

Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in National Policy Dialogue 2013 – 2020

Case Studies - Volume 3



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Abbreviations and acronyms

AA	Association Agreement	IFSP	Strengthening the Institutional Framework in the Water and Sanitation Sector in Moldova project
ADA	Austrian Development Agency		
ADB	African Development Bank		
ANSAF	Agriculture Non-State Actors Forum		
APASAN	Moldovan abbreviation for Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH)	IMS	International Media Support
AR	Annual Report	LED	Local Economic Development
BBC	The British Broadcasting Corporation	LGA	Local Government Authorities
BFC	The Basket Fund Committee	LMIC	Low Middle Income countries
CCHF	Comprehensive Council Health Plan	LSG	Local self-government
CCM	Party of the Revolution	MCT	Media Council of Tanzania
CHF	Swiss Francs	MENSANA	Mental Health Project
CHF	Swiss franc	MinRegion	(informal) Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine
CSO	Civil Society Organisation		
DAC	Development Assistance Committee		
DCF	Development Cooperation Framework	MoFP	Ministry of Finance and Planning
DHFF	District Health Financing Facility	MoH	Ministry of Health
DP	Development Partners	MoHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour, and Social Protection
DPG	Development Partners Group	MTEF	Medium term Expenditure framework
EPR	End of Phase Report	MTR	Mid-term Review
EQ	Evaluation Question	NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
EU	European Union	NGO	Non-Government Organisation
EUD	European Union Delegation	NHIF	National Health Insurance Fund
FCS	Foundation for Civil Society	NPO	National Programme Officer
GAVI	The Vaccine Alliance	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
GBV	Gender Based Violence		
GD	Government Directive		
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
GNI	Gross National Income	P4H	The Global Network for Health Financing and Social Health Protection
GOT	Government of Tanzania	PCCB	Prevention and Combatting of Corruption Bureau
HBF	Health Basket Fund	PD	Policy Dialogue
HBFC	Health Basket Fund Committee	PF	Policy Forum
HOC	Head Of Cooperation	PHC	Primary Health Care
HOM	Head of Mission	PORALG	President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government Tanzania
HPSS	Health Promotion and System Strengthening		
IDP	Internally displaced person		

RLGSP	Regional and Local Governance Strengthening Programme	U-LEAD	Ukraine – Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme (a multi-donor programme of the EU, Germany, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia and Slovenia)
RM	Republic of Moldova		
SAM	Social Accountability Monitoring		
SAP	Social Accountability Programme		
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office – Swiss cooperation team	UN	United Nations
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals	UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
SWA	Sector Wide Approach	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
TA	Technical Assistance	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
TAPAS	Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Services (USAID/UKaid project)	WASH WB WHO	Water, Sanitation and Health World Bank World Health Organisation
TMF	Tanzania Media Fund		

Country case study Burkina Faso

1 Introduction

1.1 Context – political, economic, main development challenges

Political context

An October 2014 popular, mainly youth-driven, uprising removed then President Blaise Compaore from 27 years in power, thus preventing constitutional changes that would have allowed for an extension of his mandate.¹ The uprising was caused by, and left, a challenging legacy of corruption, impunity, mismanagement and inequalities, youth unemployment² and lack of access to resources. In combination with regional factors (such as the rise in transnational terrorism affecting Northern Burkina Faso), these challenges, which the government of Roch Marc Christian Kabore was unable to decisively address in the immediate aftermath of the 2014 uprising, have become the drivers for fragility in Burkina Faso.³ Trust in government remains low, and in the past couple of years, the security situation in the country has considerably deteriorated, as seen in the increase of militant groups and jihadist terrorist attacks,⁴ leading to mass internal displacement,⁵ and, as a consequence, a significant humanitarian crisis.⁶ SDC's 2020 Annual Report describes an "intensifying spiral of violence which caused (in 2020) the death of over 4000 people and the forced displacement of over a million Burkinabes." This led, in January 2022, to the overthrow of the government, and the installation of a military regime.

Economy

Exacerbating an already volatile situation, Covid-19 had a tangible impact in a country that is dominated by an informal economy, with a considerable share of poor daily wage earners who were hard hit by the 2020 lockdown measures (which further increased the populations' distrust in the government),⁷ such as the closure of markets for several weeks. The World Bank projected economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa to decline to -2.1 to -5.1% in 2020.⁸ And other inequalities were further exacerbated by the pandemic, as schools, in many areas already stretched beyond limit as a result of an influx of internally displaced children, closed, leaving tens of thousands of children out of school for a protracted period of time.⁹

Burkina Faso is a low-income country and, with a GDP per capita of 831 USD (in 2020), remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Key development challenges are related

¹ The uprising rang in a short period of optimism for a more democratic trajectory not only for Burkina Faso, but across the region. See, for example [What's Next For Burkina Faso?](#) Council for Foreign Relations, November 2014.

² In 2014, according to [World Bank data](#), youth (15-24 year olds) unemployment stood at around 8.6%; in 2019 (the last available data), this figure was at 7.64.

³ "...Burkina's insecurity today is also a direct result of the rot at the core of state institutions that was enabled by Compaoré's style of rule." In Gavin, Michelle: [The Roots of Burkina Faso's Crisis](#). Council for Foreign Relations, 9 November 2019.

⁴ For example, a suspected Islamist terror attack in June 2021 claimed 160 civilian lives in a village in Northern Burkina Faso; the attack had been preceded by several others. See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-57368536>

⁵ A [July 2021 statement by the UNHCR](#) cited official data from the Burkinabe government, which put the number of internally displaced persons at 1.3 Million. The report also provided data on increasing numbers of Burkinabe refugees in neighbouring countries.

⁶ An estimated 3 Million Burkinabes are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance (SDC 2020 Annual Report).

⁷ Campbell, John: [The Confluence of Conflict, Corruption, and Coronavirus in Burkina Faso](#), Council for Foreign Relations, 16 April 2020

⁸ World Bank "[Africa's Pulse: Assessing the economic impact of Covid-19 and policy responses in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)", April 2020, Volume 21 and [World Bank data overview Burkina Faso](#).

⁹ Relief web citing Norwegian Refugee Council, [Covid-19 and conflict forced over 12 million children from school across Africa's Central Sahel region](#); 19 October 2020.

to consistent population growth (which stood at 2.8% in 2020),¹⁰ which further increases vulnerabilities such as food security (in turn influenced by climate change); public services (education and health); and already limited employment opportunities in an economy dominated by low-productivity agriculture (employing 80% of the country's workforce) and scarcity of natural resources and a weak industrial base.¹¹

1.2 SDC in country Burkina Faso

SDC has been present in Burkina Faso since 1974. The evaluation covers two Country Strategy periods, 2013 – 2016 and [2017-2020](#). Over the two strategy periods, there has broadly been continuity in terms of the areas for Swiss support, though food security has become an important thematic addition in 2013. The 2017-2020 strategy set out SDC support in three domains: Governance and Democracy (with a priority on support to decentralisation); Primary Education and Vocational Training; and Local Economic Development (with a focus on rural areas). Governance, conflict sensitivity, and gender have been cross-cutting themes throughout the portfolio. SECO has been providing macro-economic support through direct budget support, and which the Strategy recognised as an entry point to policy dialogue. The annual financial envelope for SDC and SECO in the 2017-2020 period was ca. 28 million CHF, or 19 million CHF and 9 million CHF, respectively. In the 2021-2025 strategy period, the overall financial envelope remains broadly the same, with 2.5 million CHF per year allocated to humanitarian aid.

Burkina Faso also participated, in the period covered by the evaluation, in a number of Regional Programmes: the Regional Rural Economic Development Programme; the Regional Programme for Primary Education and Vocational Education; the Regional Governance Programme. Burkina Faso also participated in Global Programmes (such as the Global Programme for Migration and Development; the Global Food Security Programme; the Global Water Programme; and the Global Climate Change Programme), although their importance has decreased over the past few years.

The 2017-2020 Strategy already reflected an increased need to frame SDC's support in the context of growing fragility; this focus has come out even sharper in the current, [2021-2025 Country Strategy](#), which emphasises the “triple nexus” of development, peace, and humanitarian actors and actions in Burkina Faso. SECO direct budget support is projected to be phased out by the end of the ongoing strategy period.

Years	Goal for the cooperation strategy	Focus (% of the total budget)
2013-2016	To support the development of a solidary democracy based on respect of citizens and social justice, and which is an active player that is internationally recognised and respected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary education and vocational training – 5.5 MCHF • Rural development and food security – 4.5 MCHF • Institutional reform, decentralisation, local administration and citizen participation – 6.5 MCHF • Macro-economic management (public finance management) - 9 MCHF (SECO)
2017-2020	Support to sustainable development, in particular for vulnerable populations so that they can improve their living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and democracy – 21.8 MCHF (35%) • Primary education and vocational training – 19.7 MCHF (25%)

¹⁰ According to World Bank data, the population of Burkina Faso has increased four-fold between 1960 (4.8M) and 2019 (20.3M). See World Bank Country Data Burkina Faso at <https://data.worldbank.org/country/BF>.

¹¹ World Bank Country Data Burkina Faso at <https://data.worldbank.org/country/BF>

	<p>conditions thanks to quality education, local economic opportunities, good governance, and capable institutions. Women, men, and in particular young people are able to exercise their democratic rights, to assume their civic obligations and in this way, contribute to the creation of an enabling, inclusive environment conducive to growth, the prevention of violent extremism, and socio-economic development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local economic development – 25.8 MCHF (32%) • Macro-economic support – 33 MCHF (this amount is accounted for separately from the SDC budget)
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1.3 Environment for Policy Dialogue

While a considerable part of the assistance is being implemented by non-state actors (Swiss; international; and national Burkinabe organisations), consecutive strategies have highlighted the alignment with Burkinabe national strategies and policies, as well as the need for policy dialogue with state stakeholders in order to achieve systemic change at sectoral level. Stakeholders have pointed out that while there is no shortage of sectoral policies and strategies, the challenges are typically at the level of implementation, as well as the coherence of these policies over time.

A number of multi-lateral organisations (UN system); multi-lateral (EU) and bi-lateral donors (AFD, Danida, GIZ, Japan, Luxemburg, and others) and financial institutions (World Bank, African Development Bank, others) are present in Burkina Faso. Among the bi-lateral donors, Switzerland is the sixth largest one. In principle, donor coordination mechanisms exist at sector level, including in the Swiss domains/priority themes, and where Switzerland has been rotating as lead donor on decentralisation, education and rural economic development over the period covered by the evaluation. In practice, stakeholders have reported that coordination is not always smooth. The highest level of donor coordination (the “Troika”) aims to coordinate and represent the position of the technical and financial partners; and to organise the political and strategic dialogue between the government and the partners; however, it is struggling to fulfil this role. Also, responses vary among donors regarding the freezing of payments of tranches into pooled funds in those cases where irregularities in the spending have been uncovered by state auditors.

Other aspects in the country context that have an impact on the context for policy dialogue

There is no Swiss Embassy in Burkina Faso; the country is covered by the embassy in Cote d’Ivoire. This poses specific challenges in terms of access to high-level governmental stakeholders, and where a more formal, political presence could be useful as a door-opener. The status and level of accreditation of the head of cooperation is not senior enough to gain access to high-level donor coordination mechanisms, which take place at ambassador level. However, Switzerland has access to high-level donor coordination where it is co-chairing sectoral donor coordination groups, however. Another aspect appears to be resource constraints to work through regional organisations and structures more effectively, such as the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). Over the period covered by the evaluation, a key feature has been the gradual descent of the country into fragility, and which has posed specific challenges to policy dialogue with the government, in particular at national level, but also at the regional and local levels, and where stakeholders report a decreasing presence of the state, making it difficult to conduct political or policy dialogue.

1.4 In-depth case studies

Switzerland has a long track record of supporting decentralisation in Burkina Faso, and which could be said to be the overarching thematic umbrella for most of the assistance portfolio, as many sectorial programmes work in support of strengthening decentralisation reforms, for example in the area of rural economic development and education. The case study is extrapolating some key examples of successful policy dialogue.

2 Summary of findings

2.1 Outcomes

There have been numerous results highlighted by reports and stakeholders of policy dialogues across the various domains.

Fiscal decentralisation

Swiss policy dialogue has contributed to the inclusion, in the Mining Code, of a contribution of 1% of mining companies' revenues to the budgets of the local communities in which the operations take place. Switzerland has supported decentralisation in Burkina Faso for several decades. Interventions have been multidimensional, including the empowerment and development of local actors in the three geographic pilot regions. Fiscal decentralisation has been one vector of support and an opportunity was identified by Switzerland and other development partners in the early 2010s, to support local revenues through the reform of the 2003 Mining Code that was under review at the time. SDC engaged in policy dialogue directly with the government, as well as through facilitating multiple government-civil society dialogue platforms, to include a provision in the revised law that would see substantial income from extraction licenses to citizens in the locations where mining takes place. The inclusion of such a provision in the 2015 version of the Mining Code was a considerable success—although one that was considerably leveraged by the complementarity of instruments, and specifically, the macroeconomic budget support, where it was a disbursement indicator for the variable tranche (see also below). However, there is a persistent problem with implementation, as at present, companies do not pay up. Once implementation happens, the local communities would see an unprecedented rise in income, as revenue would be a multi-fold of the resources currently available for social services etc.

Education

Through its participation in the multi-donor fund for education (CAST), Switzerland influenced national policy-making to improve access to and quality of primary formal and non-formal/alternative education as well as overall financial management of resources in the education sector. This includes the support to the elaboration of a national strategy for non-formal education, as well as a pledge to support its implementation upon the strategy's adoption; the World Bank, too, has pledged support. Swiss policy dialogue has resulted in the introduction of minimum quality standards for providers of non-formal educational offers (requirement of providers to have certain educational qualifications etc.). The fund provides a continuous, structured framework for donors to influence government policy making, through frequent, regular meetings in sub-thematic working groups chaired in rotation by various donors; these meetings include the discussion of the results of audit reports and priority setting. It ensures that the funds directly benefit students. The format also serves as a course correction when the government suggests expenditure that contradicts the spirit of the fund. For example, according to stakeholders, the government has in recent years started to prioritise the paying of civil servants' salaries from the CAST, something that is not in line with the objectives of the fund. Also, the government has suggested the procurement of infrastructure from the CAST, something that eventually was renegotiated in policy dialogue, as development partners were

concerned that buildings might not comply with safety standards and pose a risk to students. It was argued that the funds are better spent elsewhere to directly benefit students, and that school infrastructure should be specifically commissioned so as to comply with health and safety standards.

In 2017, Switzerland was timely in highlighting the need to respond to a deterioration in the security context and the anticipated impact of this on primary education. As a result, UNICEF, along with other donors (Danida, Norad, Japan) pledged funding for the programme “Education in an Emergency Context”, targeting primarily border regions; this programme continues to exist and is supported by a Technical Secretariat of the government of Burkina Faso. UNICEF is piloting approaches to make schools more resilient to crises. National stakeholders whose capacities had been built in previous phases of support (see previous paragraph) are now empowered to participate in policy dialogue and implementation of actions in the context of the humanitarian fund.

At the interface between education, decentralisation and rural development, Switzerland, together with other development partners, was able to influence policies with regards to school canteens (see also following paragraph on Investment Code). A requirement exists, since 2012, for pre-schools and schools to provide at least one nutritionally balanced meal in the school canteen. Many local communities receive government subsidies, however, in many places, these subsidies are insufficient, and prone to corruption, and tend not to favour local producers and markets. Policy dialogue supported by Switzerland and other development actors resulted in a national strategy to support local supply chains for produce for school canteens and a greater role of local communities in running them.

Rural Development

Swiss support facilitated dialogue around the 2018 Code on Agro-Pastoral Investments and helped to reconcile and reflect stakeholder interests in this sector. Swiss policy dialogue contributed to the adoption of law which reflects the interests of family farms and decentralised communities. Provisions include the tax exemption for importing agricultural equipment. The Code also foresees stimulation of public procurement of produce from local producers, thus stimulating the local economy.

As a result of Swiss policy dialogue engagement, including concerns around food security, animal food is now included in the national food reserve. In its role of chair of the rural development donor coordination group, Switzerland was able to raise the importance of animal food to ensure livestock breeding and to prevent food security crises and famines. Animal food had not been part of the national food reserve until 2017 but is now part of it.

2.2 Factors

Switzerland is a long-term development partner in Burkina Faso, with support in all domains using consistently a multi-level approach, which results in evidence from the ground that feeds into policy dialogue at the national level. In particular in the areas of support to decentralisation and education, Switzerland is looking back at several decades of support in three geographical regions. This long-term support has generated a credible track record of evidence from pilot activities that are being used as the basis to inform policy dialogue at local, regional and central levels.

Continuity has been one of Switzerland’s key characteristics as a development partner in Burkina Faso. Regardless of political regime changes, Switzerland operated under the “staying engaged” principle. This has reinforced Switzerland’s legitimacy vis-à-vis and gained the confidence of the authorities and population.

Swiss support has been consistent in supporting domestic actors, including at the local level. Switzerland has created a network of national partner organisations that are able to conduct advocacy and policy dialogue at various levels. Switzerland facilitates domestic actors' participation in policy dialogues but is careful not to assume their role. For example, in the education field, Switzerland has supported the growth of several indigenous NGOs that have become leading advocates in the reform of the non-formal education sector, and whose experiences have facilitated the inclusion of non-formal educational approaches in national policy discussions, including the need for a national non-formal education policy. The pursuance of a national strategy for non-formal education is a direct reflection of the experience gained on the ground with piloting models of non-formal education and the importance of these in advancing literacy levels. Other examples include the empowerment of farmers' associations in the policy dialogue around the 2018 Code on Agro-Pastoral Investments (see below).

The network of non-governmental partners has allowed Switzerland to mobilise and facilitate their participation in national-level policy dialogue. This was the case, for example, in the discussions around the 2015 Mining Code, where NGOs that had been supported by Switzerland, participated in protracted government-civil society dialogue processes to demand that local communities benefit from extraction licenses. As the ensuing legal provisions remain, thus far, largely unimplemented, these civil society organisations continue to be involved in urging the government to insist that companies comply with the law.

The complementarity of modalities provided good entry points for policy dialogue. Switzerland contributes to a multi-donor pooled fund on education and is providing macro-economic support through SECO. Both modalities could be leveraged in policy dialogues.

The Swiss ability to engage in policy dialogue is more limited than that of other development partners. Due to the hierarchical nature of donor-government dialogue in Burkina Faso, an accreditation of the head of cooperation at Chargé d'Affaires level would be beneficial to gain access to senior government decision-makers/officials as well as to high-level donor coordination mechanisms involving the government. Currently, the SCO has only limited access to these high-level for a, with a knock-on effect on the Swiss ability to influence policy dialogue.

Policy dialogue—and consensus-building—as part of donor coordination has proven crucial to maintain focus on aid money reaching the most vulnerable. Stakeholders reported a tendency, over the past years, of the government to spend funds from the multi-donor central education fund on civil servants' salaries instead on educational expenses for school-aged children. Donor coordination and joined up dialogue with the government has been able to push back on these developments.

Direct budgetary support through SECO has been an important instrument to leverage policy dialogue. Even though the Swiss share of direct budget support to the government is relatively small compared with that of other donors, it has proven an important entry and leverage point for policy dialogue in Burkina Faso, complementing the SDC portfolio of assistance. For example, in 2015, disbursement was put on hold due to delays in the work to revise the Mining Code (see above); once this restarted, the tranche was released. The SCO considers that this instrument should not be discontinued; while an extension until 2025 has been negotiated with SECO, an agreement on longer-term continuation has not been reached.

2.3 Lessons learned

The resources needed to successfully engage in and maintain policy dialogue are considerable. As in other contexts, staff is engaged in formal policy dialogue, including such conducted as part of international development partners' coordination with governmental institutions, as well as informal policy dialogue, conducted as part of long-standing professional relations with individuals in the institutions. Stakeholders suggest that this engagement takes up around 40% of their working time.

The time horizon for successful policy dialogue can be significant. Examples of successful policy reforms (Mining Code) point to multi-annual efforts to negotiate consensus and eventually, anchorage and ownership of legislation and reforms. Even where ostensibly, policy dialogue led to faster results, the ground for these have been prepared in regional cooperation contexts and policy dialogues conducted there, for example ECOWAS.

Integrating fragility into policy dialogue with the government requires sensitivity and nimbleness in approaches. Stakeholders suggested that it has been a challenge to have the government consistently acknowledge how the different vectors of fragility affect sectorial policies, and how these have to be incorporated into policy approaches, planning, and responses. However, Swiss policy dialogue with the government was able to take into account the potential wide-ranging implications thematising fragility. For example, in terms of public opinion and perception, it could have been highly detrimental to publicly suggest a food security crisis or famine. However, Swiss policy dialogue in the rural development domain was instrumental in integrating food security concerns into its discussion with the government, and livestock feed has, as a result, been included in the national food reserve.

While Switzerland has contributed to shaping sectorial policies, stakeholders point out that the subsequent implementation of these policies does not always meet expectations. For example, while the adoption of the Code Minier with provisions to benefit local communities was a success, it remains unimplemented. Similar is the case with policies affecting the education sector.

Programming over a timeframe of 12 to 15 years and the consistent involvement of stakeholders at the local level works in favour of sustainable change. This approach favours the development of know-how as well as behavioural change, including that of local authorities vis-à-vis citizens, and creates a level of ownership of reforms by key stakeholders who, in turn, can then bring their weight to bear on national-level policies. Experience from the local level then also informs Swiss policy at the national level.

2.4 Peers

The interviews did not include such with peers. However, some anecdotal insight has been gained, as follows.

Switzerland pursues consensus-building with a group of like-minded donors, and in particular Danida, GIZ, and Luxemburg were mentioned in this context. These donors share a common priority agenda framed by the SDGs. Other donors have a more focused policy agenda (f.e. security and migration, etc.) There is also an acknowledgement that donor approaches differ significantly in the country, and that bigger players have relatively greater influence due to bigger financial envelopes as well as easier access to high-level donor coordination platforms.

Switzerland opts, where possible, for soft pressure with the government where other donors might take more drastic steps. As an example, the response to audit reports was mentioned by stakeholders. Where other development partners might opt for the freezing of payments, Switzerland will choose to pursue a parallel track—insisting on ineligible

expenditures to be reimbursed to the pooled fund, while continuing operations the suspension of which would, eventually, have a negative impact on the prime beneficiaries.

Annex 1 Findings across the evaluation questions

Findings pr. EQ and indicator each finding indicating which indicator (I) the finding is linked to and source (S).

