE have already gained some experience in their new role within the decentralised process. The project postponed the conference to October 2018 the earliest.

5.2 Training for skills needs of companies in the water sector

OUTCOME 2: The training framework for two professions of the drinking water sector is adopted and required specialists are trained both in the secondary specialized education system and the adult further education system (ProDoc).

Main achievements:

- 2 new water professions - *technician-technologist for operation of public water supply utilities* and *technician for hydrological processes and pumping station* - have been introduced in the National Classifier of Occupations; educational standards and curricula were developed, approved and piloted in colleges. Moreover, internship was introduced in the 1st year of study and internship time in the 2nd and 3rd years was increased. Also, company-based internship became more structured and accountable with the development and implementation of “Internship Diaries” for students.
- 10 modular training programs (instead of six envisaged in the ProDoc) for further education in the above-mentioned occupations were jointly developed with the Educational and Methodological Centre, "Kommunalukuv", approved by the MoHCS and



implemented with 6,700 adults so far both in the RCCs and in specialized training centres of the line ministries.

- The entrepreneurship training modules "Know about Business" developed by the ILO for the educational process in vocational colleges and for adult education were taken up by the project. SDP adapted these training modules to the national educational standards in cooperation with the CCI experts and the CVE. The package was translated into Russian and Uzbek. Both versions were approved by the CVE and recommended for implementation in vocational colleges and further training courses in RCCs. The Chamber kicked off and coordinated the large scale implementation of "Know about Business". So far, 9,000 people have been trained and the number will be doubled in the next 6 months.

- 33 Regional Competence Centres have become operational based on the joint resolution of the line ministries "On Organizing of Professional Development Courses for



Water Management Specialists at Vocational Colleges". This resolution called for implementation of tasks in promoting the system of advanced training and training of specialists in the water sector. College-based RCCs established in the previous project phase and the specialized training centre of the Tashkent Irrigation and Melioration Institute, carried out advanced training courses for more than 6,000 technicians, heads of

water-consumer associations, hydraulic engineers, and operators of water-management facilities and engineers, on the basis of training modules developed by the project. The 5 newly-established RCCs in Phase IV carried out short-term courses on training, retraining and advanced training at the request of water companies, for temporarily unemployed people and for teachers and professional trainers of vocational colleges, the number of beneficiaries so far being about 1,000 persons.

A significant achievement of the project is that the Swiss colleges and RCCs are much better prepared to face the challenges related to the new interface of the VET system than other education providers.

Issues:

- Focus on teacher materials (modular curricula, handbooks), less on students' materials. Students receive a digital copy of the handbooks, very few teachers prepare paper handouts and students are back to traditional notetaking instead of dedicating time to questions & answers, groupwork, practicing.
- Focus on quality of contents, not so much on quality of teaching: the teaching/learning methods used both in VCs and RCCs are traditional (teacher training was in focus during project phase I but for some reasons lost priority in later phases). One-size-fits-all learning model is widely used; no groupwork or project work is given to the students. They also have limited access to equipment for cost reasons.
- Equipment procurement for the 5 Colleges/Regional Development Centres lasted longer than envisaged (first generations of graduates of the modular curricula and several batches of trained adults are out now and some equipment is still on the way).

One important dimension of measuring achievement of project outcomes is examining the monitoring and evaluation mechanism and its application results. The review team reached the conclusion that the monitoring and evaluation system of the project was structured adequately. The system included internal monitoring tools (questionnaires, companies' and VCs records, reports etc.) as well as an external monitoring and evaluation mechanism such as the Project

Steering Committee with high officials representing the main project partners that met on yearly basis to review project results and approve envisaged project activities.

Related to project efficiency, the review experts, having examined the project budget and the expenditures so far concluded that the intervention was cost-efficient in terms of resources invested and obtained revenue. The funds were distributed in a legitimate and balanced manner. Equal amounts were allocated and spent for equipment procurement and teacher training activities, which is rather impressive since modern water equipment is very costly. Moreover, if considering the overall soft component (teacher training, development and printing of materials, stakeholder coordination platform, unified information system), it prevails by far the hard component of the project in terms of funds (is almost double).



In terms of synergies with other donor agencies, the project has always been ready for open exchange regarding the approach and training packages developed with other initiatives active in VET. The modular learning materials were shared with KOICA to serve as model and be used for various job trainings at their regional training centres. The “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle and particularly, the modular training approach was thoroughly discussed with the British Council that has followed SDP approach in their project Skills for Tourism and plans to step into VET (following the same approach) with a more comprehensive project focusing on demand-driven training in four sectors: tourism, agriculture, energy and construction. This intervention very much emulates SDP structure and methodology:

- standards’ development
- resource materials (market research tools, competence-based modular curricula development etc.)
- capacity building (strengthening teacher training system)

which proves that the Swiss project serves as role model for initiatives in VET. Also, BC plans to start a new VET project in agriculture including water resources (as part of rural development portfolio) in which they will focus on 6 regions, at least 3 regions will be the same as SDP geographical areas of intervention (Tashkent, Sardarya, Samarkand). The project will build upon SDP results in these regions and most probably replicate the good practices to the remaining three regions.

Furthermore, SDP team provided comments to the concept note for the new EU VET project in agriculture (2020-2024) and connected the EU Delegation to the network of key players in VET. They intend to set up Service Centers in agriculture (based on colleges) – that are in some ways similar to RCCs – to provide various streams of services (initial training, further training, advisory role, knowledge sharing, exchange of experience among the farming community). The Swiss experience will be valuable in this regard to show what worked and what worked less in establishing this kind of multifunctional training centers.

The review team has also had a meeting with ADB representatives during the field mission and recommended them to meet with the SDP team as the bank is now conducting a skills survey among entrepreneurs and could make good use of the labour market survey methodology developed by the Swiss project. It is difficult to estimate to what extent the donor agencies focusing on VET and water sector will take over the SDP developments, but there is high probability that they do so, since ready-made functional models not only are in place but also they have been endorsed and institutionalized by the authorities.

6. Gender and Social Inclusion

The **gender aspect** was not highlighted as a cross-cutting issue in the ProDoc. It surfaced only when defining the need for training of VCs, RCC managers, teachers and trainers (“industrial training masters”) and planning the training process with consideration to the gender aspect

(more further education opportunities for women to be offered). Great value was added by the incorporation of the manual developed in the previous project phase “How to attract young women for water management professions and to support their specifics within the training process?” into the management and teaching staff training.

Furthermore, the review experts’ discussions with the project and partners revealed that concern for gender was always on the project implementation agenda. The project team made a general observation that the number of girls has increased in the drinking water sector in the past years, particularly during the third and current project phases. One significant reason for that is the Swiss contribution both in terms of modern water infrastructure as well as attractive and versatile demand-driven training offers. Women involvement in the water sector is stimulated by raising awareness of parents and potential girl students during Open Doors Days. VCs and RCCs are proud to present their modular training packages and advanced technical equipment.

The project applied a questionnaire on the college students to assess their motivation to pursue a career in the water sector. The gender-disaggregated results showed that girls are motivated / interested because they deal with modern equipment (70%), it is a clean job (90%), the work is important for the community (70%) and there is a greater chance for them to get into a management position (50%). The results showed that girls choose more often dispatcher jobs in the drinking water pumping stations, for instance, rather than jobs in the agriculture sector (irrigation) due to the hard working conditions they face in this sector.

A cross-cutting objective on **social inclusion** was not explicitly mentioned in the planning documents. However, the needs of disadvantaged groups are considered in the joint intervention of CCI-SDP on entrepreneurship training using the “Know about Business” program. This nationwide campaign of training entrepreneurs complements well the new presidential initiatives on youth employment measures and social inclusion measures. The first one deals with offering small grants for youth to start up businesses in rural areas in either agriculture or small service shops, car mechanics etc. The second one focuses on people with special needs that are offered solutions to become self-employed (given a sewing machine, a laptop etc. to work from home).