EQ1: Results

<p>EQ1: What were the outcomes and impacts (positive and negative) from policy dialogues as a tool to achieve Swiss development goals?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Evidence of positive outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, enhanced understanding of policy issues and other outcomes 1.2 Evidence of negative outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, and enhanced understanding of policy issues, and other unwanted outcomes 1.3 Evidence of the extent to which national policy dialogue contributed to the success/failure of SDC's programme and project objectives 1.4 Evidence that positive changes resulting from policy dialogues led to systemic changes and can be considered sustainable 1.5 The extent to which the national dialogue actors/agents are capacitated to carry out policy dialogues and own the process 1.6 Evidence of impacts from the changes induced by policy dialogue
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Decentralisation/fiscal decentralisation

Swiss policy dialogue has contributed to the inclusion, in the Mining Code, of a contribution of 1% of mining companies' revenues to the budgets of the local communities in which the operations take place. This was a multi-annual, long-term effort. While the changes at the level of legislation are very significant, implementation is lagging, but would result in multi-fold rise in financial resources at the local community level, providing considerably more resources to finance the decentralised communities. I.e., it would be a very significant contribution to make decentralisation more sustainable, as communities would be in a much better position to finance those services that have been devolved to them. There is considerable potential for significant impact once implementation is ensured. Should those revenues materialise at the local level, then there could be challenges in terms of absorption capacity of funds, given that they outstrip anything that communities have received in the past by some considerable margin (i.1.1, i. 1.3, i. 1.6) (S: interview with JAAB)

SDC facilitated policy dialogue between national actors, through mobilisation of those partners that it had supported through its decentralisation programme and encouraged them to participate in advocacy efforts, such as roundtables etc. SDC encouraged the government to include these stakeholders but left the stage to national actors (government and civil society) who then, through an iterative process, agreed on the changes. It can be said that the national civil society partners had gone through SDC empowerment and capacity-building, and which then enabled them to play this advocacy role well. (i. 1.3, i. 1.5) (S: interview with JAAB)

National policy dialogue was strategically accompanied by leverage that could be used through direct budget support. Switzerland suggested at the level of its informal policy dialogue, for example with members of parliament, that it would consider withholding payment. (i. 1.3) (S: interview with JAAB)

Education

Switzerland has a long track-record of support to education, which includes a consistent bottom-up and top-down approach. Thematically, the support focussed on strengthening primary formal and non-formal educational approaches.

Switzerland provided long-term support to national civil society organisations (Tin Tua, la FDC, ASIBA, Andal and Pinal and others) at the sub-national/local levels in the geographic pilot regions, which, as a result, have built up their capacity, reputation, and voice to participate in national policy dialogue processes. They have established themselves as key players on educational reform policy dialogues (*i.1.5*) (S: interview with PC; Capitalisation Exercise Education Sector, 2021)

Evidence generated through piloting different types of educational approaches on the ground fed back into policy dialogue at the national level, including policy dialogue happening as part of Switzerland's contribution to CAST, the multi-donor fund for education. Results include, but are not limited to: raising the level of awareness of the BF government to anchor non-formal education in a national strategy (a protracted process that dates back to the 2010s) and a pledge from the World Bank to support the financing of the strategy once adopted; the introduction of a modicum of regulation in the provision of non-formal educational offers (providers need to be able to proof minimum educational qualifications/degrees etc.) (*i. 1.1*) (S: interview with PC; Capitalisation Exercise Education Sector, 2021)

Evidence and policy solutions and approaches were facilitated through the CAST, which provides central level budget support for primary and formal and non-formal education as part of a structured, regular dialogue with the government around education priorities. (*i. 1.1*) (S: interview with PC; Capitalisation Exercise Education Sector, 2021)

Examples of successful policy dialogue to which Switzerland contributed is the inclusion of children and adolescents outside of schools into the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education and Alphasisation, which, as a result, opened centres for adolescents that offer educational opportunities for those outside the school system. (*i. 1.1*) (S: Annual Report 2018)

CAST also serves as a corrective to government policy-making where these went counter to priorities agreed between the government and donors. For example, the government suggested to use leftover (?) funds to procure physical infrastructure (buildings) for educational purposes (providing school premises). Donors challenged the government in the framework of CAST, insisting that adherence to health and safety standards could not be guaranteed and that funding should go to benefit students directly. (*i. 1.1*) (S: interview with PC)

Fragility aspects have featured continuously and consistently in policy dialogue around education. Switzerland took a leading role in its dialogue with the government and other donors to address the potential impact of militant conflict on affected regions, as well as pre-empting and reacting to forced displacement as a result of conflict. Reportedly, on Swiss insistence, UNICEF, in 2017, committed to addressing these concerns in a programme "Education in an Emergency Context". Other, bilateral, donors followed (Denmark, Norway, Japan). This is a programme that continues to exist, and it is also supported by a Technical Secretariat inside the BF government. Measures are aimed at making schools more resilient to crises (including digital approaches), something that has also been important in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Annual Report 2018 cites that due to the programme, 875.000 school children were able to remain in education, of which 400.000 girls, these interventions have had an impact on school attendance as well as a general

level of preparedness of responding to crises (*i. 1.1, 1.4, 1.6*) (S: interview with PC; Annual Report 2018)

Switzerland continues to be active in policy dialogue and support to education in the context of crisis/conflict. The SCO reports active involvement in UN OCHA's humanitarian fund for Burkina Faso. The civil society organisations supported through previous support in the education sector (see above) have become active stakeholders in the policy dialogue and are also implementing responses (*i. 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6*) (S: interview with IP and PC)

While not solely attributable to Switzerland, there has been a Swiss contribution to the policies around school canteens. This is a long-standing issue that is also related to school attendance (a full meal at school can be a further incentive for parents to send children to school). Schools are obliged, since 2012, to provide one fully balanced meal a day, but it has been a challenge to implement this obligation, due to a combination of factors. A considerable percentage of schools receives state subsidies to purchase produce, but subsidies are insufficient and/or lost to corruption. Local producers and markets are not favoured, thereby missing out on opportunities for supporting local economic players. Policy dialogue in which Switzerland participated contributed to a national strategy to support local supply chains and that empowers local communities to run school canteens. (*i. 1.1, 1.4*) (S: interview with PC, Annual Reports 2017 and 2018)

Rural development

Switzerland has been involved in the changes to the 2018 Code on Agro-Pastoral Investments. Swiss policy dialogue contributed to the adoption of law which reflects the interests of family farms and decentralised communities. Provisions include the tax exemption for importing agricultural equipment. The Code also foresees stimulation of public procurement (for example the procurement of produce for school canteens) of produce from local producers, thus stimulating the local economy. (*i.1.1, 1.5, 1.6*) (Source: interview with AG and SS; Annual Report 2018)

An important result of Swiss-led policy dialogue was the inclusion of animal food in the national food reserve. Switzerland successfully raised the issue of animal food in order to prevent food security crises and famines. The lack of animal food can exacerbate and escalate food shortages, and Switzerland advocated for an inclusion of animal food in the food reserve, which did not, until 2017, include it. This has potentially a great impact on preventing food security crises and famines (*i. 1.1, 1.4., 1.6*)

EQ2: Factors/practices

<p>EQ2: What are the factors/practices that supported/hindered outcomes from policy dialogues?</p>	<p>Indicators: <u>Context-related</u> 2.1 The extent to which <u>national policy dialogue aims and content</u> were well grounded in the context and relevant for the partner in pursuing development priorities as well as relevant from the point of view of Swiss development policy goals and SDC's programme and project objectives 2.2 The extent to which the <u>national policy dialogue processes</u> were well grounded in the context and building on understanding of context, including timing and choice of partners 2.3 The extent to which internationally agreed goals e.g., SDGs, conventions, humanitarian principles enabled national policy dialogues <u>Actor related</u> 2.4 The extent to which policy dialogues with multilateral institutions (globally and nationally) and in the context of global programmes were coherent and supported SDC policy goals at the national level</p>
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	<p>2.5 The extent to which SDC working with other development partners in developing joint policy messages and conducting joint policy dialogues enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of policy dialogues</p> <p>2.6 The extent to which working with national partner country actors, including other than the government, supported national policy dialogue outcomes</p> <p><u>Internal capacity-related</u></p> <p>2.7 The extent to which Swiss ways of working, including long-term partnerships, broker, and bridge builder, is a high value asset and door-opener for Swiss engagement in policy dialogue</p> <p>2.8 The extent to which knowledge and Swiss comparative advantages and domestic expertise supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p> <p>2.9 The extent to which Swiss political dialogue with partner countries supported outcomes of SDC policy dialogues and projects/programmes</p> <p>2.10 The extent to which SDC's policy dialogue activities were systematically and sufficiently coordinated internally (including SDC HQ and SCO) and with other Swiss government counterparts (WOGA), as well as non-Government entities where relevant</p> <p>2.11 The extent to which SDC's procedures (including for preparation and development of strategies for policy dialogues) and modalities were value-for-money and conducive to implementing policy dialogues</p> <p>2.12 The extent to which SDC staff guidance, staff training and capacities supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p>
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Stakeholders highlighted that their capacity for the SCO to engage in meaningful policy dialogue was limited by a) resource constraints due to staff limitations in comparison to the relative size of the programme and b) by the lack of an embassy in Ougadougou which could engage both in political dialogue to open up and to support opportunities for policy dialogue as well as policy dialogue coordination with other donors. (*i. 2.7; 2.9; 2.10*)

There is a consistent and clearly recognisable multi-level approach to programming across all domains. Support is provided through domestic actors on the ground at the level of geographic focus areas, which is then successfully used in policy dialogue at meso and macro-levels. (*i. 2.2*)

This approach means that the evidence (pilot initiatives etc.) put forward are anchored in the local contexts and which strengthens their persuasive power at central policy-making levels. The pursuance of a national strategy for non-formal education is a direct reflection of the experience gained on the ground with piloting models of non-formal education and the importance of these in advancing literacy levels. (*i. 2.1, 2.2*), (Source: interviews with SCO staff)

The BF context is conducive to policy dialogue formats. "Ours is a society that traditionally favours dialogue. We have a societal culture of dialogue and consensus-building on which we can build." (*i. 2.1, 2.2*) (Source: AB, AG, SS interviews)

At the same time, SCO stakeholders report that the quality of policy dialogue has perceptibly changed, and that there was decreasing willingness of the government to engage. (*i. 2.1*)

There has been consistent, long-term support to domestic actors, resulting in established, strong networks of partners at all levels of interventions. This is particularly visible in the area of decentralisation and education, which has supported and empowered actors that can now step up to conduct policy dialogue at national levels. Examples include NGO advocacy and involvement in policy dialogue around the Mining Code, and the role of Swiss-supported educational NGOs in the humanitarian response (*i. 2.6*) (Source: interviews with SCO; Annual Report 2015; Capitalisation Exercise Education Sector, 2021)

SECO direct budgetary support has been an important complement to SDC assistance, as has SDC's participation in CAST. Both modalities have allowed for leveraging policy results that might otherwise not have been possible. For example, disbursement was leveraged in 2014 in connection with the Mining Code and where there was reluctance, in the parliament, to adjust the Code to include benefits for the communities in which extraction is taking place. When work on the Code restarted in 2015, the payment tranche was released. Conversely, the discontinuation, in 2025, of direct budget support is anticipated to weaken Swiss policy dialogue potential, as an important instrument for leverage/conditionality will disappear (*i. 2.10*) (Source: interviews with SCO staff; Annual Report 2015)

The SCO does not have the same level of access to policy dialogue as other donors have. There is a variety of donor coordinator platforms with the government, but Switzerland cannot access the highest level as its head of office is not accredited at ambassador level. This results in limited access to government decision makers and the possibility to influence policy directions that are agreed on during Troika meetings for example. Switzerland is therefore not as strong a player as they could be based on their continuity, experience, commitment, and consistency in sectoral support. (*i. 2.11*) (Source: interviews with SCO staff, Annual Report 2018)

Donor coordination remains an important vehicle to influence policies. Switzerland is able to shape policy dialogue, including at the senior level, when it is in the role of co-chair of sectoral working groups, as the co-chairmanship provides this top-level access. Assuming the co-chair role (as has been the case throughout the evaluation period, f.e. in 2016 and 2017 Switzerland chaired the education sectoral donor coordination group, and in 2018 the one on decentralisation etc.) might therefore be of comparatively greater importance than in BF than in other settings. (*i. 2.11*) (S: Annual Reports)

Switzerland acknowledges differences among donors in BF, and that there are donors that have greater leverage than others, including because of a greater financial envelope. It also acknowledges that it has advantages stemming from its impartial role (compared, for example, with France, or the US). (*i. 2.11*)

Switzerland is, despite these differences, committed to policy dialogue among donors. Stakeholders reported a tendency, over the past years, of the government to spend funds from the multi-donor central education fund on civil servants' salaries instead on educational expenses for school-aged children. Donor coordination and joined up dialogue with the government has been able to push back on these developments. (*i. 2.11*) (Source: Interviews with SCO staff)

EQ3: Lessons learned

<p>EQ3: What are the lessons learned and how where they applied?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>3.1 The extent to which SDC identified lessons and best practices in policy dialogues with regards to processes and reaching outcomes</p> <p>3.2 The extent to which SDC applied such lessons in its policy dialogue activities across the organisation and shared knowledge with other government agencies engaged in policy dialogue activities</p>
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As in other contexts, staff is engaged in formal policy dialogue, including such conducted as part of international development partners' coordination with governmental institutions, as well as informal policy dialogue, conducted as part of long-standing professional relations with individuals in the institutions. Stakeholders suggest that this engagement takes up around 40% of their working time, given that attending meetings with stakeholders was just one point of engagement, but that there was a considerable workload attached to preparation and follow-up to policy dialogue meetings. They also suggested that the

increased importance attributed to policy dialogue represents a perceptible shift in the way things are done and that policy dialogue required specific skills that need to be developed. (i. 3.1, 3.2) (Source: interviews with SCO staff)

Many of the results identified come from protracted, multi-annual engagement around policy issues. This includes the work on the Mining Code, the Agro-Pastoral Investment Code, educational policies etc. Stakeholders have suggested that deep and thorough multi-stakeholder dialogue increases ownership of reforms and is at the core of democratic processes (i. 3.1) (Source: interviews with SCO staff, Annual Report 2018)

Even where ostensibly, policy dialogue led to faster results, the ground for these have been prepared in regional cooperation contexts and policy dialogues conducted there, for example ECOWAS in the area of preparedness for educational crises etc. (i. 3.1)

Stakeholders suggested that it has been a challenge to have the government consistently acknowledge how the different vectors of fragility affect sectorial policies, and how these have to be incorporated into policy approaches, planning, and responses. However, Swiss policy dialogue with the government was able to take into account the potential wide-ranging implications thematising fragility. For example, in terms of public opinion and perception, it could have been highly detrimental to publicly suggest a food security crisis or famine. However, Swiss policy dialogue in the rural development domain was instrumental in integrating food security concerns into its discussion with the government, and livestock feed has, as a result, been included in the national food reserve. (i. 3.1, 3.2) (Source: interviews with SCO staff)

EQ4: Peers

<p>EQ4: What are the experiences of peers in conducting national policy dialogues, and are there lessons to be learned?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>4.1 Evidence of good practices in policy dialogue from other donors that can inspire SDC practices</p> <p>4.2 The extent to which policy dialogue processes and outcomes of other development partners' efforts contributed to SDC ways of conducting policy dialogue</p> <p>4.3 The extent to which the Swiss approach to policy dialogues was more effective/less effective than peers'</p> <p>4.4 The extent to which SDC collaborated with others in exchanging knowledge on good/bad practices and developing existing practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of policy dialogues</p>
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The interviews did not include such with peers. However, some anecdotal insight has been gained, as follows.

Switzerland pursues consensus-building with a group of like-minded donors, and in particular Danida, GIZ, Norway and Luxemburg were mentioned in this context. There is also an acknowledgement that donor approaches differ significantly in the country, and that bigger players have relatively greater influence due to bigger financial envelopes as well as easier access to high-level donor coordination platforms. (i. 4.2, 4.4) (Source: interviews with SCO staff)

Switzerland opts, where possible, for soft pressure with the government where other donors might take more drastic steps. As an example, the response to audit reports was mentioned by stakeholders. Where other development partners might opt for the freezing of payments, Switzerland will choose to pursue a parallel track—insisting on ineligible expenditures to be reimbursed to the pooled fund, while continuing operations the suspension of which would, eventually, have a negative impact on the prime beneficiaries. Examples here included funding through CAST. (i. 4.2, 4.4) (Source: interviews with SCO staff).

Country case study Moldova

1 Introduction

1.1 Context – Political, economic, main development challenges

Political context

The political context informing Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) in Moldova is reflected in the three consecutive Country Cooperation Strategies that fall into the time scope covered by this evaluation (2010-2013; 2014-2019; 2018-2021). The country has experienced high political volatility, with an oscillation between so-called pro-EU/Western and pro-Russian leaning forces throughout this period and which resulted in frequent changes in government. In 2014, a large-scale fraud led to the disappearance of around 1 billion US Dollars (an estimated 15% of Moldova's GDP) from three major banks, leading to further hardship among wide sectors of the population through a decrease in already low living standards. Politicians from a pro-European party coalition were implicated in the scandal, thus compromising the credibility of any European agenda, and paving the way for pro-Russian narratives and political orientation. Corruption and organised crime have been staple features since Moldova's independence from the Soviet Union, and Moldova has been implicated in large-scale money laundering schemes. Moldova has an Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union (EU) since 2014. An estimated 25% to 30% of Moldovans hold Romanian, i.e., EU citizenship, enabling them to benefit from freedom of movement and labour in the EU; in 2020, an estimated 27% of the population worked abroad. The conflict over Transnistria remains unresolved and continues to provide conflict potential, as well as a safe haven for different illegal or informal activities. After a constitutional crisis in 2019 and subsequent elections, Moldova is currently governed by a pro-European government, and a president and prime minister with a long pro-European record.

Economy

The period covered by the evaluation has seen steady economic growth until the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a contraction of -3.1% in 2020; for 2021, the economy was predicted to grow by 4%. Moldova is the poorest country in Europe, and its economy is largely depending on remittances from economic outmigration (facilitated, in great part, by the above-mentioned Romanian citizenship of a large part of the population). According to [UNDP](#) and [IOM](#), the pandemic led to a decline in remittances, which, according to the [World Bank](#), made up around 16% of Moldovan GDP prior to the pandemic, and which led to an increase of the dependency on social assistance and pensions. A [2020 World Bank estimate](#) puts around 23% of the Moldovan population as living in poverty. The new pro-European government has raised hopes that it will embark on structural reforms, including on tackling corruption and organised criminal schemes (money laundering).

1.2 SDC in Moldova

Switzerland has had a cooperation programme with Moldova since 2000 and describes its engagement as being based on “solidarity” and as a contribution “to enhancing security and stability in Europe”. The cooperation was initially focused on humanitarian assistance for the disadvantaged, and the rehabilitation of social institutions. From 2005, SDC supported long-term programmes and projects in particular in the fields of water and sanitation, and health, where it is the biggest bi-lateral donor.

Table 1: Goals and focus of Swiss strategic cooperation in Moldova

Years	Goal for the cooperation strategy	Focus (%of totalt budget)
2010-2013	To support the Republic of Moldova in its objectives to guarantee to all its citizens equal access to quality infrastructure and services in the health and water sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health 13 MCHF – 50% • Water 7.8 MCHF – 35%
2014-2019	To support the Republic of Moldova in its transition process by ensuring equitable access to good quality public services and improved institutional capacities with a special focus on the health and water sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health 25.82 MCHF – 47% • Water and Sanitation 18.66 MCHF – 34% • Migration 6.3 MCHF – 12%
2018-2021	To enhance the well-being of the Moldovan population and the cohesion of Moldovan society, with a special focus on the inclusion of excluded groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Governance 17.9 MCHF – 38% • Health 15.4 MCHF – 33% • Economic Development & Employment 12.1 MCHF – 26%

1.3 Environment for Policy Dialogue

The environment for policy dialogue in Moldova has been affected by political and institutional instability (see above) characterising the evaluation period throughout. From 2017 until 2020 alone there have been 7 changes of government. For both the water and sanitation, and the health domain, the institutions in charge underwent various restructurings and division, as well as subsequent remerging of responsibilities. This has affected the policy dialogue conditions in the water and sanitation domain, while the health domain, despite frequent upheaval at the ministerial level—four Ministers of Health since 2017—retained relative stability at the technical level, and where SDC has developed long-term working relations with counterparts. As a result of low remuneration and a perceived lack of career prospects due to political instability, policy dialogue in Moldova is also characterised by a brain drain of experts and specialists from state institutions into international cooperation and assistance projects, leaving a low capacity for policy dialogue in the institutions themselves, and much of the policy dialogue is being conducted by staff of external technical assistance providers substituting for the lack of capacity and skills in the state institutions.

Donor coordination has varied across the evaluation period and domains/sectors. It has been, and remains weak in the water and sanitation area, and where Switzerland was for most of the period the visible lead donor—a role that ended with the strategic decision to exit the water sector and the closure, after phase 1, of its Strengthening the Institutional Framework in the Water and Sanitation Sector (IFSP) project. Donor coordination was further weakened by the transfer from the State Chancellery to the Ministry of Finance of the overall lead on donor coordination in Moldova, without the necessary capacity or preconditions to effectively assume such a role, as well as the above-described parting and re-merging of the institutions in charge of the water sector (water and sanitation and water resource management). Donor coordination functions better in the health sector, where regular meetings are chaired by the WHO (as part of the SDC governance project). International donors meet among themselves on a regular basis.

1.4 In-depth case studies

For Moldova, in coordination with the SDC cooperation team in Moldova, the water and health sectors—domains with a very considerable track record of Swiss assistance—were chosen to be considered in depth.

2 Summary of Findings

2.1 Outcomes

Although some policy dialogue results were achieved in water, overall, the results were disappointing. The projects supported by SDC have left a series of projects implemented at the local level that have built local capacity, and that potentially serve as a demonstration of appropriate design and alternative management models. A compendium of options and solutions has been developed and widely disseminated. Some systemic results were achieved, for example in Law 303, which does allow for a degree of recognition on a case-by-case basis for local-level management of water services. A notable result in advancing domestic policy dialogue was the support provided to the Congress of Local Public Administrations of Moldova, which is now the first structure in Moldova that provides demand-based assistance and capacity-building for small operators and Local Public Administrations. However, systemic change in the approach to investment decisions such as choice of technology and regionalisation of service operators in the water sector has not, yet, occurred. Partly as a result, SDC decided to pull out from direct support to the sector to, instead, deepen ownership at the centre through a nationally implemented project on the Strengthening the Institutional Framework in the Water and Sanitation Sector (IFSP). The policy aims of this project to create systemic change also fell short of expectations. Support has not, yet, succeeded in establishing a sustainable source of finance for the river basin management organisations – although there are some cases of municipalities providing skeleton budgets which, although insufficient, is encouraging.

The results achieved in the support of policy reform in the health sector in Moldova are considerable. Projects have consistently adopted an approach of working, on the one hand, at the legislative, regulatory, and normative levels to assist Moldova in achieving systemic reforms it has committed to as part of existing national health policies. On the other hand, SDC supported the roll-out of the implementation of reforms through technical and other assistance at the local and regional levels. For example, the ongoing project on mental health, MENSANA, has provided policy dialogue in support of the National Mental Health Action Plan, as well as a comprehensive package of capacity building and trainings across Moldovan stakeholders and institutions in charge of implementing these reforms. Policy dialogue at the systemic level and technical assistance at the local levels have also resulted in the Mental Health Centres now being part of the state budget, and thus, having secured the sustainability of the project, including policy dialogue, results. The Healthy Generation project, a ten-year effort across all 35 districts of Moldova (the separatist Transnistrian region not included), too, has resulted in the financial sustainability of 41 Youth Friendly Health Centres. After generating evidence of the usefulness of their services and resulting policy dialogue on financial models between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance, these centres are now being funded by the National Health Insurance.

Evidence provided by SDC has informed policies at central as well as at regional and local levels. For example, Swiss support to the WHO is credited as being influential in the design and adoption of key legislation on the use of tobacco; salt and sugar; and alcohol use. Expertise provided in these areas formed part of policy dialogue between the donor community, led by WHO and the Moldovan government, as well as the parliamentary committee on Health, Social Protection, and Family, which was instrumental in facilitating the passage of this legislation. A Swiss-mandated project on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD), Healthy Life, working at local and regional levels incorporates actions on the

implementation of this new legislation, and, in turn, feeds evidence back to WHO, the Ministry of Health, and the parliamentary committee that can inform necessary further policy reforms.

Not all topics pursued in health sector policy dialogues have resulted in change. For example, while SDC, along with other donors, such as the World Bank, have stressed in the dialogue with national counterparts, for many years, the need for hospital reform—a dense, yet severely underfunded and thus, financially unsustainable, network of facilities left over from the Soviet Union for a population size that has halved, since—such a reform has not, yet, been tackled, as it is considered politically too sensitive, given the amount of expected local backlash. And the Swiss-funded Healthy Generation project, implemented by a local NGO in collaboration UNICEF, has worked on making education on sexual and reproductive health and rights a compulsory part of the educational curriculum for all secondary school age students in Moldova; however, thus far, this goal has not been achieved and the policy dialogue by these actors and SDC, despite evidence generated by the project (on decreased teenage pregnancy rates etc.), has not resulted in systemic changes, owing to entrenched political agendas in the Ministry of Education and considerable resistance from the Orthodox church. Both issues point to the long-term nature of policy issues and the need to persevere until windows of opportunity might open to advance these policy changes. With respect to hospital reform, several community and district level projects, such as the Healthy Life project, work on paving the way for a decreased demand on hospitals (through the promotion of healthy lifestyle and disease prevention); while some way in the future, this should provide additional evidence for the consolidation of the hospital sector.

Swiss policy dialogue combined with technical assistance has advanced the existing domestic reform framework on topics that might otherwise not have made progress towards implementation. For example, while a Moldovan policy framework on mental health has existed for almost 15 years, no resources were available to implement reforms. There is considerable stigma surrounding mental health issues, but the MENSANA project, by conducting policy dialogue on the local and regional levels and in cooperation and coordination with other Swiss-funded projects (Healthy Life, and Healthy Generation), and by participating in policy dialogue with other actors at the national level (including WHO and the Parliamentary Committee on Health, Social Protection, and the Family), has improved the situation of people with mental health issues.

The practice of Swiss policy dialogue in the health sector, while not explicitly referring to this framework, follows a human rights-based approach, involving duty bearers (Ministry of Health and other line ministries; the relevant parliamentary committee; the donor community) and rights-holders (service users, students/young people, patients etc.). SDC is credited with empowering and capacitating local organisations to conduct policy dialogue at local, regional, and national levels, thereby strengthening indigenous actors to engage in policy dialogue without outside intervention. Crucially, the approach enables ownership of reforms by those who will be tasked with implementing them on the ground.

2.2 Factors

The policy influencing tool was instrumental in leading to a more strategic and systematic approach, at SCO level and across domains and implementers to policy dialogue. The health sector portfolio historically pursued policy dialogue as an integral part of its projects and therefore, whilst still useful for most involved in this sector, the tool did not bring as many new insights as it did for the water sector. The policy influencing tool requires a more explicit, thought-through approach to policy dialogue.

The tool has raised demands on the implementers and the SCO. On the one hand, the SCO has raised the bar in terms of what the SCO requires from its implementing partners; these have now to present a considered approach to policy dialogue, the elaboration of which is a stimulating, if challenging, exercise and useful in and of itself. The requirement to develop such a tool has increased awareness of implementers about the need for projects to deliver beyond outputs, and that the ultimate objective of any project is to affect changes at the systemic level. At the same time, implementers can now, based on the tool, call on SCO support in a more structured and predictable way. In this sense, the tool sharpens and strengthens the dialogue between implementers and the SCO, and implementers can signal bottlenecks or the need for SCO intervention in a more systematic way.

In the water sector, the rationale of piloting projects at the local level that could serve to provide convincing evidence of the need for policy change did not work in practice.

A core factor was the absence of an effective and influential partner at central level. Other factors include insufficient awareness and means of dealing with:

- Vested interest in maintaining current approaches
- Technical bias favouring outdated standards among government
- Instability and low capacity among government staff
- An over-reliance of the SCO on policy dialogue being delivered by others
- Overly complex project design
- Inadequate donor coordination

A well-meaning attempt to deepen ownership through national implementation was, in hindsight, naïve and did not work as intended – the government institutional set-up changed too often, staff were not able to deal with the complexity and for international standards on procurement and programme management.

The legacy of the Soviet Union has a long-lasting influence on the direction of reforms. While in the water sector, conditions in particular in rural areas of Moldova had always been challenging, in the health sector, citizens were used to a dense network of health care facilities, including hospitals. Any policy dialogue for reform, including the reduction and consolidation of hospitals, needs to take into account the high expectations Moldovans have as a result from what was a previously high standard. Ongoing projects supporting the reform of community health care are paving the way for new models the evidence from which can be used to inform further policy dialogue.

The Swiss approach is marked by the provision of specific technical evidence around a reform area as the convening point for policy dialogue. This approach permeates all support in the health sector and allows for a de-politicisation of often difficult and loaded topics. The Policy Dialogue project funded by Switzerland, and which was implemented through the WHO produced numerous pieces of evidence (including international, regional and such generated by projects on the ground) to influence legislation on tobacco, alcohol, and salt and sugar contents of food.

The relatively small size of Moldova is a factor positively influencing policy dialogue. Geographically, distances are reasonably short, allowing for frequent presence on the ground. Also, access to senior stakeholders/interlocutors is easier than in a bigger country.

The relative stability or volatility at the technical level has been a factor for the success of the policy dialogue in the health sector and the water sector, respectively. While the Ministry of Health has seen frequent change in leadership, at the technical level, there was some stability, allowing most of the projects to continue when senior positions changed. In the water sector, political changes including changes in terms of which ministry

had the mandate translated into significant changes also at the technical level, therefore leaving the IFSP project, among others, without strong leadership from the top, thereby contributing to its failure.

Health sector reform projects are long-term, often spanning 3 phases. SDC acknowledges that systemic reforms are difficult and protracted. Policy dialogues in the sector take time, and so that reforms can take root.

2.3 Lessons learned

The shift towards an overall (at SCO level), domain, and project-level systematic policy influencing approach in itself represents the results of lessons learned, specifically from the limited impact on systemic reform that became clear in the long-term APASAN (WASH) project, and the relative lack of success from the successor effort at central government level, which was also premature.

The integration of water—which had, for a long time, been treated in isolation—into a wider local governance programme, too, is the result of lessons learned from the APASAN and IFSP project.

An explicit policy influencing tool is useful for deepening insight into existing and emerging opportunities for policy dialogue. It also raises implementers' capacities and awareness of where their programme or project fits into a systemic reform context.

However, while the policy influencing tool is useful, care should be taken for it to remain nimble, in accordance with the project's or programme's implementers' needs and capacities. The tool works best, when used as a non-rigid framework for assessing and continuously reassessing the context and parameters in which policy dialogue can take place. It can also serve as an informing factor about the continuation or discontinuation of programmes and projects.

The SCO's policy influencing tool is explicitly going beyond policy dialogue, thereby sharpening the focus on actual reforms.

Donor coordination platforms provide systematic and legitimate entry points for coordinated policy dialogue.

SDC policy dialogue cannot address all policy-related issues: there are areas where progress will need to await a national shift in opinion or expectations that is not open to external influence.

Given its track record and reputation, the cooperation team is well positioned to react to windows of opportunity when these open. For example, the SCO was invited to a closed-door policy workshop on health and social issues reflected in specific policy notes, convened by the new government in 2021.

Support to the provision of in-depth evidenced-based assessments and analyses has contributed considerably to influencing policy change.

Working through international bodies in the health sector has proven to be effective as they are able to provide global legitimacy to difficult policy messages.

Annex 1 Findings

Findings per EQ and indicator each finding indicating which indicator (I) the finding is linked to and source (S).

EQ1: Outcomes

<p>EQ1: What were the outcomes and impacts (positive and negative) from policy dialogues as a tool to achieve Swiss development goals?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>1.7 Evidence of positive outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, enhanced understanding of policy issues and other outcomes</p> <p>1.8 Evidence of negative outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, and enhanced understanding of policy issues, and other unwanted outcomes</p> <p>1.9 Evidence of the extent to which national policy dialogue contributed to the success/failure of SDC's programme and project objectives</p> <p>1.10 Evidence that positive changes resulting from policy dialogues led to systemic changes and can be considered sustainable</p> <p>1.11 The extent to which the national dialogue actors/agents are capacitated to carry out policy dialogues and own the process</p> <p>1.12 Evidence of impacts from the changes induced by policy dialogue</p>
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SDC policy dialogue and evidence with regards to the importance of kinder gardens for women to enter the labour market led to a policy change in the municipality triggering increased investments in kinder gardens. (I 1.1, possibly 1,4) (S: PCR)

Policy dialogue was used to unblock the internal resistance in the VET system - as noted by the annual report (SDC, 2020, p12; interview (SCO, CT) “ The draft law did not sufficiently encourage practical experience with companies, SCO based on consultations with the private sector together with GIZ was able to persuade and support government to revise the approach (2019) (i.1.1)

Some policy level success in migration programme: i) a national diaspora strategy that recognises the importance of diaspora beyond just remittances but also supports return of human capital through setting of an engagement hub: ii) changes in the labour protection law on addressing migration issues more broadly at all stages of migration including return to Moldova (the regulation of private recruitment agencies is proving “tricky” and is still ongoing). [interviews SCO (RD)]

Local governance and water

There were some policy dialogue successes in the water sector but modest when compared to the original intentions and needs of the sector. Systemic change in the approach to investment decisions in the water sector have not yet occurred (country evaluation (2014-17, p19, interviews SCO (AC) ADA others))- some results were achieved for example in law 303 which does allow for a degree of recognition on a case-by-case basis for local level management of water services. The support did not yet succeed in establishing a sustainable source of finance for the river basin management organisations – although there are some cases of municipalities providing skeleton budgets which even if not enough is encouraging. [ADA interview, external evaluation report (Melikyan, 2020); SDC, IFSP end of project report 2021.]

Capacity for domestic policy dialogue has been built up which could have long term effects .There was also some success in building up municipal support services: “*APASAN has successfully managed to institutionalise within a Moldovan institution, support services aiming to improve rural water and sanitation services delivery: Congress of Local Public Administrations of Moldova (CALM) is now the first structure in Moldova that provides demand-based assistance and capacity building for small operators and Local Public Administrations* some results were achieved for example in law 303 which does allow for a degree of recognition on a case by case basis for local level management of water services. The support did not yet succeed in establishing a sustainable source of finance for the river basin management organisations – although there are some cases of municipalities

providing skeleton budgets which even if not enough is encouraging *and bring their 'interests' at policy level*". And *"Providing support services to their members has enabled CALM to be more technically equipped for evidence-based advocacy. This has helped raising CALM's profile toward Local Public Administrations but also towards national institutions"*. There are however still issues on the financial sustainability of the service provided. (Evaluation report, Lecert, 2019)

The strategy of piloting and demonstrating new approaches made sense but has not yet worked as intended. The pilots have largely worked as intended and demonstrate the superiority of the new approaches such as using simpler more affordable technology and allowing a greater degree of consumer influence in the management of services. But this has not yet led to systemic changes at the central level. There are some signs that not all is lost and other development partners such as ADA and WB are continuing to make use of the projects to advocate and demonstrate the need for change. (Interview ADA)

Decentralisation policy dialogue results have not advanced – as noted by the annual report (SDC, 2020, p10) *"With no clear vision and policy framework on decentralization and territorial reform, an adaptive approach is needed to advance on the portfolio results at national level. More time and efforts to be dedicated to advocating and extensive policy dialogue in this respect."*

A compendium of solutions was developed and has been disseminated and it is expected that this will have an influence over future investment decisions with some signs it already has. There is some evidence that a more evidence-based approach to investment decision making is taking place supported by the projects (ADA interview, external evaluation report (Melikyan, 2020).)

Health (NB: the evidence is selected, given that not all can be presented here)

The results achieved in the support of health sector reform in Moldova are considerable. SDC support influenced the shaping of national policies, for example the 2008 to 2017 Health System Development Strategies and subsequent sub-strategies that are part of this overarching framework (Health Programme in a Nutshell, SCO Moldova, no year), as well as the Health Strategy 2030. For example, SDC supported the development of the National Programme on NCD prevention and control 2022-2030 and its Action Plan, and where the policy development was supported by the SDC-funded Healthy Life project. The draft National Programme has been discussed in the MoH working group and the Parliamentary Commission on Social Protection, Health and Family, and is expected to be approved in the first trimester of 2022. (Up-dated Policy Influencing Tool of Healthy Life project; stakeholder interview with Health Life implementation team). The Healthy Life project provided evidence to inform regulations (Government Directives-GD) as well as a public awareness campaign related to nutrition (NCD-related), specifically, amendments to the Regulation on Trans-fats (GD no. 899/2017) and GD no. 596/2011 on salt content in some foods and repackaging of iodised salt. SDC's contribution to these regulations has also been at the central level, through the Policy Dialogue project implemented by the WHO. WHO specifically credits SDC support with advancing legislation on tobacco use (to be brought in line with the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to which Moldova is a signatory) and its implementation (ban on advertisement and sale in the vicinity of schools; packaging with deterring images etc.); alcohol use (rise in tax duties on alcohol); and salt and sugar content in food production, and where there is also a policy dialogue ongoing with various stakeholders involved in the food chain (Ministry of Agriculture, food processing industry) to discuss the feasibility and preconditions for implementation of the legislation. (Stakeholder interviews with WHO and Healthy Life project; updated Policy Influencing Tool from Healthy Life project November 2021). The Healthy Generation project (2012-2020) contributed to the development/adaptation of policy documents including the National Concept of Youth-Friendly Health Services; the National Reproductive Health

Strategy; standards governing the quality of youth-friendly health services; guides and protocols, as well as monitoring and evaluation tools for youth-friendly health services, such as an “Adolescent Health Promotion Guide” and others. (non-exhaustive list, source: Factsheet Health Generation project, stakeholder interviews with project implementer - “Health for Youth” NGO).

Evidence provided by SDC has informed policies at national as well as at regional and local levels. For example, the Healthy Life project, a project at national, district and community levels that contributes to Primary Health Care (PHC) reform which the WHO supports at the central level with the Ministry of Health. The Healthy Life project states (Project Brochure) that “A key aspect of PHC relates to the role of outreach services and the tasks that could – but are not being – taken over by community medical assistance (community nurses). WHO is supporting MoHLSP (now the MoH) with the PHC Reform, but the strategic direction remains unclear which can make it hard to move forward with the development of integral concepts...The project, therefore, contributes to PHC reform by clarifying the role, subordination, performance indicators and incentives for community medical assistance, and demonstrates the benefits of outreach services for prevention and control of NCDs.” Specifically, the project prepared a concept/profile of what community medical assistance should look like and has drafted a regulation to this effect within a working group convened with the MoH. On official adoption, training programmes will be institutionalised to help implementation of the concept. See also above paragraph.

Swiss policy dialogue combined with technical assistance has advanced the existing domestic reform framework on topics that might otherwise not have made progress towards implementation. The MENSANA project pursued objectives that would not, otherwise, have been a priority issue (due to the lack of resources and funding), despite the existence of a National Mental Health Action Plan as part of the Health System Development Strategy. The policy objectives of the project included “Deinstitutionalisation of people with mental health issues is carried out with joint support and ownership from both Ministry of Health and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection” and “Decision-makers [...] recognise and actively support the notion that community-based health services constitute the majority of care provided for mental illness in Moldova”. These are fundamental changes in policy approaches in Moldova, and which have cut against deeply entrenched ideas of what mental health is and how it should be approached. The project has engaged in long-term policy dialogues at the local levels to convince practitioners in the community that alternative approaches are necessary, possible, and economically more viable than institutionalisation of persons with mental health issues. (Policy Influencing Tool MENSANA project; stakeholder interviews with implementation team). Both MENSANA and the Youth-friendly Health Services project managed to demonstrate their value for the communities on the ground and thus, provided convincing evidence to the Ministry of Health to include the operation of the Community Mental Health Centres and the Youth Friendly Health Centres into the budget of the National Insurance Fund, thereby making them financially sustainable.

Not all topics pursued in health sector policy dialogues have resulted in change. Among these is “one of the most important areas for reforms, the hospital sector, has seen several failed attempts to consolidate the number of hospital services and beds.” (Health Programme in a Nutshell, SCO Moldova, no year; interviews with WB and SDC). The Healthy Generation project reports that its work on the institutionalisation of compulsory education on sexual and reproductive health and rights has not, yet, succeeded, due to what is described as a conservative political leadership at the Ministry of Education which is very reluctant to take this issue on. Policy dialogue processes between the MoH and the Ministry of Education seem to have not been instigated, and there is a need for a facilitating role played by UNFPA (with which the project cooperated, though outside of the Swiss funding framework) and SDC. However, stakeholders from “Health for Youth” NGO (who is

the implementer for the Youth-Friendly Health Services project) and UNFPA indicate that this is a “very difficult” reform area and where there is no immediate prospect of change. (Stakeholder interviews with UNFPA and “Health for Youth” NGO).

The practice of Swiss policy dialogue in the health sector, while not explicitly referring to this framework, follows a human rights-based approach. Looking at the practice of policy dialogue, there is a clear picture on a consistent involvement in policy dialogue of duty bearers (the line Ministries; government and institutions at central, regional and local levels, as well as the donor community, which also counts as a duty-bearer) and rights-holders (NGOs, as well as service users, and citizens) into policy dialogue process. Evidence is provided by the community-level projects that are engaging, in an inclusive way, with all involved stakeholders (for example also persons with mental health issues) at the local level, and who are then bringing their perspective to bear at the regional and national levels. Stakeholders (NGO implementing partners; WHO) have credited the SDC National Programme Officer for proactively involving them into policy dialogue at national level, thereby contributing to the capacity building of local actors to conduct policy dialogue effectively. (Stakeholder interviews with UNFPA, “Health for Youth” NGO, MENSANA, Healthy Life, NPO Health).

EQ2: Factors

<p>EQ2: What are the factors/practices that supported/hindered outcomes from policy dialogues?</p>	<p>Indicators: <u>Context-related</u> 2.13 The extent to which <u>national policy dialogue aims and content</u> were well grounded in the context and relevant for the partner in pursuing development priorities as well as relevant from the point of view of Swiss development policy goals and SDC’s programme and project objectives 2.14 The extent to which the <u>national policy dialogue processes</u> were well grounded in the context and building on understanding of context, including timing and choice of partners 2.15 The extent to which internationally agreed goals e.g., SDGs, conventions, humanitarian principles enabled national policy dialogues <u>Actors-related</u> 2.16 The extent to which policy dialogues with multilateral institutions (globally and nationally) and in the context of global programmes were coherent and supported SDC policy goals at the national level 2.17 The extent to which SDC working with other development partners in developing joint policy messages and conducting joint policy dialogues enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of policy dialogues 2.18 The extent to which working with national partner country actors, including other than the government, supported national policy dialogue outcomes <u>Internal capacity-related</u> 2.19 The extent to which Swiss ways of working, including long-term partnerships, broker, and bridge builder, is a high value asset and door-opener for Swiss engagement in policy dialogue 2.20 The extent to which knowledge and Swiss comparative advantages and domestic expertise supported outcomes of policy dialogue 2.21 The extent to which Swiss political dialogue with partner countries supported outcomes of SDC policy dialogues and projects/programmes 2.22 The extent to which SDC’s policy dialogue activities were systematically and sufficiently coordinated internally (including SDC HQ and SCO) and with other Swiss government counterparts (WOGA), as well as non-Government entities where relevant</p>
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	<p>2.23 The extent to which SDC's procedures (including for preparation and development of strategies for policy dialogues) and modalities were value-for-money and conducive to implementing policy dialogues</p> <p>2.24 The extent to which SDC staff guidance, staff training and capacities supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p>
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General

A special policy dialogue tool was used – as noted in the country evaluation 2014-17: *“to enhance the effectiveness of its policy dialogue, in 2016 the SCO has developed a useful policy influencing concept and tool”*. The evaluation noted: *“the policy influencing concept note prepared by the SCO is well conceived and should enable the SCO (and contract partners) to lead a more systematic policy dialogue at project level, diversifying both key stakeholders/ interlocutors and the channels by which to address and engage them.”* A policy influencing strategy was developed to go beyond the process as in dialogue and focus also on policy change and outcomes – in response to observations that attempts to influence policies have often been launched in an ad hoc manner, without proper planning and preparation SDC developed a policy influencing concept (2016). In practice based on discussion with SCO it was found that:

- The tool is useful as a means of deepening understanding within the SCO team and with key development and implementing partners – both at design and during ongoing management e.g., during periodic stock taking
- The tool is a means of ensuring a collective voice from development partners
- The tool helps SCO to challenge the projects on what is being done on the policy influencing front and also helps the projects to challenge the SCO on the political and higher-level support being provided
- It is the quality of the staff and project manager that is more influential than the tool itself (the tool cannot replace a good implementation and SCO team)
- The tool was helpful to find synergies between different SDC projects that could support key messages especially on decentralisation and inclusiveness
- The tool helps to lift the thinking from the activity level and compliance with contracts to a more strategic and outcome level.
- The tools were instrumental in the decision process to move from APASAN to IFSP to local governance as it pointed to weaknesses in the earlier project design and partner choice (too narrow and too technical) that was then revised.
- Initially the tool was often too technical, and an additional effort was needed to single out key policy message that could be presented at higher levels (this was then done)
- The reporting on the tool has been mixed (some projects report, and some don't)
- Some find the tool an unnecessary bureaucracy as they are doing policy influencing already and it becomes a box ticking exercise – for others it has been an eye opener (e.g., for the water projects)
- SCO and implementing partners need a process for i) ensuring that policy messages are well founded in evidence and ii) policy messages are feasible and timely – it is not always clear if the SCO has the technical insight in all areas to ensure this. This is then also a reason why the policy messages should be built into the rationale and design of the project.
- It is not useful to use the tool as a blanket and obligatory procedure.