7. Success Factors of the Overall Project

The review team’s interviews with the main stakeholders and project partners revealed the key success factors of this intervention that can be summarized as follows:

- The four project phases organically evolved one from the other and were logically related, building on and strengthening previous developments.
- The overall project had a twofold approach blending bottom up and top-down strategies, starting with pilot institutions, moving on to regional then sector level and finally scaling up to the national level, both horizontally (covering two sectors: drinking water and irrigation) and vertically (embedding pilot results into legal framework).
- SDP was an initiative that started when the VET reform gained momentum, it managed to articulate the key issues of the labour market and VET in Uzbekistan and generated tangible results, progressing from quantity to quality.
- The project implementation strategy was highly flexible, taking into account the recent developments of the national context.
- National models incl. mechanisms and tools packages were developed, piloted, approved and mainstreamed to ensure functionality of the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle.
- The project was based on a balanced blend of the soft (modular training packages, legal framework) and hard (equipment) components.
- High emphasis on interconnectivity and networking between key players in employment and VET (employers, VET providers and government), supporting their functions and capacitating them to contribute to the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle.
- Adult/further training acknowledged as a priority dimension of skills development in the water sector and developed as a fully-fledged component of VET along with initial vocational education.

- SDP has fruitfully cooperated with SDC water infrastructure projects and provided capacity building to the Associations of Water Consumers (trainings in technical, legal and financial issues).
- SDP is considered a flagship project by the main donors in VET! (EU Delegation, BC, ADB). It is appreciated for the pragmatic and hands-on materials developed during the project lifecycle as well as for transparency, openness and sharing attitude. It has been described as an agent of change and catalyst of reform.
- The project developed in cooperation with the CCI a modern entrepreneurship course and related handbook “Know about Business” and implemented it with 9,000 persons so far, this being an endeavour of unprecedented scale and effectiveness, and also matching the recently-launched presidential program “An entrepreneur in every family”.
- Strong and stable implementation team: competent and culture-sensitive team leader, committed and professional national team members and experts.

8. Sustainability of Project Achievements

There is a good chance that the innovative practices introduced by the project at the macro, meso and micro levels are sustainable.

An effective economy is based on synergies between the demand and supply sides. An efficient VET system is one that bridges the two sides, creates linkages and generates shared gains. Partner ministries and agencies, companies and VET providers have learnt how to contribute to a demand-driven VET by understanding their roles and responsibilities in the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle and implementing them accordingly. Companies define their demand in terms of areas of interest, number of employers, skills required and forward the information to VET institutions; following, companies provide graduates with job placements because they defined the demand, contributed to content development and trust the outcome. VET providers develop curricula and learning materials based on employers’ requirements and do their best to offer practice-oriented training. Line ministries and agencies supervise the process and develop the needed legal framework for the communication and cooperation between the world of work and world of education to function.



A labour market needs analysis methodology and tools have been developed and applied in two water-related sectors, the package is now ready to be replicated to other sectors.

33 VCs and RCCs as well as specialized training centres have been supported with new curricula, modular training materials and technical equipment. They are now ready to assume ownership for the new demand-driven training

model, are sufficiently capacitated to carry on with this approach for the following years and rather immune to the ongoing systemic changes.

Partnerships between enterprises and colleges are well established: skills demand has been mapped for 2018-2022, companies are more open to provide internships and eagerly participate in skills assessments. Skills development for the water sector is now based on two dimensions: initial education and further training. Employers are more satisfied with employees’ skills after training, as they have provided their inputs to defining the types of skills needed. Moreover, as employers become more confident of the quality of training, they are open to consider covering the costs for upgrading their employees, thus making private sector contributions a new reality in VET.

Most innovations piloted on local and regional levels have been legally approved by CVE, disseminated to other colleges in the system and are thus binding. On the national level, about five project products have been embedded into strategic government decisions. This is highly convincing evidence that the project has reached its objectives and that its results will be maintained beyond SDC support.

The entrepreneurship training program “Know about Business” was developed in cooperation with the CCI and implemented by VCs and RCCs on a national scale. The merit of SDP was to involve a strong partner such as the CCI in proliferation of the modular training approach and rolling out a vast campaign of economic literacy.

The project has created and implemented a knowledge and experience transfer mechanism over time with the key partners in the process being the CVE, VCs and RCCs along with the national authorities and employers in the water sector. This mechanism is based on the rationale of the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle and has strong emphasis on coordination, sharing, learning from each other, joint growth and mutual benefits, the end result being quality assured VET and skilled labour force with higher chance of employability.