The tool has raised demands on the implementers and the SCO. On the one hand, the SCO has raised the bar in terms of what the SCO requires from its implementing partners; these have now to present a considered approach to policy dialogue, the elaboration of which is a stimulating, if challenging, exercise and useful in and of itself. For example, the MENSANA project found it *“useful, because we thought we know what policy dialogue is,*

but it turned out we all had a different understanding” (Stakeholder interview with MENSANA).

Persistent, patient and donor coordinated approach seems successful - as noted in the country evaluation 2014-17 SCO contribution has been “ *considered judgement, persistence and at times patience, in terms of engaging in policy dialogue with the GoM, as well as its focus on close cooperation with like-minded donor partners in this manner. The modus operandi is not one of issuing ultimatums, but rather to progressively build the foundations to achieve the intended CS programme and the related country development goals.*”

Government and other partners find SCO staff highly competent and dedicated. Both in health and water, partners were at pains to stress that any failure in policy dialogue was mainly due external causes and that SCO staff were highly professional and valued. “*the SDC have highly professional staff, the minister of environment would often call SDC staff for advice even on matters beyond specific projects, the SDC staff had an authority*” (Stakeholder Interview)

Local governance and water

Water is, in the later local government cooperation, used to gain policy dialogue on the wider local governance front - as noted by the annual report (SDC, 2020, p.10 “ *With the last water project being finalized, the LG domain will gain more coherence and SDC profile in policy dialogue on local governance (and not only on water and sanitation) will be strengthened*” Close to 60% of the local government bodies being supported have selected water and waste investments as one of their main areas for support. [Interview SDC (AC, RD)]. The local public authorities are better able to select and make wise economic decisions and are not so tempted to over- invest because the funds remaining can be used for other priorities.

Analysis of challenges provided a basis for policy dialogue – as noted by the annual report (SDC, 2020, p10) “*mapping of gaps in legal and regulatory frameworks related to communal service provision was launched to feed into further sectoral policy dialogue.*”

SDC partners are often not at a strategic level which was recognised as limiting policy dialogue - as noted in the country evaluation 2014-17 in response to the “*sometimes erratic process of reform implementation over the past years by the MoH and the Ministry of Environment (MoEnv), since 2013 the SCO has sought to broaden its partners targeted via strategic policy dialogue and consultations*”. The need for SCO to identify strategic entry points is also noted by the annual report (SDC, 2020, p37)

Instability in Government institutional set up and staff – the mandate for water changed several times over the cooperation period. Even during period when the mandate was stable the senior staff changed. This meant that orientation and capacity development had to start again. In some cases, the project direction and a key decision had to be revisited and revised. (SDC (AC) and ADA staff, external evaluation (Melikyan, 2020): SDC, IFSP end of project report 2021.).

Government implementation was seen as a means of increasing ownership, but lack of capacity and procurement complexity meant it was not effective. The IFSP project “strengthening the institutional framework in the water and sanitation sector in Moldova” (7F-08870.01) was nationally implemented in response to findings that the objectives of water sector cooperation could not be met without integrating the institutional changes within central level authorities. However, the national project managers did not have the capacity, especially to manage complex projects and especially the SDC procurement systems which led to many

practical delays and frustration on all sides. Efforts to train and orientate national staff were hampered by frequent change in SDC and ADA staff, external evaluation (Melikyan, 2020) SDC, IFSP end of project report 2021.)).

Some of the resistance to regionalisation of water services have been traced back to vested interests which the project was not able to counter. Regionalisation of water services where smaller towns water and sanitation would be managed by utilities based in larger towns were strongly resisted. A desire for autonomy and a fear of losing control over allocation of senior posts in the utility were cited as possible reasons for resisting what otherwise appeared as a very advantageous arrangement leading to low costs and better service. (Stakeholder interviews, ADA, IP Ministry of Environment)

Changing in building codes and standards was not as easy as envisaged due to entrenched technical bias in favour of the Soviet systems and low influence at the standards body. The challenge of changing standards (to make the infrastructure cheaper and easier to maintain) that were deeply rooted in the technical education of decision makers was underestimated. There was a reluctance to experiment also because deviation from the standards was by definition illegal would have entailed risks. Nevertheless, the project was allowed to experiment with improved, simpler standards but the piloting was not owned by the government or recognised by those that would need to influence the change in standards. Mayors were interested to have the largest projects possible because they could not use the savings for any other purpose – the incentive was to spend more not less. [Interviews, ADA; Ministry of Environment (IP)]

Several key outputs such as updating standards were left undone because bids were not received – low responsiveness by the private sector this could also have been because the bids were not easy to understand and were launched without making sure that there was capacity in the market. (External evaluation (Melikyan, 2020)).

Weak sector and donor coordination– the government, over some periods, did not coordinate the donors forcing the donors into self-coordination. An effort to centralise coordination in the Ministry of Finance did not work because it was found too complex and remote from the issues affecting the sector. (SDC (AC) and ADA staff, external evaluation (Melikyan, 2020) SDC, IFSP end of project report 2021.)). SDC financed the Ministry of Environment coordination meetings and secretarial functions (interview IP). Heavy donor support also led to conflict over who should lead the sector because it was well financed this might have led to some of the instability. Even if they did not always work, the donor coordination arrangements are best means of ensuring systematic policy dialogue entry points. (Interview, IP)

The relative stability or volatility at the technical level has been a factor for the success of the policy dialogue in the health sector and the water sector, respectively. While the Ministry of Health has seen frequent change in leadership, at the technical level, there was some stability, allowing most of the projects to continue when senior positions changed. In the water sector, political changes including changes in terms of which ministry had the mandate translated into significant changes also at the technical level, therefore leaving the IFSP project, among others, without strong leadership from the top, thereby contributing to its failure.

Water was over crowded with donors after the association agreement was signed by Moldova in 2014 this which hampered policy dialogue – When the sector was over financed by donors and also by national sources there was less attention paid to policy dialogue and listening to difficult messages. The focus was on implementation and donor demands and requests were easy to ignore (Interview, IP)

The institutional change projects were too complex and beyond the absorption capacity of national partners. The IFSP project “strengthening the institutional framework in the water and sanitation sector in Moldova” (7F-08870.01) was cumbersome with multiple partners and attempting too many objectives at the same time and vulnerable to weak government capacity. (External evaluation, Melikyan, 2020; SDC, IFSP end of project report 2021.); SDC management response to evaluation of target project, 2016, Earnst Basler, November 2015).

SDC delegated considerable policy dialogue to UNECE but without strong supervision. “Lack of involvement of SCO despite its leading role in national WSS sector coordination and policy dialogue “ (Earnst Basler, November 2015; Interview ADA).

Health

The legacy of the Soviet Union has a long-lasting influence on the direction of reforms. Citizens were used to the Semashko system “an oversized hospital infrastructure and a focus on secondary care. [...] While the Semashko system was unsustainable, the population appreciated it as effective and accessible. Primary, specialised outpatient and inpatient care were owned, controlled and funded by the state and therefore, well-coordinated.” ((Source: Health Programme in a Nutshell, SCO Moldova). Any policy dialogue for reform, including the reduction and consolidation of hospitals, needs to take into account the high expectations Moldovans have as a result from what was a previously high standard. Ongoing project supporting the reform of community health care are paving the way for new models the evidence from which can be used to inform further policy dialogue, for example the Healthy Life project, which works on lifestyle changes which also, in the medium and long-term, should contribute to decreasing the need for hospitalisation by preventing or reducing the onset of NCDs.

The Swiss approach is marked by the provision of specific technical evidence around a reform area as the convening point for policy dialogue. This has been a consistent tenet of the health portfolio for many years. Stakeholders (WHO, UNFPA, Healthy Life, MENSANA, WB) recognise and acknowledge this as a specifically Swiss approach. Given the highly political nature, it allows for a de-politicisation of often difficult and loaded topics and takes advantages of the fact that health care provision affects everyone in the population, and that therefore, it is in the common interest to find reform solutions. The Policy Dialogue project funded by Switzerland, and which was implemented through the WHO produced numerous pieces of evidence (including international, regional and such generated by projects on the ground) to influence legislation on tobacco, alcohol, and salt and sugar contents of food. There are numerous examples of how this approach has worked (see also above paragraphs under results).

The relatively small size of Moldova is a factor positively influencing policy dialogue. Geographically, distances are reasonably short, allowing for frequent presence on the ground. This means that projects at local level can achieve a greater coverage and can engage a greater number of stakeholders at community level into local level policy dialogues Also, access to senior stakeholders/interlocutors is easier than in a bigger country, in part also because stakeholders are few and relatively well known to each other. (Stakeholder interviews;

Reform project, including in the health sector, are long-term, often spanning 3 phases. SDC acknowledges that systemic reforms are difficult and protracted. Policy dialogues in the sector take time, and so that reforms can take root.

Quotes:

“The policy influencing tool has better equipped us to see and react to the windows of opportunity for making changes” (SCO)

“In health we have always had policy influence as an element that is integrated in the project” (SCO)

The project design issues (too complex compared to the absorption capacity of state institutions in the context of the nascent stage of reforms and political instability) were at the core of the delays and inefficiencies, with the full-on national execution modality also a contributing factor. (External evaluation, Melikyan, 2020).

“SDC was always open and listened to the needs of government” (Interview IP)

“There is a culture of control by ministers; it is centralised, and personalised and even small decisions are taken by the minister” (Interview of IP).”

EQ3: Lessons learned

EQ3: What are the lessons learned and how where they applied?	Indicators: 3.3 The extent to which SDC identified lessons and best practices in policy dialogues with regards to processes and reaching outcomes 3.4 The extent to which SDC applied such lessons in its policy dialogue activities across the organisation and shared knowledge with other government agencies engaged in policy dialogue activities
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- In water, the approach was too technically dominated without realistic assessment of the political economy and institutional challenges.
- Ownership cannot be obtained simply by converting to national implementation the capacity, the coordination and absorption capacity has to be in place.
- The shift towards an overall (at SCO level), domain, and project-level systematic policy influencing approach in itself represents the results of lessons learned, specifically from the limited impact on systemic reform that became clear in the long-term APASAN (WASH) project, and the relative lack of success from the successor effort at central government level, which was also premature. (Interviews with SCO staff).
- The integration of water—which had, for a long time, been treated in isolation—into a wider local governance programme, too, is the result of lessons learned from the APASAN and IFSP project. (Interviews with SCO staff)
- An explicit policy influencing tool is useful for deepening insight into existing and emerging opportunities for policy dialogue. It also raises implementers’ capacities and awareness of where their programme or project fits into a systemic reform context. (Interviews with MENSANA, Healthy Life, Healthy Generation / Youth-Friendly Health Services project).
- However, while the policy influencing tool is useful, care should be taken for it to remain nimble, in accordance with the project’s or programme’s implementers’ needs and capacities. The tool works best, when used as a non-rigid framework for assessing and continuously reassessing the context and parameters in which policy dialogue can take place. Implementers have reported varying use of the tool—for example, while the Youth-Friendly Health Services project did not find the tool particularly useful (“we have always done policy dialogue” and thus, no guidance is needed), other projects have found it helped defining common understanding on what policy dialogue constitutes (MENSANA), and the Healthy Life projects actively checks whether it is on track to

achieve policy influencing. It can also serve as an informing factor about the continuation or discontinuation of programmes and projects (IFPS project).

- The SCO's policy influencing tool is explicitly going beyond policy dialogue, thereby sharpening the focus on actual reforms. (statement in the SCO Policy Influencing Concept; interview with SCO staff)
- Donor coordination platforms provide systematic and legitimate entry points for coordinated policy dialogue. (interviews with WHO, WB, UNFPA, ADA, GIZ)
- SDC policy dialogue cannot address all policy-related issues: there are areas where progress will need to await a national shift in opinion or expectations that is not open to external influence. This concerns in particular the needed hospital reform, and where SDC, along with other donors, have been vocal in policy dialogues over many years, yet, where this has not had results, because of the potential political backlash at local and regional levels that serve as a disincentive. There might be a window of opportunity that could arise if the decentralisation and territorial-administrative reform gains momentum. (Stakeholder interviews with WB and Healthy Life project; Health Programme in a Nutshell, SCO Moldova).
- Support to the provision of in-depth evidenced-based assessments and analyses has contributed considerably to influencing policy change. (see above examples)
- Working through international bodies in the health sector has proven to be effective as they are able to provide global legitimacy to difficult policy messages. The reforms in the health sector to a considerable extent result from the membership in the WHO. SDC support to WHO has helped strengthening the organisation's policy influence at country level. (Stakeholder interviews with Healthy Life project)

EQ4: Peers

<p>EQ4: What are the experiences of peers in conducting national policy dialogues, and are there lessons to be learned?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>4.5 Evidence of good practices in policy dialogue from other donors that can inspire SDC practices</p> <p>4.6 The extent to which policy dialogue processes and outcomes of other development partners' efforts contributed to SDC ways of conducting policy dialogue</p> <p>4.7 The extent to which the Swiss approach to policy dialogues was more effective/less effective than peers'</p> <p>4.8 The extent to which SDC collaborated with others in exchanging knowledge on good/bad practices and developing existing practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of policy dialogues</p>
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ADA did not have a defined policy dialogue agenda and strategy in the water unlike SDC although they are intending to adopt one in the future. SDC led the earlier water projects that were co-financed by ADA which could also explain the lower attention to policy dialogue. It was also considered by ADA that OECD/UNECE were leading on the policy dialogue front in water (especially for water resources).

Country case study Nepal

1 Context

Switzerland has been engaged in Nepal for decades. Switzerland is recognised for accompanying the peace process which in 2006 led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and for contributing to the most recent Constitution of Nepal (2015) that provides for the establishment of a federal state as a solution to the root causes of the conflict. The political and development cooperation of Switzerland with Nepal centres on the implementation of the Constitution and support to a political transformation of Nepal from a centralised unitarian system of government to a federal system of government in which all people can participate.

2. Summary of findings

2.1 Outcomes

SDC's contribution to peace, the constitution, transitional justice, and federalization stems in large part from the Swiss 'political engagement' in Nepal supporting the peace process and the ensuring constitutions. Whilst the Swiss Embassy uses its development projects to reinforce its political engagement – by, for example, restructuring all projects according to the federal structure of government – the development projects themselves do not really feature in SDC's contribution to peace, the constitution, transitional justice, and federalization. Examples of SDC contributions within the field of implementation of the Peace Accord, the Constitution (2015) and transitional justice:

- Support for the constitutional process – the Constituent Assemblies – through dialogue with political parties and other stakeholders, provision of technical expertise on federalization.
- The holistic approach to transitional justice (four pillars of truth, justice, reparation, and non-recurrence) which was facilitated through mediation and providing expertise on transitional justice.
- Engagements with political parties and development partners to support the implementation of the Constitution, including the new federal structure. Notable examples are the promotion of the Civil Service Act, and the dialogues with the development partners to forego their traditional inclination to deal with the federal ministries.
- Project support for capacity building and awareness raising for the executive branches of provincial level of their new roles, powers, and responsibilities as well as building capacity for planning and budgeting.
- Reorganizing the SDC cooperation to fit the new federal structure – this required substantial dialogue to change the projects and place the responsibility and funding of three spheres of government.

Outside the realm of the peace/ constitution processes there are examples of systemic changes that SDC policy dialogue contributed to:

- The introduction of the dual TVET system in Nepal whereby the federal system sets standards and certifies; provincial levels offer higher-level skills and local governments often in collaboration lower levels skills training options (TVET schools.) and the apprenticeships model. Policy dialogue with parties to federalize the TVET sector through law, and support for provincial level to understand their new role. Ensuring a coherent federal approach by other development partners in the sector.
- Shift towards a more realistic and pro-migrant understanding of migration in the government and administration. SDC and GoN now collaborates on issues related to safe migration including through joint support for Migrant Resources Centers offering

support for migrants prior and after migration. An example of proof of concept that is then taken over by the GoN.

- Full adaptation of the implementation of Trail bridge Sector and Motorable Bridge Sector according to the new Constitution.

2.2 Factors

Understanding the context based on having accompanied the peace and constitutional processes over the past 25 years. Switzerland was well plugged into the political fabric of Nepal – something that is unique for Nepal, as donors traditionally have had very good access to political parties, members of parliament etc. However, this now seems to be more controlled.

Switzerland has an integrated Embassy that combines diplomacy, development, trade and investment promotion. The WOGA cooperation works well. Also, SECO activities contribute to the implementation of the constitution through its support for the World Bank in the MoF (PMF).

Long-term engagement. The Evaluation to a large extent ascribes the Swiss accompaniment and contribution to the peace and constitutional processes as based on the long-term engagement such as community forestry, rural road and bridges, TVET etc of Switzerland in Nepal, gaining Switzerland a reputation as a respected, appreciated, credible, impartial, thorough, patient, and consistent partner. The Swiss way of working based on sharing expertise and knowledge rather than dictating course of action is appreciated as is its ability to identify partners and processes for engagement where there are good entry points and realistic prospects for success.

Political/ policy dialogue informed by SDC cooperation programmes/ projects. There is a clear delineation of responsibilities in cooperation with Nepal. The experiences and knowledge obtained and produced at the technical/ programmatic level feed into political and policy dialogues that the Embassy conducts, inter-alia to protect the cooperation projects and implementers from often sensitive political engagements.

2.3 Lessons learned

Defining the Swiss engagement as support for the overall implementation of the Nepali Constitution and actively supporting this politically while reframing the development cooperation to explicitly support this political goal. Initially this meant strong focus on federalization. As the structures of the federal state is taking form it is now time to focus on the broader aspects of the Constitution: inclusion, equality, and participation.

In the process of contracting implementing partners, the Embassy now use the two-tier process to ensure that the partner understands the political aspects of the project and that this is well reflected in the project description and results framework.

2.4 Peers

Switzerland invested heavily in aid coordination through the International Development Partners Group. The Embassy used the platform to promote support for the understanding amongst development partners as to the importance of delivering development support in accordance with and in respect for the constitutional structure, not least the federal structure. A notable example is the SDC cooperation with FCDO and WB which resulted in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) revisiting the project design and implementation modalities of its road programme which were also found to be unconstitutional. Following this, the WB and ADB have negotiated with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General administration that all rural road

and infrastructure programmes are implemented according to the Constitution, which means on provincial and local levels. This is seen as an important breakthrough in Nepal against huge resistance from the respective Federal office. SDC has been the driver behind in alignment with FCDO and WB.

Annex 1 Findings across the evaluation questions

EQ1: Outcomes

<p>EQ1: What were the outcomes and impacts (positive and negative) from policy dialogues as a tool to achieve Swiss development goals?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.13 Evidence of positive outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, enhanced understanding of policy issues and other outcomes 1.14 Evidence of negative outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, and enhanced understanding of policy issues, and other unwanted outcomes 1.15 Evidence of the extent to which national policy dialogue contributed to the success/failure of SDC's programme and project objectives 1.16 Evidence that positive changes resulting from policy dialogues led to systemic changes and can be considered sustainable 1.17 The extent to which the national dialogue actors/agents are capacitated to carry out policy dialogues and own the process 1.18 Evidence of impacts from the changes induced by policy dialogue
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National policy dialogue and support for the development of the Constitution and the subsequent implementation of the constitution centred on the implementation of the federalist structure of government as well as transitional justice. Main conclusion: The political/policy dialogues in Nepal is driven by political considerations related to peace and justice whereas the projects are seen as means to support these overall goals for Switzerland in Nepal.

“The overall goal of the SCS 2018-21 is that *“women and men benefit from equitable socio-economic development and exercise their rights and responsibilities in an inclusive federal state”*. This goal will be pursued through three integrated domains of intervention, where the federal state building programmes contribute to the achievement of the sectoral outcomes, and the sectoral operations promote the progressive establishment of inclusive political and social institutions.” Country Strategy (CS).

Outcomes at intervention level at a high level and requiring a combination of political and programme activities to be reached. E.g.:

1.2 Outcome statement

Subnational governments ensure inclusive, resilient, and accountable development.

Swiss action: Switzerland contributes to the national outcome by building the capacities (mainly in planning, implementation, monitoring, and PFM) of the state and local level governments in order for them to realise their exclusive and concurrent rights as per the new constitution. Switzerland further contributes to help “federalise” the sectors, in which SDC is active (rural infrastructure, agriculture etc.), in line with the provisions contained in the new constitution. Switzerland will also help to strengthen the subnational governments, in its intervention areas, to deliver services effectively and inclusively to the citizens, especially for women and DAGs, and to strengthen their disaster risk resilience.

Examples of results taken directly from the draft evaluation

- 2 during the two consecutive Constituent Assemblies, between 2006 – 2015, SDC and the FDFA Human Security Division facilitated dialogue and made available Swiss federalization and Nepali constitutional experts to inspire and inform the constitution writing process and address contentious issues, including through a retreat in Thun, Switzerland,
- 3 in 2018, the SDC changed its support to the transitional justice process, bringing in victims as actors in the transitional justice process. It helped different victim groups to organize themselves and develop a Charter, capturing the needs and demands of the victims. Moreover, SDC facilitated victims participating directly in national-level dialogues on transitional justice with the Nepal's political leaders and parties,
- 4 SDC also geared all political parties and the victim groups to embrace a '*holistic approach*' to transitional justice (based on the four pillars of truth, justice, reparation, and non-recurrence). The SDC facilitated this through mediation, sharing expertise on transitional justice principles and processes, and organizing high-level roundtables with all parties concerned (both in-country and in Bangkok),
- 5 after the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution, the SDC actively supported the implementation of the Constitution:
 - informing the Unbundling Report (which detailed the federalization of functions, funds, and functionaries), by making available federalization and sector expertise,
 - engaging actively with all political parties and development partners for them to adhere in all their actions to the new federal structure of government. This included, amongst others, promoting the passing of a new Civil Service Act (as a key building block of federalism as it gives provinces and municipalities the right and power to organize themselves and recruit civil servants as per their own vision and requirements), and ensuring that large ADB and World Bank projects empowered provincial and local governments in accordance with their constitutional powers and duties (and not vested undue power in federal ministries),
 - organizing provincial level workshops for the executive branch and bureaucracy on their new roles, responsibilities, rights, and powers including, for example given supporting the building of a legal framework and resolving concurrent functions between different spheres of government for the trail bridge, motorable bridge, small scale irrigation and TVET sector,
 - facilitating the build-up of the government in Province 1, coaching the government throughout the process, and making available technical expertise to the Provincial Government on budgeting and planning processes, allowing the Provincial Government to formulate its first budget and Periodic Plan,
 - mirroring the federal structure of government in all SDC's development projects, by placing the oversight, steering and implementation of projects in the hands of provincial and/or local governments. This was more profound than it reads on paper. It necessitated a recurrent battle with federal government officials on the power and authority of the federal, provincial, and local sphere of government. In other words, these 'battles' helped to explain, clarify, operationalize, and solidify the federal system of government – it helped Nepal to 'walk the talk' of federalization,
 - helping federal and provincial governments to adjust old, or formulate new laws and policies, in part by accompanying the policy drafting process (as in the case of the national TVET Act,) or providing consultancy services to prepare new policies and strategies (such as the provincial agriculture development strategies).

1. The time passed (from a few years to two decades) and the nature of this evaluation (a qualitative inquiry into the implementation and impacts of the Cooperation Strategy) do not allow to quantify SDC's contribution to the peace-process, the constitution writing, the transitional justice process, or the progress and impacts of federalization. Key informants to the evaluation agreed unanimously that the SDC *'did contribute'*. Whilst it may not have provided all the oil that made the machinery (the progress) possible, SDC did – through its contributions – grease the wheels of change.
2. The prevailing peace and stability in Nepal, as well as the impact of federalization at the provincial and municipal level, rubs at least in part off on the SDC. It entails both the 'long-term impact' of SDC's engagement in the peace process and with the Constituent Assembly, as well as the 'short-term impact' of SDC's work on promoting the adherence to and the implementation of the Constitution and the federalization of government.
3. What stands out from SDC's contribution to peace, the constitution, transitional justice, and federalization is that the contribution stems in large part from the Swiss Embassy's 'political engagement', its diplomacy, its self-implementation of small actions or small projects.¹²

EQ2: Factors

<p>EQ2: What are the factors/practices that supported/hindered outcomes from policy dialogues?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p><u>Context related</u></p> <p>2.25 The extent to which <u>national policy dialogue aims and content</u> were well grounded in the context and relevant for the partner in pursuing development priorities as well as relevant from the point of view of Swiss development policy goals and SDC's programme and project objectives</p> <p>2.26 The extent to which the <u>national policy dialogue processes</u> were well grounded in the context and building on understanding of context, including timing and choice of partners</p> <p>2.27 The extent to which internationally agreed goals e.g., SDGs, conventions, humanitarian principles enabled national policy dialogues</p> <p><u>Actors related</u></p> <p>2.28 The extent to which policy dialogues with multilateral institutions (globally and nationally) and in the context of global programmes were coherent and supported SDC policy goals at the national level</p> <p>2.29 The extent to which SDC working with other development partners in developing joint policy messages and conducting joint policy dialogues enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of policy dialogues</p> <p>2.30 The extent to which working with national partner country actors, including other than the government, supported national policy dialogue outcomes</p> <p><u>Internal capacity related</u></p> <p>2.31 The extent to which Swiss ways of working, including long-term partnerships, broker, and bridge builder, is a high value asset and door-opener for Swiss engagement in policy dialogue</p>
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¹² This statement deserves a little elaboration. The Swiss Embassy's engagement with political parties and coordination with development partners are undertaken by the Swiss Ambassador and the deputy Head of Cooperation. The restructuring of the bilateral development cooperation projects to the federal structure of government is done by the Swiss Embassy management and staff. The initial support to the province 1 Government was funded through a series of small actions. Support to sectoral unbundling and policy development is initiated through political discussions between the Embassy and the relevant ministers or senior civil servants (even though project funds are often used to guide or support the actual policy making process). The bottom-line is that in all these cases the changes were initiated and led by the Swiss Embassy management and staff (and did not come out of the bilateral development cooperation projects).

	<p>2.32 The extent to which knowledge and Swiss comparative advantages and domestic expertise supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p> <p>2.33 The extent to which Swiss political dialogue with partner countries supported outcomes of SDC policy dialogues and projects/programmes</p> <p>2.34 The extent to which SDC's policy dialogue activities were systematically and sufficiently coordinated internally (including SDC HQ and SCO) and with other Swiss government counterparts (WOGA), as well as non-Government entities where relevant</p> <p>2.35 The extent to which SDC's procedures (including for preparation and development of strategies for policy dialogues) and modalities were value-for-money and conducive to implementing policy dialogues</p> <p>2.36 The extent to which SDC staff guidance, staff training and capacities supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p>
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Thorough understanding of the context - Understanding the context based on having accompanied the Peace and constitutional processes over the past 25 years. Switzerland has been well plugged into the political fabric of Nepal – something that is quite unique for Nepal as to the level of engagement with donors. (Access to political parties, members of parliament etc. now seem to be more controlled compared to what it used to be, underscoring the need for a nationally determined and owned process.)

Understanding that development is essentially a political process – and development challenges are often political in nature.

Factors related to engaging with the political actors (from the evaluation):

- talking frequently with all political parties to find common cause (whether in peace, the Constitution, or the implementation of a federal system of government),
- convening the main political actors for face-to-face dialogue (either in-country or abroad),
- making available mediation and technical expertise which could guide and inform these dialogues,
- guiding political actors, whether federal or provincial ministers, in building up a federal system of government, both through informal coaching and (again) by making available technical expertise for peer learning,
- generally combining '*handholding*', '*dialogue*' and '*constructive engagement*'.

Factors inherent to Swiss way of working (from the evaluation):

What allowed the Swiss Embassy to engage politically? The interviews suggests that this ability to engage politically rests on twelve complementary characteristics of Switzerland's engagement in Nepal, which make the Swiss Embassy an accepted, respected and appreciated development partner. These twelve complementary characteristics are:

SDC's long-term, continuous engagement in Nepal (since 1959) with, well-known interventions (from the peace mediation to the trail bridges), Switzerland's impartiality (whilst guided by values, it treats all parties equal), clarity and consistency of position (it walks its talk, both on its values and impartiality), Switzerland's natural credibility (on such issues as federalism and TVET), positive messaging (emphasizing what parties unite and how they can contribute), sharing experience and expertise (and not dictating courses of action), thoroughness (understanding the issues and coming to the table prepared), consistency in vision and action across subsequent Embassy senior managements,

strategic skill (able to identify the levers of change be it the Civil Service Act or ADB's adherence to the federal structure of government),

patience (to accompany change processes for 10 years and more), and

based on the above, the ability to offer a 'safe space', giving voice to and enabling dialogue between political adversaries.

According to the evaluation's key informants, no other development partner can match the Swiss Embassy's access to political leaders, nor position in promoting federalization in the country. According to other development partners, SDC punches well-above its weight.

At the same time the evaluation also states: Section 3.1 highlighted that the Swiss Embassy holds a unique position in Nepal's development cooperation with unparalleled access to political decision-makers. It is considered a stalwart of federalization by other development partners.

The evaluation "concurrs that SDC development cooperation undergirds its diplomatic efforts".

The WOGA approach functions well as seen from the embassy. "SECO supports enhanced public financial management in Nepal at all three spheres of government through a World-Bank administered Public Financial Management project. This support is aligned with Nepal's move towards a federal system of government and complements SDC's support. The SDC and SIFEM are working together to introduce a MSME financing window in Nepal. "Evaluation.

EQ3: Lessons learned

EQ3: What are the lessons learned and how where they applied?	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>3.5 The extent to which SDC identified lessons and best practices in policy dialogues with regards to processes and reaching outcomes</p> <p>3.6 The extent to which SDC applied such lessons in its policy dialogue activities across the organisation and shared knowledge with other government agencies engaged in policy dialogue activities</p>
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As the political and federalization process moves on and decision-making processes become less politicized, there is room to cooperate better on implementation of projects with IPs, and room for them to operate also in the policy dialogue space in collaboration with the embassy and based on clear results frameworks that also encompasses policy dialogue outcomes.

As the structures of the federal state is taking form it is now time to focus on the broader aspects of inclusion, equality, and participation. The Embassy is working to enhance the focus on the implementation of the Constitution – not only federalization but all the implications of the Constitution, including its focus on human rights and equality, and good governance. This is likely to lead to improved opportunities to build alliances with development partners and across Nepali actors. This lesson comes as there is back-lash against federalization being accused by politicians of being too donor driven.

EQ4: Peers

EQ4: What are the experiences of peers in conducting national policy dialogues, and are there lessons to be learned?	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>4.9 Evidence of good practices in policy dialogue from other donors that can inspire SDC practices</p> <p>4.10 The extent to which policy dialogue processes and outcomes of other development partners' efforts contributed to SDC ways of conducting policy dialogue</p>
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	<p>4.11 The extent to which the Swiss approach to policy dialogues was more effective/less effective than peers'</p> <p>4.12 The extent to which SDC collaborated with others in exchanging knowledge on good/bad practices and developing existing practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of policy dialogues</p>
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Working with development partners such as the WB and ADB was important to ensure that they supported the implementation of the Constitution – not least the aim of the federalized system. Switzerland invested heavily in aid coordination through the International Development Partners Group. The Embassy used the platform to promote support for the understanding amongst development partners as to the importance of delivering development support in accordance with and in respect for the constitutional structure, not least the federal structure. A notable example is the SDC cooperation with FCDO and WB which resulted in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) revisiting the project design and implementation modalities of its road programme which were also found to be unconstitutional. Following this, the WB and ADB have negotiated with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General administration that all rural road and infrastructure programmes are implemented according to the Constitution, which means on provincial and local levels. This is seen as an important breakthrough in Nepal against huge resistance from the respective Federal office. SDC has been the driver behind in alignment with FCDO and WB.

Country case study Tanzania

Executive summary

Switzerland is associated with good policy dialogue outcomes in Tanzania. As co-chair of the development partner group, Switzerland recently played an instrumental role in re-establishing the policy dialogue between the development partners and the government of Tanzania (GoT). **In the health sector**, SDC is associated with establishment of a private sector-based procurement system and standardisation of procedures for good financial management and introduction of IT based MIS which forms the back bone of the decentralised health financing fund – a pooled financing fund for health care at the district level, which SDC also contributed to establishing. **In the governance sector**, SDCs long term support for national CSOs and media led to both capacity building for further engagement in national policy dialogue by these actors, as well as important improvements in accountability in service delivery and policy inputs e.g., to the Finance Bill and rules regulating CSOs.

Important factors for success:

- Switzerland's recognition and credibility as a long-term partner driven by genuine interest for development by the GoT and development partners.
- Switzerland's focus on understanding the development issues and hence on creating a basis for evidence-based dialogue through support for studies and research, technical assistance, perception analyses, and pilot projects to test uncharted waters.
- Strong technical capacity in the health sector also based on long term engagement and at all levels
- The existence of a structured dialogue forum and within that cooperation with development partners in the development partner group and in the health sector also as a member of the health basket fund coordination.
- Complementing policy dialogue with political dialogue – although there may still be further opportunities in the light of GoT opening up for dialogue.
- In the governance sector, important elements of success also included flexible and adaptable programming to cease new opportunities for the CSOs.
- Personal skills combining development knowledge with diplomacy, knowing when to act and with whom – this was particular the case in the support of the CSO partners.
- Infrastructures for linking local and national dialogue processes as well as trustworthy, persistent, professional, capacitated, and organised CSOs.

Important factors that hindered success:

- Pursuing wide ranging policy reforms in the health sector through technical dialogue partly delegated to implementing partners partly pursued in technical working groups
- Lack of capacity for diagnostics studies that can provide the basis for policy inputs for wide ranging reforms such as implementation of insurance-based health financing
- Lack of a long-term vision for reducing donor dependency of the supported CSOs and media actors.

As far as the evidence presented suggests, Switzerland has chosen a hands-off approach to policy/political dialogue on difficult policy and political issues with the government. This is the case in the health sector where difficult issues related to the long-term financial sustainability of the sector in light of demographics, equal access for all etc. In the governance sector it is not clear that the many results produced by the CSOs are used actively in pursuance of policy dialogue and that when CSOs and media are under pressure, SDC steps up to support them. Such dialogues are best left to the multilaterals to pursue.

Lessons learned relate to the limitations brought about by engaging in technical policy dialogues through implementing partners, when the issues at stake are political, as was the case in the health sector and promotion of health insurance. Related to this, also the lesson that in driving such politically and technically complicated policy agendas as transforming the financing of the health sector to be insurance based, there is a need for much stronger diagnostics and policy formulation capacities and experiences from other developing countries that most often rests with larger multilateral bodies. In the governance sector, SDC in its dialogue with partners in the CSO sector will have to address issues related to financial sustainability.

In the current opening environment, Switzerland will also have to make choices as to address sensitive issues, such as human rights and the long-term development vision of the country considering demographics and the need to invest heavily how most effectively in human capital formation to achieve growth and engage youth in gainful employment. The broader policy discussion is probably best pursued in the context of the Action dialogues between GoT and the development partners backed up by frank discussions through bilateral dialogues and the context of the continued development cooperation within the priority areas. The transformed Country Programme 2021-24 with thematic cross cutting objectives offers great guidance as to the priorities for Swiss policy dialogue on strategic issues with Tanzania going forward.

Better engagement in policy dialogue and donor coordination requires more time, additional human resources and an active decision to do so by the management of the Embassy.

1 Introduction

1.1 Country context – political, economic, main development challenges

Political context

CCM has been in power since independence. The opposition has remained relatively weak and with the election of President John Magufuli in 2015, got further marginalised together with the press and civil society. A Freedom House rated Tanzania a partly free country in 2017, with a score of 58. Four years later, scoring only 34, Tanzania is one step from being characterised as a non-free country in terms of political rights and civil liberties¹³. The government's drastic narrowing of space for the opposition and civil society is reflected in arrested opposition leaders and activists¹⁴ and lately in the imprisoning of the chairman of the main opposition party¹⁵. Frequent shutdowns of newspapers and websites and prosecutions of journalists, as well as an intense oversight of social networks are being widely reported¹⁶. This year, Tanzania has been ranked 124th among 180 countries in the world's ranking on press freedom¹⁷.

Following the death of President Magufuli, the then vice-president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, was sworn in on March 19, 2021, as the country's sixth and first female president. The government's proclaimed priorities include combating corruption, improving public infrastructure systems, public administration and accountability, and socially-responsive management of public resources¹⁸.

Economy

¹³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tanzania/freedom-world/2017>, accessed 21.10.2021

¹⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tanzania-rights-idUSKCN1UV1FX>, accessed 21.10.2021

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54777226>, accessed 21.10.2021

¹⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tanzania-rights-idUSKCN1UV1FX>, accessed 21.10.2021

¹⁷ <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>, accessed 21.10.2021

¹⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tanzania/overview#1>, accessed 21.10.2021

In the past decade, the country's economy has seen sustained growth, reaching an important milestone in 2020, when Tanzania formally graduated from low-income to lower-middle-income country status¹⁹. This reclassification reflected the country's rising gross national income (GNI) per capita, which reached US\$1,080 in 2019, surpassing the US\$1,035 threshold for LMIC status. Tanzania's achievement reflects sustained macroeconomic stability that have supported growth as well as the country's rich natural endowments and strategic geographic position. However, poverty remains entrenched. The average poverty rate based on the international extreme poverty line of US\$ 1.90 per day in 2011 purchasing-power-parity terms for a country that has just achieved LMIC status is 30 percent, yet Tanzania's extreme poverty rate remains close to 50 percent. Rapid population growth, slow and uneven job creation, low levels of education and health, limited access to educational and employment opportunities, especially among women and girls, have reduced the inclusiveness of Tanzania's economic expansion, blunting its effect on poverty reduction. Human capital development is crucial to rectify this development. With the current fertility rate of 5.2, two million people are added to the population every year creating a huge demand for social services, where infrastructure investments continue to absorb available funding to the detriment of improving the quality of services.²⁰

Although overwhelmingly agrarian country²¹, agricultural sector grew much slower than the rest of the economy in the period from 2011 to 2018²². The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been widespread and increased poverty in 2020. The digital economy is a key driver of Tanzania's future growth and prosperity, and a key element in the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²³

In the ranking on the *Ease of Doing Business*, Tanzania takes 141st place and ranks below its regional competitors, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda²⁴. The ranking on the human development index, put Tanzania in the low human development category in 2019²⁵.

1.2 SDC in Tanzania

Switzerland has been engaged in Tanzania since the early 1960's. Currently the engagement is around CHF 20 million a year.

Table 2: Goals and focus of Swiss strategic cooperation in Tanzania

Years	Goal for the cooperation strategy	Focus (%of total budget)
2011-2014	Poverty reduction through pro-poor growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSD in Agriculture (34%) • Health (45%) • Governance and Social Accountability (20%)
2015-2020	Poverty reduction in Tanzania through building a more equitable society and inclusive growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health (39%) • Employment and income (30%) • Governance (23%) • Other (8%)

¹⁹ World Bank, 2021 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tanzania>, accessed 17 October 2021

²⁰ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/803171614697018449/pdf/Tanzania-Economic-Update-Raising-the-Bar-Achieving-Tanzania-s-Development-Vision.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tanzania/Economy#ref37574>, accessed 21.10.2021

²² World Bank, 2020, Tanzania Economic Update : Addressing the impact of Covid-19.

²³ World Bank, 2020, Tanzania Economic Update : Addressing the impact of Covid-19.

²⁴ World Bank, 2020 <

https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.BUS.EASE.XQ?locations=TZ&most_recent_year_desc=false, accessed 21.10. 2021

²⁵ <https://countryeconomy.com/hdi/tanzania>

2021-2024	Empowering young people, especially poor young women, to advance socially and economically, thus enabling them to be a main driver of Tanzania's move to an equitable and stable middle-income country and contributing to regional stability and prosperity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and income (44%) • Health (26%) • Governance (24%) • Other (6%)
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The most recent SDC Country Programme 2021-24 transitioned from a traditional domain structure to a cross sectoral approach to centre policy dialogue and programming on a few topics central for the long-term development of Tanzania. The intention was to focus on a few areas where Switzerland adds value and can support systemic changes. The objectives are: Strengthening state institutions to deliver services, protecting open space for civil society and youth engaged in gainful employment. This way of structuring the objectives allows for prioritized political and policy dialogue on crosscutting strategic issues central to the development of Tanzania.

Swiss cooperation with Tanzania differs from other countries in one important aspect – namely that a relatively larger share of funding is channelled directly through government channels compared to development cooperation at large (21 pct. of funding in Tanzania compared to 6 pct globally), offering opportunities for more direct policy dialogues with the government (figures 1.1 & 1.2).