Whether the good collaboration of different line ministries and the CCI that emerged as part of project implementation can be maintained and further developed is difficult to predict, particularly now with the decentralized approach to VET. This multi-stakeholder partnership was strengthened continuously by the project over the years and there is a reduced chance that it diffuses when the project comes to an end. The key players in VET are now more mature and convinced of the multiple advantages of the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle. However, the risk remains that different ministries will have their own ideas and visions on how to operationalize VET, therefore coordination and capacity building of the new VET “owners” is highly needed. Conceptual support is needed with understanding and adequately adopting and upscaling project innovations to other priority sectors.



Moreover, CVE as key beneficiary is in need for more support and capacity development in modular methodologies, teacher training approaches, coordination and streamlining demand-driven training curricula as well as positioning themselves as service provider to the ministries currently involved in VET.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Recommendations for the remaining project time

The review team concludes that the project has achieved its planned outcomes to a high degree. However, the review team also found some drawbacks related to skill acquisition in the water occupations and regarding the performance of RCCs. Considering that the current phase has been extended until December 2018, it is recommended that the project:

- (1) Organizes one round of teacher training for VCs and RCCs staff on student-centred approach, experiential learning (learning by doing), characteristics of adult learning etc. to expose teacher and trainers of pilot institutions to modern teaching methods.
- (2) Ensures that sufficient copies of the modular manuals developed are available to all interested parties. Consider printing of more hard copies of selected manuals (black and white version, A5 format), particularly to supply students with learning materials (against small cost).

Furthermore, in the remaining project time, it is crucial that the project:

- (3) Coordinates and monitors feeding of data into the unified VET information system as well as finds ways to incentivize the IT company to provide training in database operation and maintenance to assigned CVE staff.
- (4) Facilitates the exchange between the “experienced” and “new” line ministries and agencies involved in VET on the roles and responsibilities they have to assume within the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle. A good way would be to organize one or two round table discussions to provide the main stakeholders with a suitable format to share best practices,

lessons learnt and help them conceptualize a new scenario on how to implement the “Demand-Training-Job Placement” cycle under in the new context of VET.

- (5) The current project phase is scheduled until end of 2018, i.e. at the time when graduates of the 3-year training programme (implemented in Phase IV) will look for employment. It is advisable to conduct a tracer study in autumn 2018 (provided that resources are available) in order to assess the qualitative dimension of training in terms of acquired skills (based on modular programs and advanced equipment available in VCs and RCCs), employment rate among graduates and industry feedback on their performance.

9.2 Recommendations for the future

The project ends in challenging times related to the new wave reform in VET. The project context faces a temporary difficult situation accounted by:

- Many administrative changes at the same time (reorganization of ministries, decentralization of VET) which makes it problematic to hand over the project developments and best practices on the macro level;
- Many donors entering VET with different perspectives and approaches, timeframes and budgets (British Council started a small-scale VET initiative in 2018; EU Delegation and Asian Development Bank are starting VET projects in 2020 etc.)
- Current lack of donor coordination from the government side (government has increased the number of ministries and is now fully focused on internal coordination and clarification of mandates, no attention is given to coordinate donor initiatives).

The review team would like to suggest that with little funds SDC could provide support to donor coordination and ensure sustainability of project results.

Due to high visibility and recognition among national stakeholders and international partners, the Swiss could temporarily employ a **Technical Advisor** to be based in CVE or even better, maintain a **mini-team** (1 international expert + 1 national expert) with specific tasks for a time-bound transition period to proliferate project achievements and facilitate donor coordination.

The proposed timeframe for Swiss support is 1 year (2019). This period could be seen as a bridging year to close the gap between the new reform wave and other donors joining in such as Asian Development Bank and EU Delegation. This way the sustainability of the project developments could be increased and inputs of other donors leveraged. The result of this transition period should be clear commitment from the government to take over donor coordination and guarantee perpetuation of the Swiss contribution.