Figure 1

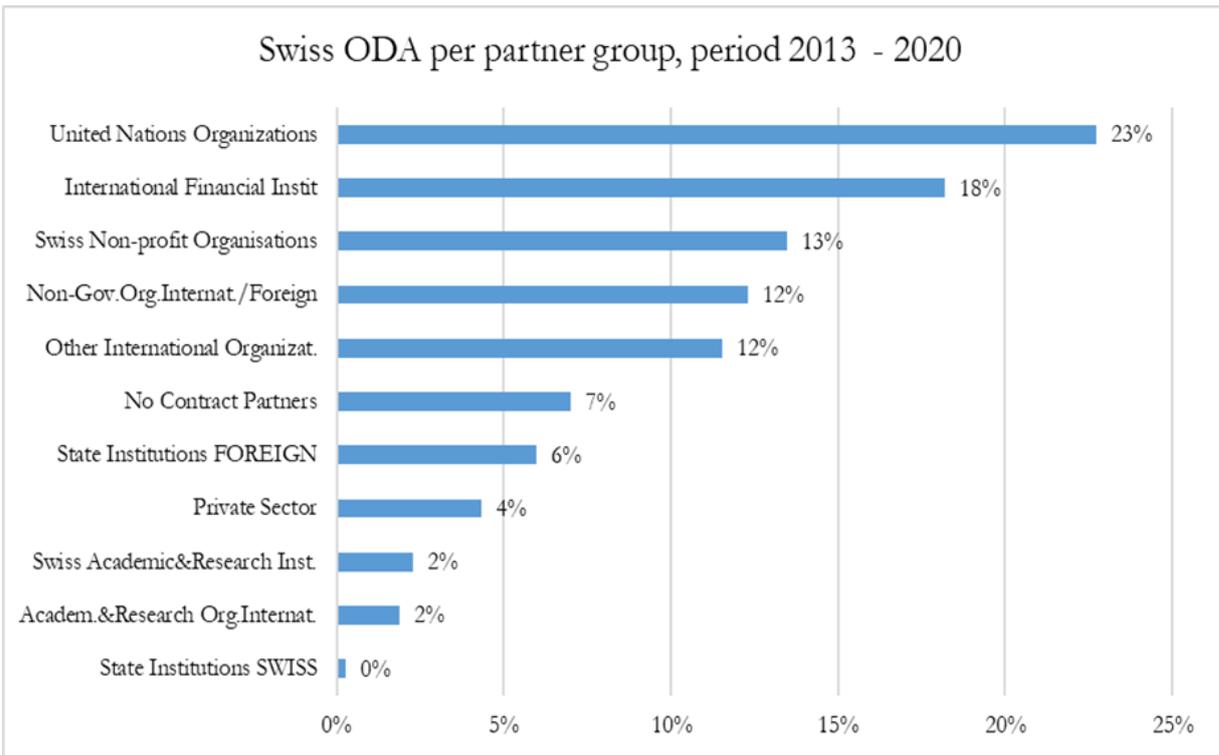


Figure 2

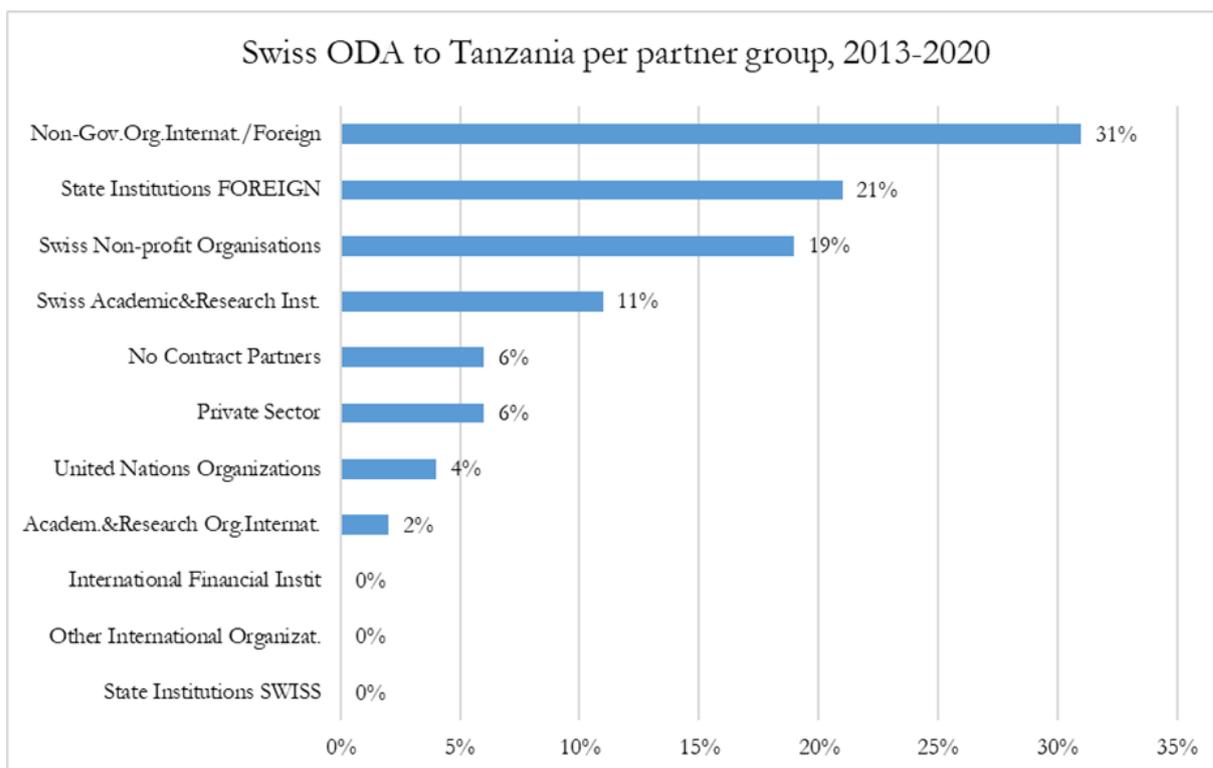
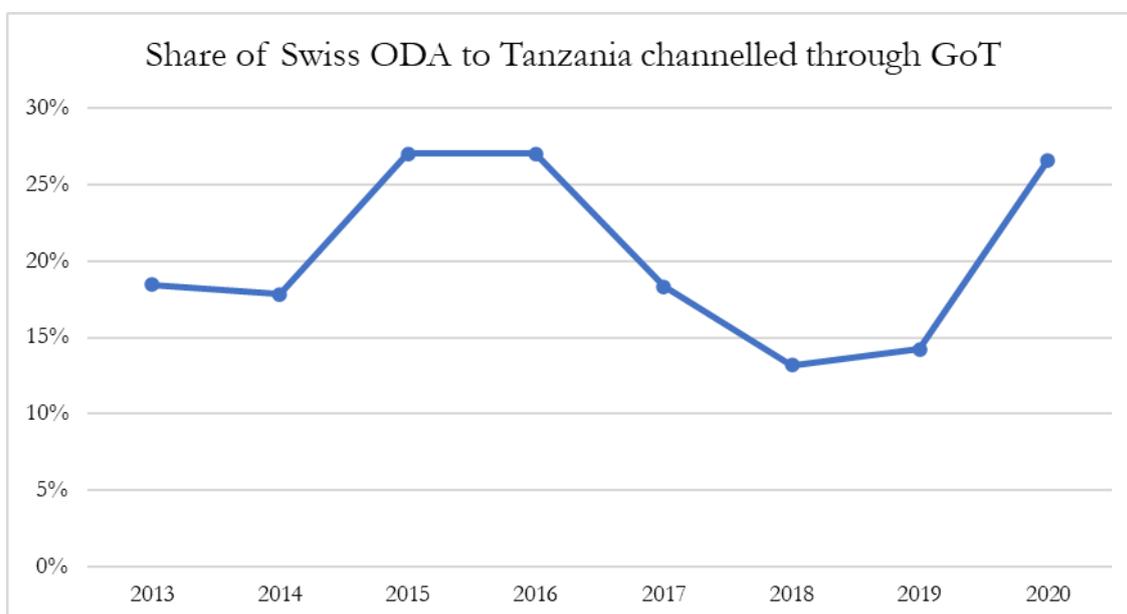


Figure 3



The drop in funding channelled through the GoT in 2016-2019 to some extent reflects a shift in priorities towards the domain Employment and Income (E and I) in the Country Programme 2015-2018. Annual reports over the period suggest the drop in the share of ODA channelled through the GoT, is an outcome of circumstances, rather than a deliberate decision. E.g., the drop from 2015 to 2016 relates to a drop in the support for the HBF as other domains needed more fiscal space to implement contracted activities (Annual Report 2016). The next programme cycle 2021-24 will see a continued reduction in funding channelled through the GoT as support for E and I will continue to take up an increasing share of the country programme.

1.3 Environment for Policy Dialogue

Coordination of development assistance takes place through the Development Partners Group (DPG) 'main' comprising 17 bilateral and 5 multilateral agencies (UN counted as one) that was set up to promote principles of aid effectiveness, as well as sectorial DPG, e.g., on health, governance, gender etc. DPG meets monthly. Amongst other things, the DPG coordinates and prepares the high-level strategic dialogues with the GoT at ministerial/HOM level and preparatory dialogues at the level of permanent secretaries/HoC twice a year. This is supplemented by an extensive network of working groups involving both DP and GoT. For example, in the health sector there are 7 technical working groups. In addition, there are some specific task forces and sub-committees for e.g., the Health Basket Fund (HBF) financing committee (HFC), where the contributors to the fund work with GoT. The DPG policy dialogue is complemented by a political dialogue that takes place once a year between HoMs and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The expectation on the part of the government is that political issues (HR and democratization) can be raised in this context.

Traditionally, cooperation between the DPs and the GoT was quite elaborated and centred on general budget support. During the Magufuli years (2015-2021) government-donor partner relations grew increasingly restrained partly related to DPs moving away from general budget support and Magufuli driving a more nationalistic agenda. In 2017, GoT and DPs agreed on a process to re-establish relations facilitated by former president of the ADB, Kaberuka, and former WB country director, Jim Adams.²⁶ The outcome was a Development Cooperation Framework (DCF) emphasising strengthened national ownership and government leadership in development programming and cooperation; ensuring effective management of resources for development results; strengthening both domestic and mutual accountability for all partners; and promoting country's benefits from increased trade, and domestic and foreign investment so as to contribute to sustainable development.

But it was not until after the re-election of Magufuli in 2020 that the relationship began to improve again possibly due to Magufuli realising that despite achieving LMIC status, the DPs were still needed to address continuing development challenges.²⁷ This process of opening up towards the DPs accelerated with the new President coming in March 2021. Even as the cooperation structures are being revitalised, the basic relationship has changed to a situation where there is now more ownership and leadership on the part of the GoT compared to previously which is generally welcomed.²⁸

In the past few years, Switzerland has held the chair of the DPG twice. This is seen by some DPs positively as strong commitment on the part of Switzerland to the Paris, Accra, and Busan aid effectiveness principles, which in the current donor environment is getting less priority as donors increasingly pursue national agendas. The DPG dialogue with GoT qualifies as an Action Dialogue under the Global Partnership for Development Effectiveness that Switzerland currently co-chairs. GoT has made an ambitious plan for the up-coming round of Action dialogue culminating in November with a meeting co-chaired by the Ministry of Finance and Planning and DPG Co-chairs. The preparatory work has involved pre-consultative meetings in six Regions bringing together key actors from selected regions and Local Government Authorities.²⁹

²⁶ <https://tzdpg.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Final-Kaberuka-Falicitation-Report.pdf>

²⁷ Interview Dar es Salaam November 1, 2021

²⁸ Interview Dar es Salaam November 3, 2021.

²⁹ <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/tanzaniaactiondialogue>

2 In-depth case studies

In addition to assessing Swiss/SDC engagement in policy dialogue and donor coordination overall in Tanzania, the team in consultation with the Embassy selected a deep dive into policy dialogue in the context of Swiss support for the health sector as well as the support to securing the space of civil society and media.

2.1 SDC in the Health sector

SDC has been active in the health sector in Tanzania for more than 40 years. In cooperation with other donors and in response to increasing demands for aid effectiveness, SDC in 1998 engaged in establishing a sector wide approach for donor engagement in the health sector including a health basket fund (HBF) pooling most donor resources in support of the 5-year national health sector strategic plans. In 2015 the HBF moved from providing sector budget support to the MTEF to a performance oriented decentralised funding modality – District Health Financing Facility (DHFF). For the fiscal year 2017/18, the DHFF HBF reform was completed, and disbursements started to flow directly to the bank accounts of more than 6700 primary health care facilities (PHC) nationwide based on performance. The DHFF came with improved digitization and health management information systems for better accountability and increased community involvement in oversight of health spending. The DHFF and the Prime Vendor backup supply system for medicines and devices (the latter supported by the HPSS) have contributed to improved access to primary health care, medicine availability, quality and utilization of health services. SDC contributions for the HBF from 1998 to 2021 amounts to CHF 104m.³⁰ SDC support for the reformed HBF continues with support for the DHFF, which is expected to provide the new foundation for the future single national health insurance system. Through the new MoU, the DHFF will be exploring ways of moving resource allocations from a "per person treated" system towards a "reimbursement of services". The DHFF has become the main funding source for health finance at primary health care facility level, as user fees, resources from the National Health Insurance and the Community Health funds will be channelled through the DHFF, hopefully also attracting other large vertical funders in the health sector, incl. the Global Fund.

In addition to the support for the health basket fund, SDC has provided extensive TA through the Health Promotion and Systems Strengthening Programme HPSS implemented by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. This project aims at contributing to evidence-based policy decisions on the part of the Tanzania government with regards to health financing, private sector-based solutions for better medical supplies, and IT-systems solutions for better governance and accountability in the provision of health services and the use of funds. The results framework contains an outcome related to evidence generation "Policy decisions of the government is informed by evidence capitalisation and research." According to MTR 2021³¹ progress has been achieved in setting up the Prime vendor system that has contributed to better availability of medicines, whereas progress on IT solutions has been slow and long underway. With regards to reforms related to the long-term financing of the health sector in Tanzania through an insurance scheme, progress has been slow due to lack of political willingness to move forward with the insurance scheme to a large extent based on uncertainties as to how such a system would function and how to finance health care for the poor that are currently exempt from user fees.³² These reform efforts have been underway for years with potentially a breakthrough in sight with the possible adoption of a Health Insurance Bill currently being debated in parliament. After the adoption of the law, considerable work remains with regards to establishing the insurance system and rolling it out, including minimum benefit packages and schemes to protect the poor. The final area of evidence gathering for policy decisions according to the MTR is

³⁰ End of Project Report 1998-2001 Health Basket Fund

³¹ MTR HPSS Phase 3 20211010

³² Interviews

lagging far behind. “Lack of evidence generated from this component is denying HPSS project and SDC an opportunity and capacity to provide very important evidence-based advocacy for policy changes.”³³

Policy dialogue with the Government takes place through the Joint Annual Health Sector Policy Review Meetings and joint field visits (JAHS PRM; Quarterly meetings between GoT and DPG H Troika chairs; TWGs; HBF sub-committees, as well as bilateral exchanges by the Embassy (and eventually through HPSS advisors but this remains at a very technical level Policy dialogue themes in addition to the many technical themes related to the implementation of the HBF and set out in the MoU with side agreements related to the HBF, and additional ones are referenced in credit proposals including gender issues (equal access to health and representation in Health Facility Governance Facilities), and governance where SDC fund perception surveys, that can help inform policy dialogue on governance and accountability issues, and engaging youth in the governance of the health facilities. Going forward policy dialogues also in the health sector will be informed by the overall objectives defined in the Country Programme.

Despite strong improvements in many health indicators not least reduction in under-5 mortality and maternal mortality, the health sector challenges remain – some of which were and are related to the continued increase in the demand for health services. In 2016, health outcomes in Tanzania lagged behind regional neighbours with lower rates of deliveries at a health facility, a higher proportion of underweight children and higher under-five mortality rates. Nursing density per capita is the fifth lowest of any lower middle-income country, and 41% of the population have no access to a health facility (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, there are wide disparities between regions in health outcomes, infrastructure, and budget allocations.³⁴

Underlying SDC engagement in the health sector is the universally accepted - but not always acted upon - approach that health system strengthening must be the objective. Support must be for the system as such to ensure the sustainability and resilience of the system as a whole can respond to the essential health-related needs of the population and that these can be satisfied in the long term and that the system can absorb the implications of demographic developments. This is not yet the case for Tanzania. The covid-19 situation accentuated the short comings.

Currently an overall debate in-country and with the development partners is not taking place on what it will take to get Tanzania on a trajectory towards long term health system strengthening with sustainable financing. The hope is that this is about to change under the new president.

2.2 SDC in the Governance sector: Civil Society and Media

Switzerland has a long history of supporting governance in Tanzania. Over time, Switzerland has gained high credibility in the domain by balancing support to state systems and support for CSOs and independent media. Support to state systems has been mostly through long-term partnerships with key accountability actors such as the Prevention and Combatting of Corruption Bureau (PCCB). CSOs have mostly benefitted through pooled funds in support of their strategic plans nationwide (nationally and locally) while support to Media outlets has primarily been channelled through the Tanzanian Media Foundation (TMF) in the form of grants and capacity building activities and more recently through

³³ MTR HPSS Phase 3 20211010 draft, pg. 17

³⁴

ODI%20briefing%20note%20on%20subnational%20health%20budgets%20as%20shared%20(Mar%202021).pdf

intermediary organisations like UNESCO, IMS and BBC MA to support the media houses on a number of issues including financial viability.³⁵

In the period between 2009 and 2014, SDC's support to well-rooted capacity building, advocacy, health, and agriculture CSOs such as the Foundation for Civil Society (FCS), Policy Forum (PF), Sikika and ANSAF contributed to the development and strengthening of a more vibrant, outspoken, and active civil society that in turn contributed to improved accountability of duty bearers. There is, however, a long way to achieving the desired accountability. The support to partnering CSOs was channelled under the Social Accountability Programme (SAP) that applied the rights-based social accountability tool to monitor accountability and government use of public funds for improved service delivery at the subnational level and by linking local findings to national-level advocacy and policy influencing on broader policy agendas such as civic laws, budgetary processes and procedures, central government accountability and transparency etc. SAP partners trained and engaged a number of local CSOs in establishing their social accountability monitoring programmes to advocate for evidence-based policy changes at the local level. Yet, the MTR of the SAP programme (2021) revealed that upstreaming the local level work in broader policy changes has not been successful, despite enhanced CSO influence on national policy discussions, especially around natural resource governance and agriculture.

In accordance with its basic principle, SDC stayed engaged under increasingly authoritarian and hostile Magufuli's administration that drastically narrowed the space for CSOs to pursue evidence-based dialogue by enacting the Statistics Act 2015 and its amendment in 2018 that made it a crime for people in Tanzania to publish statistics without the approval of the National Bureau of Statistics. The second phase of SAP began in 2015 and in 2019 third phase was launched. SDC continued working with FCS, PF and ANSAF and entered into a partnership with Twaweza, a regional CSO focusing on citizen agency and civic space. The strategic partnership with key accountability CSOs has formed a backbone to policy dialogues, influencing and advocacy carried out by national actors supported by SDC.³⁶

In the media landscape, Switzerland has for many years been the lead donor supporting media in advocacy, capacity, and investigative journalism and at the local level community radio stations primarily to promote rights and duties of young people and women. Through the Media Council of Tanzania (MCT), SDC in the past supported advocacy initiatives for the enactment of the right to information and a media law that would allow for the free flow of information.³⁷ Over the years, success stories reported were mainly related to higher quality reporting of TMF grantees in relation to non-TMF grantees, successful accountability actions taken by local CSOs and radio stations, increased understanding of local specific issues, as well as prosecutions of major corruption scandals that can as well be attributed to the critical role of media.³⁸

Under the Magufuli administration, SDC continued supporting community radios through intermediary organisations. Support to enabling environment for freedom of expression and media was discontinued because the partner (MCT) failed to manage funds appropriately in the previous phase of support. However, MCT and other media stakeholders were not able to prevent the environment for media becoming increasingly hostile with passage of the Media Services Act, 2016, The Cybercrimes Act, 2015 and the Statistics Act, 2016.³⁹

³⁵ SDC project proposals; SDC Annual Reports; Interviews

³⁶ Policy Note: Governance in Authoritarian Contexts; Interviews

³⁷ MCT and TMF project proposals

³⁸ SDC Annual Reports; Interviews

³⁹ Empowering Media in Tanzania End of Phase Report

Policy dialogue with government in principle takes place through the Development Partner Group (DPG). However, there was de facto no dialogue between Government and Development Partners from 2014 onwards.⁴⁰

3 Findings

These findings are based on a desk assessment of available documents, interviews with SDC, Government of Tanzania, Civil society organisations, international organisation and other donors conducted remotely and in a field work in Tanzania that took place from November 1-3.

3.1 General policy dialogue

As co-chair of the DPG, SDC played an instrumental role in re-establishing the policy dialogue with the government 2020-2021. Over the past few years SDC has twice been the bilateral donor representative co-chairing the DPG together with the UN Resident coordinator, most recently from 2020/21. Generally, SDC is seen as a competent donor willing to invest in donor coordination and aid effectiveness also at a time where many donors had lost interest in the DPG as the dialogue with the government had stalled. In 2020 when SDC again came in as co-chair, SDC had as its primary objective of the co-chairmanship to reengage development partners and restart the dialogue with the government. According to interlocutors, SDC skilfully used the Covid situation to bring the development partners back around the coordination table. At the same time, the newly re-elected president Magufuli changed attitude towards development partners and gradually reengagement started from late 2020. SDC actively pursued openings with the government to re-establish the Action Dialogue, that is now going to take place end of November bringing together ministers, development partners, parliamentarian, civil society and the private sector. SDCs role was that of a convener not of an agenda setter.

SDC was seen as credible both by the donors and the government combining diplomatic skills with solid development knowledge. SDC was well placed to reignite the dialogue among the development partners and consecutively with the GoT, having a long history of development cooperation with Tanzania and generally seen as non-confrontational. Switzerland is generally known for its preference for frank respectful dialogue behind closed doors rather than brazen public statements alienating the government.⁴¹ Engagement in aid coordination as co-chair does require an investment in time requiring that prioritization of staff time in the Embassy.

To underpin evidence-based policy dialogue, SDC has the opportunity to provide funding for studies and research. The willingness of SDC to fund data collection, studies, and research to underpin policy dialogues is highly appreciated and seen as an example of the seriousness with which SDC approaches policy dialogues. As examples, SDC is currently contributing funding for the next version of the Tanzania Human Development Report ready for 2023.

3.2 Health Sector

The structured dialogue mechanism in the health sector between GoT and DPs should allow for strategic long-term dialogue about development of the health sector. The structured dialogue constitutes a mechanism for dialogue that is well organised and well understood by all parties. According to development partners, these dialogues have in the past years grown increasingly technical, due to the GoT reluctance to engage in more strategic dialogues. When the recent Health Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2026 was

⁴⁰ SDC Annual Report 2014 – 2020; Interviews

⁴¹ Interviews Dar es Salaam

published it was felt by some development partners that this was too unrealistic and ambitious and hence not a basis for serious dialogue.⁴² At the recent high-level meeting between the Minister of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children with the Heads of Missions Development Partners in the HBF, some of the wider issues related to future financing of the health sector, quality issues and etc was brought up, and it is now up to the government to produce papers for further dialogue.⁴³

This development partner structured dialogue is complemented with bilateral political level dialogue which can be used to raise issues extending beyond the more technical dialogues. The Swiss ambassador engages in dialogue at the ministerial level in Tanzania to complement the dialogues that takes place at civil servants' level. These dialogues are used to present the full scale of Swiss engagement in Tanzania, as well as raising issues of concern directly with the responsible minister in this case, the Minister for Health. Follow-up will take place in the DPG technical working groups and bilaterally Tanzania/Embassy.

Dialogue at that level can be useful to discuss issues that does not fit naturally into the technical working group structure. At a recent meeting between the ambassador and the Minister of Health etc. the issue of dwindling funding for the HBF was discussed, and Switzerland agreed to continue advocating in global funds for support through the HBF. Also, cooperation on approaching new donors incl. non-traditional donors were discussed. The meeting was also used to amplify issues raised in technical working groups. Switzerland on that occasion did not raise the overall political issues related to sustainable financing of the health sector, and the establishment of the universal health insurance in light of increased demand and decreased donor funding but focused on the narrower issue of delay by the government in providing matching funds for the Community Health Fund.⁴⁴

Finally, such meetings can be used to raise issues that are politically sensitive. In the case of Tanzania this could be issues related to long term financing of the health sector related to demographics, policies on family planning, rights of pregnant teenagers, access of LGBT+ etc. According to the resume this did not happen on that occasion. It appears that Switzerland finds sensitive issues best dealt with by global multilateral institutions.⁴⁵

SDC policy inputs for systemic changes in the health sector are well recognised by the GoT and partners. SDC is widely recognised for its policy and technical input into systemic changes in the health sector, such as the development of a private sector-based procurement system that has led to better availability of medicines and supplies at district level across Tanzania. Another area where there is wide agreement as to the important policy and technical input is the standardisation of procedures for good financial management and introduction of IT based management information systems – to enhance resource management, monitoring and promote health quality and equal access. SDC in collaboration with other donors also played an important role in the establishment of the District Health Facility Financing drawing on the experience of a similar facility in the health sector in Kenya. This would not have been possible without the development of the accompanying IT systems for financial management procedures promoted by SDC through the HPSS project and the establishment of the community governance structures.

Important factors for policy success in Tanzania were understanding of the development challenges in the health sector, willingness to support research and pilot projects when there was a need for additional understanding of contexts and

⁴² Interview

⁴³ Draft Minutes for the meeting between the Minister for health etc. Dr. Dorothy Gwajima and the Ambassadors and HoCs supporting the HBF June 9, 2021, Dodoma.

⁴⁴ Minutes meeting Minister for Health etc Dr. Dorothy Gwajima and the Ambassador, October 10, 2021.

⁴⁵ Annual Report 2019 – referring to the situation about pregnant girls barred for attending school

issues, and strong technical capacity. Swiss knowledge acquired over many years about challenges in the health sector is well recognised by government actors, some of whom have worked with Swiss partners at the district level before meeting up again at national level. The Swiss and SDC engagement is lauded for the long-term commitment and the strong people relationships over many years which is described as a unique basis for cooperation. Complementing the on-budget support for the Health Basket Fund with substantial technical assistance through the Health Promotion and Systems Strengthening (HPSS) with the stated aim of providing research for evidence-based policy decisions by the government was instrumental for supporting systemic changes with regards to introduction of IT into the health systems architecture and the changes to the procurement system. According to an ongoing MTR of the HPSS final phase, the technical capacity provided by the HPSS for evidence-based policy dialogue has not been used to the full potential. Progress on evidence generation lag and needs to be expedited.⁴⁶

SDC is also commended for the seriousness with which to approach new issues, including using pilots to test approaches before rolling out across the country. As an example, government interlocutors pointed to a policy debate over whether health needs and issues differed between cities and rural areas. As no development partners were active in cities, SDC piloted a project in Dar es Salaam to learn about potential differences. It turned out that differences were small, but there was a need to be aware that complexities in district health in cities were larger, related to many different cultures coming together in one district and the wide variety in income leading to very different expectations as to what the PHC facilities should deliver. These learnings were then adapted into procedures for urban clinics.⁴⁷

SDC support for a health system financed by insurance offers insight into the limitation of Swiss policy influence based on technical input. SDC is acknowledged for its long-term engagement in the development of insurance-based financing for universal health care coverage in Tanzania. Tanzania quite early opted for insurance as the long-term financing modality for the health sector rather than a tax-based system. SDC from the start saw themselves as well placed to support such a system based on Switzerland's national experience. Despite contributing to developing and testing the improved Community Health Fund (iCHF) since 2010 initially through pilot projects that has now been rolled out across the country through a Government Circular in 2018, as well as developing and testing information management systems to support the scheme, HPSS and SDC do not appear to have tried to influence development of the overall insurance scheme as such. GoT interlocutors described the role for HPSS and SDC with regards to the insurance scheme as problem solvers rather than policy drivers leaving it to the GoT to develop the insurance system and address issues related to coverage, prices, financing of poor people's participation, minimum benefit packages etc. Some interlocutors described this as the result of GoT reluctance to engage donors in these national political discussions and infighting between departments as to where the insurance scheme should be housed.⁴⁸ The Embassy gradually came to the conclusion, that the expert input from the implementing partner organisation did not always provide the most useful technical input at the right time. The Universal Health Insurance Bill now underway through Parliament contains many unresolved issues related to access and cost coverage for the poor that requires considerable policy inputs going forward. So far it appears that policy evidence for solutions is lagging and policy dialogues between SDC/HPSS/GoT and potentially wider in the DPG health is not taking place. The MTR points to the need for the HPSS in the context of support to the iCHF to put more efforts into advocacy and technical support for the government to finalise policies and support operationalisation, and also recommends for HPSS to be more

⁴⁶ MTR HPSS phase 3 20211010 – draft?

⁴⁷ Interview Dar es Salaam November 3rd, 2021

⁴⁸ Interviews November 3rd and November 8th.

active in providing evidence for advocacy and popularization of the iCHF as success of insurance-based system hinges on broad participation.⁴⁹

Once the Universal Health Insurance Bill eventually passes there is a need for further policy evidence and policy advocacy to ensure its success in supporting health sector development with equitable access, gender focus, and continued transparency in the use for health facilities and funds in accordance with the overall objectives of health sector support. There may be a need to step back and revisit the results so far from the iCHF and the NHIF as a backdrop for further developing the system. SDC can play a role but probably should engage the wider DPG Health and larger more capacitated multilateral entities that have experiences from rolling out insurance-based health financing in other developing countries.⁵⁰ At a minimum, continued engagement of the SDC in long term financing of the health sector will require a more structured approach allowing for better understanding of the obstacles to reforms, stakeholder mapping and design of various technical – which are also very political – solutions for further discussion.

There is awareness in the Embassy of the need to strengthen dialogue in the health sector beyond technical issues to also discuss wider development trends in Tanzania that has implications for the health sector including long term sustainable pro-poor health financing. The GoT opening up for dialogue with development partners also increases opportunities for further policy dialogue on broader strategic issues as well as sensitive issues. Swiss engagement will have to be done in the Swiss way that is based on thorough evidence and respect dialogue, possibly in close coordination with development partners from the HBF.

SDC links engagement and knowledge about health sector development globally with activities in Tanzania and vice versa. SDC has a long history of support to the health sector based on Swiss national capacities and strengths in the academic and scientific areas offering strong technical support for SDC engagements in many countries including Tanzania, e.g., through the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. SDC through its support for vertical health funds such as the Global Fund and GAVI that are also active in Tanzania seeks to promote stronger coherence between activities of global funds and policies pursued at the country level. In the context of Tanzania, SDC advocates for the Global Fund and Gavi to channel their funding through the DHFF to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the use of funds and systems by having just one funding channel for funding PHC at the district level.

3.3 Governance

SDC did not engage in direct policy dialogue with the government about governance issues but supported well-established national actors in advocacy and policymaking at the national and sub-national levels. SDC has centred its approach to policy influencing in governance on support to national actors such as PCCB, CSOs, and media. Support to CSOs aimed at enhancing accountability and transparency in service delivery, primarily in health and agriculture at the local level, that in turn could open the door for policy dialogues at subnational and national levels. The SDC-funded SAP programme is the best example of this. The programme seeks to promote good governance (transparency, accountability) through collection of evidence at the local level that can form the basis for influencing at the national level by engaging civil society organisations which work directly with the smaller organisations at the local level. Local evidence collected by local CSOs, and related success stories are expected to underpin policy dialogues, influencing and advocacy at higher instances carried out by national CSOs. Yet, the MTR of the SAP programme (2021) revealed that upstreaming the local level work in broader policy changes

⁴⁹ MTR HPSS phase 3 20211010 – draft?

⁵⁰ Interview

has not been much successful, despite enhanced CSO influence on national policy discussions, especially around natural resource governance and agriculture.

In the media field, SDC has been supporting activities to contribute to increased social accountability and improved enabling environment for freedom of expression. The support, channelled through the TMF (up to 2019) and MCT (until 2015) and international organisations, targeted individual journalists, mass media houses, community media, government, parliament, and citizens. In 2018, SDC supported the launch of a pilot “Yearbook of Media Quality” which was well received by media stakeholders and sparked an evidence-based public discussion about the quality of media in Tanzania. Dialogue with the government was facilitated by the University of Dar es Salaam through the Yearbook report and UNESCO who through the joint steering committee of the rural radios project, implemented by UNESCO, engaged in dialogue with a government representative. SDC did not engage in policy dialogue itself. Especially in the Magufuli years, government was not welcoming of donor assistance in media as it was regarded as foreign interference. Dialogue in civil society and media sub-sectors has primarily been through the project management process.

Swiss support to civil society and media contributed to improved accountability in service delivery. Continuous support to civil society in Tanzania contributed to strengthening their capacities, networks and overall collaboration to report on challenges in service delivery. Between 2015 and 2020, SDC partners reported improved service delivery at local government levels on more than 50 instances in health, agriculture, education, and WASH. CSO engagement led to enhanced gender awareness and understanding of gender issues: In 2019, SDC partners sensitised more than 600.000 people on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). That contributed to reporting of 1372 SGBV cases in 2019 and about 2190 in 2020. Potentially due to the activities of SDC partners, the share of citizens who perceive that they influence allocation and spending of public funds increased from 10% in 2016 to 38% in 2020.

Swiss support to community radios has increased awareness on governance, health, and employment topics, among youth especially. In 2017, 61.5% of SDC supported media reported direct benefits of their engagement at the local level, i.e., improved health services; solutions to land disputes; or discovery of corruption cases. As one of the interviewees put it: *“SDC’s support to local media allowed stories that otherwise would not have been told”*. SDC-financed Niambie radio programme reaches 3.8m people aged 18-35 (51% women) weekly. 81% of listeners reported that the programme improved their understanding of governance issues. Another local radio supported by SDC in 2014 reported on the potential misspending of public funds through its ‘be accountable’ programme that follows on government promises.

Swiss support to key national accountability CSOs contributed to improvements in policy, rules, and regulations at the national level. In the period between 2018 and 2020, SDC’s key partners jointly carried out many policy dialogue engagement which influenced laws and bills. In 2018, Policy Forum member organisations successfully introduced various policy proposals on the Finance Bill. Further in 2018, Policy Forum signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the President’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government Tanzania (PO-RALG) regarding their role in improving public resource management at local level. SAP partners provided inputs to the government’s Regional and Local Governance Strengthening Programme (RLGSP) draft and the new decentralization policy which awaits approval by parliament. In 2019, 33% of changes to Political Act amendments proposed by CSOs were accepted and the most contentious sections in the Statistics Act were removed which slowed down the erosion of political and civic space.

The financial sustainability of supported CSOs and media outlets needs increased attention in SDC dialogue with the supported organisations, to decrease donor dependency and to ensure long term sustainability. While it is laudable also from a vantage point of future sustainability to build the capacity of CSOs and media to pursue national policy changes, SDC in its dialogue with partners in the CSO sector will have to address issues related to financial sustainability. CSOs are heavily dependent on donor-funded projects that are sporadic, therefore, often leaving CSOs without funds especially in light of increased demands for regulatory compliance by the government. For example, SDC contributed the highest share to the Tanzania Media Foundation and its grant-making programme. In the absence of sufficient internal capacities and Swiss support, the organisation struggles to deliver on its plans. SDC mainly relies on expertise of intermediary organisations such as UNESCO, IMS and BBC MA to support media houses on profitability issues. However, the report on the SDC media programme assessment noted that both SDC's implementing partners and media houses face sustainability issues.

Important factors for success were evidence-based dialogue, continuous context analysis, flexible and adaptable programming and trust. SDC support for CSOs and media to pursue evidence-based dialogue was recognised as key success factors. Together with internal structures, it contributed to the legitimacy and credibility of SDC partners both at the local and national levels. Another important factor was adaptable and flexible programming based on continuous context analysis to inter-alia, recognise policy dialogue allies and what to advocate for. In the words of one of the interviewees: *"We need to be deliberate about outcome mapping; Policy dialogue need to be fluid: pull back, reassess, always understand the context to react properly and timely"*. The core-funding modality employed by SDC allows CSOs to respond rapidly to fast-changing circumstances and follow their strategic directions. It contributes to the longer-term stability of their staff, facilitates the development of internal systems and structures and allows funding costs that would otherwise not be covered by project funding. Other important factors include trust, long-term partnerships, inter-personal relations, persistent, professional, capacitated and organised CSOs. SDC is commended for being responsive and providing strategic and intellectual direction to its partners, fostering collaboration, harmonising CSOs work and linking them to media houses.

Sensitive and highly politicised development agendas, such as Human Rights, are more effectively addressed through multilateral policy channels. At the height of the Magufuli era, The Annual Report 2019 states that some agendas such as human rights and LGBTI are more effectively addressed by global multilateral institutions rather than through bilateral dialogue. In the period of Magufuli, SDC recognised that real dialogue on sensitive issues was unlikely and that close coordination with other Development Partners (DPs) and Multilateral Partners (World Bank, WHO, UN) needs to be exacerbated. A good example is a joint and continued initiative of DPs led by World Bank against the expulsion of pregnant girls from school where a solution was found through the intervention of the WB.

Annex 1 Findings across the evaluation questions

EQ1: Outcomes

<p>EQ1: What were the outcomes and impacts (positive and negative) from policy dialogues as a tool to achieve Swiss development goals?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Evidence of positive outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, enhanced understanding of policy issues and other outcomes 1.2 Evidence of negative outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, and enhanced understanding of policy issues, and other unwanted outcomes 1.3 Evidence of the extent to which national policy dialogue contributed to the success/failure of SDC's programme and project objectives 1.4 Evidence that positive changes resulting from policy dialogues led to systemic changes and can be considered sustainable 1.5 The extent to which the national dialogue actors/agents are capacitated to carry out policy dialogues and own the process 1.6 Evidence of impacts from the changes induced by policy dialogue
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Main findings in bullet points (indicator, source of information in brackets)

GENERAL

- SDC instrumental in getting the DPG dialogue going again and in reaching out to the government 2020-2021. Donors had given up on the usefulness of coordinating – SDC used their co-chairmanship and the covid situation to push the DPG back into meeting. ((i.1)
- It started already before the change of president – change of president made the process faster and easier. Magufuli was beginning to understand that he needed to be in dialogue with the IC. Inertia was also on the donor-side limited usefulness of the DPG if there was dialogue with Government. The covid situation made it clear there was a need to restart dialogue in the donor side. (i.2)
- Action-dialogue: Strategic dialogue between DPG HOCs and Permanent Secretaries followed by dialogue between HOMs and ministers. First meeting in November (HOC/PS), followed by meeting again in May. SDC big effort to get these meetings up and running. New round November incl. Ministers. Sectoral dialogues have continued. The restarted dialogue qualifies as an Action dialogue under the Global Partnership for aid effectiveness.
- Now there are so many dialogues that may even begin to question the meaning of it. Bilateral with the government, and the government itself calling dialogue meetings.
- Policy dialogue is about the implementation of the SDGs. SDC is a very serious co-chair of the DPG – we worked with them co-chair over the past years twice. They are willing to provide funding for the policy dialogue to happen.
- SDC did a good job in convincing other donors to dialogue – SDC managed to stay in between donors and the GoT.
- SDC is in the front line of donor coordination – and still work on the aid effectiveness agenda in the context of the Global Partnership of Aid effectiveness. They link to these discussions that other donors not often do.
- **The role of the co-chair does require an investment in time and personnel – that the Swiss was willing to bear.**
- Donors are fragmented today pursuing own interests. Need to map the donors

HEALTH

The structured dialogue mechanism between GoT and DPs allowed for strategic long-term dialogue about development of the health sector contributing to systemic changes and substantial improvements in health results.

- Substantial results have been achieved in the period 2011-14 through policy dialogue and concrete projects. A closer dialogue and collaboration between the civil society and the GOT for improved service delivery at the local level, especially in health and agriculture. (SCST 2015-18) (i.3)
- The Basket Fund Committee (BFC) provides an ideal policy dialogue platform for the health sector. Since its inception, the HBF has driven reforms on decentralisation in planning and budgeting through the Comprehensive Council Health Plan (CCHP), financing through equitable resource allocations (resource allocation formula) and expenditure tracking (Epicor). The HBF has provided a durable platform for the continuous partnership building between GoT, DPs and non-state actors.

Policy dialogue remains sustained, effective and resilient throughout 3 different government periods (President Mkapa, Kikwete and Magufuli). Only few aid modalities have such a strong track record in sustaining results-oriented policy dialogue over a 20-year period.(End PR 2021) (i 1.3)

- A recent Mid-Term Review (2019) of the current HBF cycle found that the HBF significantly contributed towards provision of primary health care services in Tanzania – in particular results in reducing under 5 mortality and improved maternal health. Especially access to essential medicines, health information systems and quality of care (star rating) has improved considerably. The review clearly links health systems performance to the HBF support through DHFF to health facility level. (End PR 2021)
- Good results for governance and accountability in the health sector. Decentralisation of funding through the DHFF supplemented with increased community involvement and oversight through Council Health Boards.
- SDC worked through policy dialogue to support pooling of funds. Pooling of funds in the health sector has allowed for better alignment of funding in accordance with GoT Health Plans and improved aid effectiveness. Pooling of funds has strengthened policy formulation and prioritisation, and supervision of spending. (I 1.3)

SDC policy inputs for systemic changes in the health sector well recognised by the GoT and partners.

- Policy dialogues led to systemic changes in diverse areas such as procurement – with the introduction of the prime vendor system, establishment of the DHFF which ensures direct financing of district facilities and has the opportunity to be the foundation for the future single health insurance facility. (i1.1 and 1.3)
- SDC in particular by the GoT associated with inputs in the policy dialogue on standardisation of procedures and introduction of management information systems – to enhance resource management, monitoring and promote health quality and equal access. This MIS now established will also be useful when the roll out of the health insurance system, when this eventually will happen.
- Long experience in rural – piloted urban to learn about potential differences. Demand did not differ – but working ways had to adjust to complexities (cultural, rich/poor) – used to influence Tanzania’s policy on urban health

SDC policy input on the development of the universal health insurance acknowledged and wished to be seen through to implementation

- Insurance - First support for insurance dates back to CHF 1996. Health finance – develop a sound insurance system, social protection. Piloted the first Community Health Fund in 1996. In 2010 clear this was not working. Funding fragmented, one could not access health across the regions (portability), Restrictions on use of funds, no services available, only the sick enrolled. And the system got defunct. Worked on a new model since 2010 testing – stalled due lack of funding by the government.
- Universal health coverage can only be realised through universal health insurance – possibly a 3-legged system with – formal NHI for public employees, private insurance scheme for others, and a new and improved CHF for the poorest. Government funding.
- Swiss active on all levels of the dialogue and in all dialogues with donor partners.

GOVERNANCE

SDC did not engage in direct policy and strategic efforts with the government but provided support to well-rooted national actors engaged in advocacy and policymaking both at national and subnational level.

- In the governance sector, SDC did not have a policy dialogue process with the GoT but worked on building transparency and accountability of public resource management primarily through strengthening national actors to engage in advocacy and policymaking and improving capacities in the media landscape (*Annual reports, interviews*).
- SDC implements the Social Accountability Programme which provides financial and strategic support to well-established national organisations who work to improve accountability and transparency at national and local Tanzania - The Foundation for Civil Society (capacity building organisation), Policy Forum (a network of more than 100 CSOs working in advocacy), and Twaweza, a well-established and technically capacitated regional CSO that works on citizen engagement in policymaking. The main aim of the programme is to improve the use of public resources ensuring a more equitable access to quality social services. An important component of

the programme is a Social Accountability Monitoring tool used in monitoring all stages of the public resource management cycle. (*Project documents, interviews*)

- The media sector is supported through the Tanzania Media Fund (TMF) established by SDC and other donors, Media Council of Tanzania (MCT), a local NGO, and UNESO. The support has been directed towards strengthening the capacities of media outlets and journalists nationwide and the most prominent recipients were local radios and investigative journalists. (Project documents, interviews)

The authoritarian government and sensitivity of the topic did not allow SDC and its partners to work in favour of enabling environment for CSOs and media.

- The working environment in Tanzania was challenging for all DPs, and SDC was no exception. It was increasingly difficult to engage in any form of dialogue with high level officials. The move of the government to Dodoma has further reduced opportunities for policy dialogue (*AR2019*). Neither SDC nor the Development Partners Group had any opportunity for a dialogue with the GoT for about 3.5 years. Even the chairmanship of Switzerland of the DPG did not trigger improved access to GoT as expected. (*AR 2018, interviews*).
- At the time, the Heads of UN Women, UNDP, and UNESCO and EUD were expelled from the country. Fear was present and key national CSOs went quiet under Magufuli. (*Press releases, interviews*)
- In the period 2010-17, through the Tanzanian Media Fund, S provided more than 50 grants (Media transformation grants) to media outlets and more than 700 individual grants allowing stories, mainly local level specific issues, that would not have been told otherwise. (*interview*)

At the subnational level, the most direct benefit of Swiss support to civil society has been improved transparency, accountability and service delivery. Swiss support to community radios contributed to improved social accountability and increased understanding of locally-grounded issues.

- In the period 2015 – 2018, more than 160 CSOs were trained and engaged in social accountability monitoring in 95 districts across the country, including mainland and Zanzibar. Close to 100'000 citizens have benefited from over 50 service delivery improvements. CSOs have enhanced its understanding of governance structures and capacities to influence policy processes (*SDC website, SCST 2015 – 2018; interviews*)
- Although the quality of media reporting has improved and reporting has become more relevant to the lives of rural citizens increasing their understanding of locally grounded challenges, yet it needs more background information, comprehensiveness and opposition views. (*EPR, 2020, interviews*)
- SDC's efforts in PEACE - In total, SDC partners have supported more than 250 peace dialogues during the pre- and post-2015 election that likely contributed to the prevention of violent outbreaks related to elections. These dialogues reached around 90'000 people out of which 38% were women (AR, 2016)

Swiss support to key national accountability CSOs contributed to changed policy, rules, and regulations at the national level.

- In 2018, Policy Forum member organisations successfully introduced various policy proposals on Finance Bill. (*Annual report*)
- In 2019, 33% of changes to Political Act amendments proposed by CSOs were accepted and the most contentious sections in the Statistics Act were removed which slowed down the erosion of political and civic space. (*Interviews, Annual Reports*)
- Further in 2018, Policy Forum signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PORALG regarding their role in improving public resource management at local level. (*Annual Report*)
- SAP partners provided inputs to the government's Regional and Local Governance Strengthening Programme (RLGSP) draft and the new decentralization policy. (*Interviews, Annual Report*)

The profitability and sustainability of the supported media partners needs continuous and increased attention.