The tasks of the mini-team would be the following:

1. Disseminate project results and streamline further developments in VET;
2. Capacitate the key VET ministries to coordinate vocational colleges;
3. Capacitate government to take the lead role in donor coordination;
4. Strengthen CVE capacity in the new set-up (with support from a pool of international experts; specialized in OS development, competence-based assessment etc.);
5. Leverage inputs of other donors;
6. Facilitate regional networking (if similar initiatives exist in neighboring countries).

This arrangement would be an optimal solution to cater for the new ministries involved in VET, empower CVE, strengthen project impact and support government to assume the lead role in donor coordination.

9.3 Potential areas of intervention

Even if aware that the SDC funding of the current project ends in 2018 with the finalization of Phase IV, the review team collected and summarized below the immediate development needs articulated by the main stakeholders during the interviews:

- Replication of good practices (labour market needs surveys, modular training packages) to other (related) sectors to sustain further VET reform;
- Development of a National Methodology for Occupational Standards Development and, based on it, development of Occupational Standards in the water sector, communal services, with possible expansion to other sectors;
- Capacity Development in modern teaching/learning methods, in competence-based assessment (methodology/procedures, tools, assessor training, database, legal framework, with possible involvement in developing a mechanism and legal base for Validation of Nonformal and Informal Learning in the context of lifelong learning that is now a megatrend in Uzbekistan etc.);
- Development of career counselling service and tools within the RCCs (even more relevant now that VCs are no longer a compulsory education stage and will introduce tuition fees);
- Support talented students from the Swiss colleges that come up with innovations (scholarships, facilitate their participation in international innovations events etc.), set up an innovation hub for the water sector, as water shortage is a big problem for Uzbekistan and in the coming years the focus will be on water-saving technologies.

Annex: Program for SDC External Review Field Mission (June 14-21, 2018)

Date	Time	Activity
Thursday, June 14	14:10	International Consultant's arrival to Tashkent
	15:00-17:00	Meeting with Dildora Abidjanova, National Program Coordinator, SDC
Friday, June 15	09:00 - 11:00	Meeting with SDP Team Leader and National Expert
	11:00 - 12:00	Meeting with representative of the British Council Mr. Shuhrat Amanov
	12:00- 13:00	Lunch
	13:30-18:00	Analysis of project documents
Saturday, June 16	09:00-13:00	Working with Project Team Leader and National Consultant
	13:00 -14:00	Lunch
	14:00-18:00	Working with National Consultant
Monday, June 18	09:00-13:00	Kick-off workshop with the SDP team / SWOT analysis: SDP team presents achievements, drawbacks, pending issues for project components
	13:00-14:00	Lunch
	14:30-16:00	Meeting at MICROS IT Company
	16:00-17:00	Meeting with ADB representatives
	17:00-18:00	Meeting with Chamber of Commerce with Mr. S. Babakulov, Head of International Department
Tuesday, June 19	10:00-11:00	Meeting with Mr. O. Saidazimov, Director of the Educational and Methodological Center of "Kommunalukuv" of the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services of the Republic of Uzbekistan
	12:00-13:00	Meeting with Mr. B. Alimukhamedov, Head of the sector for work with the ILO and international relations of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan
	13:00-14:00	Lunch
	14:30- 15:30	Meeting with Mr. Sh. Janikulov, head of the Coordination and Development Department of Educational Institutions of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan
	16:00- 17:00	Meeting with the representatives of the EU Delegation
Wednesday, June 20	08:00	Departure to Samarkand
	10:00 - 13:00	Visits the Samarkand Professional College of Hydro-amelioration and Computer Technology
	13:00- 14:00	Lunch
	14:00-16:00	Visits the Samarkand Bogishamol Professional Industrial College

Date	Time	Activity
Thursday, June 21	08:30-09:30	Departure to Tashkent from Samarkand
	11:00-12:00	Meeting with Mr. Kh.Kurbanov, Head of the Department for Attracting Investments and International Cooperation of the CVE
	14:30- 16:30	Discussion of preliminary results with members of the SDP-4 project office Internal outcome and analysis of results, preparation of preliminary results.
	16:00-17:00	Debriefing Swiss Embassy in Tashkent
Friday, June 22	07:15	International consultant's departure



Published by:

Prepared on behalf of:
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Internet:

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This report was produced by independent external experts.
It reflects only their opinion and assessment.

Chisinau/Tashkent, July 2018