- SDC contributed the highest share to the Tanzania Media Foundation and its grant-making programme. In the absence of sufficient internal capacities and Swiss support, the organisation struggles to deliver on its plans (interviews)

Quotes: -

Value addition of SDC was that they helped harmonize donor's views, they reached out to government with frank discussions behind closed doors, and they support analytical work that can improve the basis for dialogue between donors and the government

Yes, in Tanzania, we do conduct policy dialogue with the development partners

EQ2: Factors

<p>EQ2: What are the factors/practices that supported/hindered outcomes from policy dialogues?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p><u>Context related</u></p> <p>2.1 The extent to which <u>national policy dialogue aims and content</u> were well grounded in the context and relevant for the partner in pursuing development priorities as well as relevant from the point of view of Swiss development policy goals and SDC's programme and project objectives</p> <p>2.2 The extent to which the <u>national policy dialogue processes</u> were well grounded in the context and building on understanding of context, including timing and choice of partners</p> <p>2.3 The extent to which internationally agreed goals e.g., SDGs, conventions, humanitarian principles enabled national policy dialogues</p> <p><u>Actor related</u></p> <p>2.4 The extent to which policy dialogues with multilateral institutions (globally and nationally) and in the context of global programmes were coherent and supported SDC policy goals at the national level</p> <p>2.5 The extent to which SDC working with other development partners in developing joint policy messages and conducting joint policy dialogues enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of policy dialogues</p> <p>2.6 The extent to which working with national partner country actors, including other than the government, supported national policy dialogue outcomes</p> <p><u>Internal capacity related</u></p> <p>2.7 extent to which Swiss ways of working, including long-term partnerships, broker, and bridge builder, is a high value asset and door-opener for Swiss engagement in policy dialogue</p> <p>2.8 The extent to which knowledge and Swiss comparative advantages and domestic expertise supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p> <p>2.9 The extent to which Swiss political dialogue with partner countries supported outcomes of SDC policy dialogues and projects/programmes</p> <p>2.10 The extent to which SDC's policy dialogue activities were systematically and sufficiently coordinated internally (including SDC HQ and SCO) and with other Swiss government counterparts (WOGA), as well as non-Government entities where relevant</p> <p>2.11 The extent to which SDC's procedures (including for preparation and development of strategies for policy dialogues) and modalities were value-for-money and conducive to implementing policy dialogues</p> <p>2.12 The extent to which SDC staff guidance, staff training, and capacities supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p>
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Main findings in bullet points (indicator & source of information in brackets)

GENERAL

- SDC good understanding of context and moved when the time was ripe – covid situation. SDC did not use their co-chair to pursue bilateral interests. There was critique from some donors for SDC not being vocal on issues, but a co-chair has to present the full view of the donor group. (i.2.1)
- SDC has this good combination of development knowledge and diplomatic skills (i.2.12)
- SDC is seen as a credible partner by government and donors alike. (i.2.7)

SDC acts neutral also in DPG. They are well aware that many issues are political – but try not to politicise – covid e.g. They treated it like an emergency to deal with without confronting the

government. They have their policies that they pursue – media freedom, GBV, women empowerment, free and fair elections. But never in a loud way. (I 2.7)

Switzerland seen as a serious partner – not driven by internal interest to the extent that many other donors are. Harsh statements from some donors on Tanzania treatment/return of refugees for DRC and Burundi hollow, when one think about their own policies. The government here knows that. (i.2.7)

SDC has small funding to be deployed to underpin research and data collection for evidence-based policy dialogue Support for Tanzania Human Development Report – new data on service delivery to underpin discussions in DPG and with Government. (i.2.7)

SDC is willing to support the branding of Tanzania as an example of aid effectiveness delivery – data feeding into the International Aid Transparency Index (DAC/OECD) and the Global Partnership for Development Cooperation where Switzerland is also active. (i.2.)

SDC always ready to work with others, e.g., invited Canada the incoming DPG chair to contribute to the Tanzania Human Development Report. (i.2.7)

The restart of the dialogue is good – it is not a going back to the earlier forms of dialogue – the government is clearly much more on top this time and have more ownership (i.2.7)

Need to ensure that there is substance in the policy dialogue – well prepared and the government ready. Starting is good – now it is about substance. The DPG is not yet there. Question the usefulness of sending letters to achieve influence (i.)

SDC manages to use experiences from the local level to inform policy dialogue – credible (i.2.2)

HEALTH

Context related

- In the health sector there is a well-established structure for policy dialogue – that goes across all levels and topics of relevance for the Health sector. Even during the times of restrained relationship between donors and GoT the technical dialogues continued. Technical can also be very political. (i2.1)
- The dialogue took as its starting point the Health Strategies and Health financing plans to ensure alignment (i.2.1)
- Evidence based PD – Health sector - experience from projects/ programmes feeding into PD (i2.1/ i2.2; AR 2014)
- The policy dialogue on a single national health insurance has been stalled for the past 3 years due to a financing shortfall of government in support of universal health insurance. (HPSS phase 3 MTR, 201x)
- SDC contributions to policy dialogue in the health sector is based on a strong knowledge of the situation in the country from working in projects at local and district level. (i. 2.2)
- When there was a discussion of decentralisation of health and most knowledge was about rural health, SDC decided to pilot district health in Dar es Salam to understand if the situation differed. (i.2.2)
- SDC does not come with preconceived ideas and plans. They accept Tanzania in the lead and then work with us to make our plans work.

Actors related

- Health - Policy dialogue between GoT and Health Partners is strong and accountable due to the endorsement of the Sector-wide Approach Code of Conduct and Common Management Arrangement (i2.5; AR 2016). Policy dialogue through the SWAp mechanisms needs to clarify the preferred financing mechanism in order to advance on the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) (AR 2020)
- SDC working with other donors both in the context of DPG Health and the Health Basket Fund Committee. Donors of the HBFC have strong ownership to the outcomes of the policy dialogue and the decisions made and find it difficult to distinguish between one donor's input compared to others, as this was a collaborative effort. (i2.5)

- SDC takes credit for the systemic changes achieved during the past years – the establishment of the DHFF, the monitoring systems and the vendor system. (I 2.5)
- SDC – Global Fund

Internal capacity related

- S long presence in the country; trusted and valued partner of T. (i2.7; SCST 2015-18)
- SDC way of working respects the ownership and leadership of the country
- Health - S wealthy practical experience (e.g., Health Basket) and innovative knowledge (i2.8; SCST 2015-18, AR 2015)
- Health – strong policy dialogue with senior leadership –
- The substantial TA provided by the HPSS project allowed SDC to work the government to develop policies and strategies, ensure implementation and piloting new initiatives which could then be rolled out across the country.
- SDC internal capacity very high - with long term expertise, knowledge and networks in the health sector helped SDC to play its role. This was complemented with the long-term support for and cooperation between the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute that also has a long history in Tanzania.

GOVERNANCE

Important factors for success were evidence-based dialogue, continuous context analysis, flexible and adaptable programming and trust.

- Evidence based PD - A tool to monitor accountability (SAM – Social Accountability Monitoring) and government use of public funds enhanced CSO understanding of government structures and increased their capacities to influence policy processes, policy dialogue infrastructures. (i2.2; i2.6; SCST 2015-18, interviews)
- Sharp political/ strategic and power analysis; recognising allies helps CSOs in advocating for changes in policies and regulations (interviews)
- *“We need not only advocacy, but we also need evidence-based advocacy”*
- Working in governance and media sector requires flexibility in funding and expected outcomes. *“Be deliberate about outcome mapping – log frames must not be rigid – PD needs to be fluid; pull back, reassess, understand the context always so to react timely”*(interviews)
- Persistent, more professional and more organized advocacy CSOs (i2.6; AR 2013)
- Inter-personal relations; diffusing a notion that the cooperation is about helping the opposition
- Pre- and post-election peace – PD training, support by SDC partners, high number of dialogues, Co-chairing the G working group in the absence of a formal dialogue structure (i2.6; AR 2016)
- Integrated Embassy brought about more coherence in the PD with the GOT and other actors. (i2.1/ i2.10; SCST 2015-18)
- Credible policy dialogue – S comparative advantage – Health, Governance, Media. (AR)

Citations:

SDC does not come with preconceived ideas about how the health sector should develop. They listen to our plans and help us develop the plans also sometimes through support for pilot projects.

EQ3: Lessons learned

<p>Q3 What are the lessons learned and how were they applied?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>3.1 The extent to which SDC identified lessons and best practices in policy dialogues with regards to processes and reaching outcomes</p> <p>3.2 The extent to which SDC applied such lessons in its policy dialogue activities across the organisation and shared knowledge with other government agencies engaged in policy dialogue activities</p>
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Main findings in bullet points (indicator & source of information in brackets)

GENERAL

- The easy part is to get the dialogue going – now comes the hard part of defining the substance.

HEALTH

- The Health Basket Fund is an effective sector dialogue platform and remains the most reliable funding source for health service delivery, although more efforts could be made to increase the extent to which services are responsive to the special needs of youth. (*i3.1; SCST 2021-2024*)
- SDC must remain active in policy dialogue and lobbying at the highest level. There is good linkage of field experience and policy dialogue at all levels (district, regional and national). SDC has brought the programme experience and lessons learnt in three national health policy working groups. (*Credit Proposal 2, HPSS*)
- SDC points to cross fertilization between the TA on HPSS and the activities funded through the HBF. In reality the HPSS is too much a project approach with too many short-term consultants that functions as problems solvers rather than advisors on larger strategic issues.
- In hindsight, SDC should have diverted some of the HPSS funding into the HBF and used this as the structure for research and evidence gathering in cooperation with PO RALG rather than funding a Swiss partner, that was too remote from the actual big picture issues.
- On the future of the insurance – there is now a need to step one step backwards and start over again. What has been funded so far can probably inform what to do and not to do – but there is a need to rethink again the insurance scheme and to place it firmly into the financing strategy of the health sector in Tanzania. For this a broader public debate is necessary.
- Support for the health sector in Tanzania unique as it represents direct funding of government. Will continue the next strategy period under the heading of Outcome 1.
- Questions remain as to a more intense policy dialogue effort to promote the discussions of future financing of the health sector could have supported progress on the universal health insurance? It appears there was limited attempts to pursue such dialogue over and beyond the DPG.
- In order to deal with a highly politicized development agenda, a good understanding of alternative non-traditional donor agendas and their priorities is required to remain effective in our own Government of Tanzania dialogue. Some agendas such as Human Resource and Key Populations (LGBTI) are more effectively addressed by global multilateral institutions rather than through bilateral dialogue. (*AR 2019*)
- Community-level engagement
- Building up from the bottom – could have been done better – work more on the ground to understand ‘the disease’ better and feed it into strategic thinking – a central factor.
“We think of communities as beneficiaries, but they have a role in results, they are our partners, and the question is how to engage them to get better results. This is where we can create ownership and sustainability. Projects are dying”
- S could have organised PD trainings
- Setting a broader and longer PD agenda: What, Why, Who, When. The plan until the next election. Long-term agenda linked to g. plans

GOVERNANCE

- In order to deal with a highly politicized development agenda, a good understanding of alternative non-traditional donor agendas and their priorities is required to remain effective in our own Government of Tanzania dialogue. Some agendas such as Human Resource and Key Populations (LGBTI) are more effectively addressed by global multilateral institutions rather than through bilateral dialogue. (*AR 2019*)
- Evidence based sector dialogue - Pursue and facilitate results-oriented policy dialogue at national level, thus building valuable bridges between regional and sub-national data driven projects and national policy making. (*i3.1; SCST 2015-18; SCST 2021-24*).
- Intensified context analysis and policy dialogue with government and CSO stakeholders are needed in order to closely follow the context changes and to advocate for democratic and human rights principles. (*AR 2018*)
- Link HR issues to economy on policy and political level dialogue

- *"There is much more space for changes at the local level. Local government do recognise local issues and are willing to respond when they realise benefits. Many court cases started locally and brought about changed practices at the national level".*
- Use policy instead political, governance instead of democracy.
- The Embassy will have in future to invest more time to maintain and re-establish partnerships, and in political and sector policy dialogues. (AR 2018)
- Real dialogue on sensitive issues is unlikely, especially with elections approaching. Close coordination with other Development Partners (DPs) and Multilateral Partners (World Bank, WHO, UN) will be sought to retain some level of engagement. (AR 2019)

EQ4: Peers

<p>EQ4: What are the experiences of peers in conducting national policy dialogues, and are there lessons to be learned?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>4.1 Evidence of good practices in policy dialogue from other donors that can inspire SDC practices</p> <p>4.2 The extent to which policy dialogue processes and outcomes of other development partners' efforts contributed to SDC ways of conducting policy dialogue</p> <p>4.3 The extent to which the Swiss approach to policy dialogues was more effective/less effective than peers'</p> <p>4.4 The extent to which SDC collaborated with others in exchanging knowledge on good/bad practices and developing existing practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of policy dialogues</p>
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<p>Main findings in bullet points (indicator & source of information in brackets)</p>	
<p>GENERAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of SDC to "work behind closed" doors sometimes draw criticism from other donors • During the early Magufuli years there was no opportunity for a donor like SDC to act as a go between as the government was not interested. So SDC stayed with the western group. 	

Country case study Ukraine

1 Introduction

1.1 Country context – political, economic, main development challenges

The country context is well summarised in the Cooperation Strategies, and the information below is largely drawn from these strategies, and especially the 2020-2023 Strategy.

Political context

Since its independence from the Soviet Union 30 years ago, Ukraine's transition has been shaped by two key caesuras, the "Orange Revolution" in 2004 and the 2014 "Euromaidan Revolution" or "Revolution of Dignity"; the following annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation; and the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has, to date, cost 13,000 lives and displaced 1.4 million people. In September 2019, Ukraine's post-Maidan government under president Petro Poroshenko was replaced, through democratic elections, by a new government led by the Servants of the People party under president Volodymyr Zelensky. The government continues to be committed to the country's European and Euro-Atlantic integration; to a peaceful resolution of the conflict; and to continuing the broad reform agenda commenced as part of the Association Agreement with the European Union in 2014. The active conflict in eastern Ukraine is in its seventh year and continues to affect the civilian population residing in the conflict-affected areas and beyond. While there has been an overall gradual decrease in ceasefire violations and consequently, civilian casualties, the situation remains volatile.

Economy

Despite very substantial economic potential and considerable progress in reform agenda after the Revolution of Dignity, Ukraine, the largest country in Europe, is the second-poorest country of the continent. Life expectancy – especially for men – remains well below the European average. Outmigration of skilled and unskilled people in search of jobs is extensive. Decades of neglect and under-investment in infrastructure and energy-efficiency measures have led to an unsustainable over-consumption of energy, which affects public services; hampers productivity; and impairs the quality of life. The country has been struggling to attract large-scale foreign direct investments necessary for accelerating its growth. According to surveys, the lack of the rule of law and progress in fight against corruption are the main challenges for investors. Economic impact of the pandemic was not as severe as projected due to favourable world commodity prices and improved macro-financial management. Ukraine's economy fell by 4% in 2020 versus 9.8% in 2015 and relatively quickly turned to recovery path. Nonetheless about 30% of small businesses have not yet managed to reach the pre-quarantine level of income. COVID-19 also exacerbated the problem of unemployment and reversed the trend in poverty reduction but added additional impetus to the digital transformation of business and public services.

1.2 SDC in Ukraine

Switzerland has been a partner since the 1990s, in the areas of development, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. In response to the 2014 revolution, which brought in a pro-European government, Switzerland more than doubled its Official Development Assistance (ODA) and positioned itself within the Minsk Peace Process chaired by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as an honest broker between all sides of the armed conflict. Switzerland is among the lead donors in the areas of decentralisation, digital transformation, health, and energy, and the only bilateral third party to provide direct humanitarian assistance to the population on both sides of the contact line in eastern

Ukraine. Ukraine and Switzerland are also important partners within the Swiss-led constituency at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Table 3: Goals and focus of Swiss strategic cooperation in Ukraine

Years	Goal for the cooperation strategy	Focus (%of total budget)
2011-2014	To support Ukraine in the transition process to improve the living conditions of its citizens, provide effective public services, and promote sustainable economic growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governance and public services (16% CHF 9m) Reproductive health (14% CHF 8m) Financial and economic sustainability – SECO (21% CHF 12m) Sustainable energy management – SECO (35% CHF 20m) Non-core programme -(14% CHF 8m)
2015-2020	To promote cohesion, inclusive democratic governance and sustainable socio-economic development in Ukraine aiming at a peaceful, equitable and prosperous society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and peace building (29% CHF29m) Health (12% CHF12m) Sustainable energy and urban development - SECO (32 % CHF32m) Sustainable economic development - SECO (18% CHF18m) Humanitarian and non-core (8%, CHF 8m)
2020-2023	To support Ukraine on its path towards peace and towards an inclusive society, in which women and men equally contribute to and benefit from public integrity and sustainable growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace, Protection and Democratic Institutions; (41%; CHF44m) Sustainable Cities; (30%; CHF32m) Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Competitiveness (16%; CHF17m) Health. (13%; CHF14m)

1.3 Environment for Policy Dialogue

The environment for policy dialogue changed significantly after 2014, when a new, more pro-EU administration took over, and western-leaning donors pledged increased support. This received more impetus in 2019 with the election of President Zelensky and his Servant of the People party. However, since then, as reported in the SDC 2020 Annual Report, the influence of vested interests on the government has increased, although it is noted that developments on decentralisation and land reforms have been positive.

Various inclusive donor coordination mechanisms exist, and some function reasonably well in support of key reforms launched by the Poroshenko government in the aftermath of the 2014 Euromaidan revolution. Switzerland is among the lead donors in the areas of decentralisation, digital transformation, health, and energy (the latter is mainly covered by SECO). Switzerland played a lead role in the creation of the donor board on decentralisation reform in Ukraine and in the donor

coordination arrangements for health sector reforms. More recently, as noted in the 2020

The three-tier international technical assistance coordination structure.

- Tier 1 - The Development Partnership Forum enables high level policy dialogue on strategic issues of the national reforms progress
- Tier 2 - Strategic Platform allows for the strategic coordination of international technical assistance with the national reform priorities taking into account the SDGs and the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement
- Tier 3 - the Sectoral Working Groups (SWG) conduct regular dialogue and coordination between central executive bodies and Development Partners in relevant areas of public policy and sectoral reforms

Annual Report, Switzerland has scaled up its positive experience in the establishment of the Decentralisation Donor Board to the wider national level, and significantly contributed to the establishment of the three-tier international technical assistance coordination structure. In 2020, Switzerland was nominated to co-chair the Sectoral Working Group on Digital Transformation, which is expected to open up new entry points for policy dialogue. A number of reforms have lost their pre-2019 momentum. This includes the health sector reform—since August 2019, there have been four Ministers of Health; a considerable amount of staff has been replaced; and a substantial number of vacancies exist. Sectoral donor coordination has flagged.

A series of annual Ukraine Reform Conferences, started in 2017, have ensured continuity and streamlining of support, coordination and dialogue. Switzerland early on signalled its interest in hosting a conference and will be hosting the 2022 one in Lugano.

1.4 In-depth case studies

Case studies were conducted for the policy dialogue within decentralisation, digital transformation and health.

2 Summary of findings

The below findings are based on a desk assessment of available documents; interviews with SDC; Government of Ukraine (albeit with a rather limited number); implementers, including multi-lateral organisations; and other donors, conducted mainly remotely from the premises of the Swiss Embassy in Ukraine between 22-25 November 2021.

2.1 Results

For most of the time covered by the scope of the evaluation (2013-2020), there has been a favourable environment for policy reforms. SDC's contribution has been to support policy implementation through technical cooperation and finance. The main direction was not to adjust or re-direct policy reforms, but to ensure their credibility and legitimacy through supporting implementation. Thus, SDC has provided flexible and timely support to the policy reforms in health, decentralisation and digital transformation. SDC supported pilot projects at the local level for later national replication. The practical support for service delivery within water and waste management, for example, served to increase local commitment to the reform process. In combination with intensive and professional support to communication of the reforms, these efforts strengthened both the demand and expectations for reforms, and the delivery of reform outcomes.

Policy dialogue results are evident especially in the sense of protecting, legitimising, and supporting government reforms. SDC supported the government at difficult times when the reform process was threatened by opposition and vested interests.

Results within decentralisation and digital transformation where SDC actions led to a harmonised and strongly supportive international response that contributed to desired outcomes include:

- Supporting the government approach to amalgamation of local authorities through issuing joint donor statements and endorsing the approach when it was being undermined by vested interests. This built on earlier policy dialogue where the policy messages were to continue amalgamation, adopt the European charter standards and improve the communication and information exchange between central and local government. SDC provided political support to facilitate access by the government representatives to the Council of Europe expertise.
- Launching a social media and twitter storm to signal international support for fiscal decentralisation

- Encouraging government to seek Council of Europe opinion on whether the government preferred approach on the legal personality at local government was compatible with the European charter.
- Reducing misinformation among donors and others on the nature of leakage of personal data that threatened to undermine confidence in the digital platforms.
- Supporting a platform and ecosystem that led to new legislation on regulation of virtual assets (e.g., bitcoin, vouchers etc). The legislation was submitted to parliament and now awaits a second round of voting. The platform has been converted into an internally Ukrainian driven policy dialogue and exchange mechanism.
- Harnessing the convening power of the Lugano reform conference to reinforce the importance of digital transformation in advancing policy reforms and providing an opportunity for showcasing Ukrainian advances on digital technologies.

Examples where Switzerland contributed to results in the health domain include:

- Supporting the implementation of the first National Health Sector Reform Strategy 2015-2020 by providing technical support, via WHO and the WB, to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine to assume the political and technical lead to drive the reform process, including through effective donor coordination.
- Supporting the Ministry of Health to institutionalise inclusive policy dialogue practices around key policy changes that are part of the Health Sector Reform. These practices include extensive consultations of stakeholders at all levels affected by the new policies, and who are expected to implement these on the ground, thereby strengthening ownership and outcomes of these reforms.
- Policy dialogue led by the MoH was accompanied by technical expertise to provide expertise for evidence-based policy making on a variety of policies (including health financing; public health system strengthening; primary healthcare etc.); it also contained important communications/visibility actions to support the policy messages.
- Although the momentum for health sector reform has considerably slowed, there is evidence that these practices have remained as the guiding, best practices approach to policy-making, even though the MoH might not themselves be able to conduct these processes (a recent example includes the adoption of the Mental Health Action Plan, which was supported by the Swiss-funded mental health project).
- Even though clear attribution is difficult, Switzerland has been an early champion of inclusion of difficult topics into the health reform agenda, for example on mental health reform, which has been included into the National Health Sector Reform Strategy, and where Switzerland now is helping to advance this agenda by providing specific technical support to implement the Action Plan, by piloting policies and new practices at the level of three pilot regions.

SDC was instrumental in fostering a systematic platform for policy dialogue at different levels of government that ensured a harmonised donor voice. SDC helped to establish the donor board for decentralisation, and, more recently, was a key actor in initiating the three-tier coordination structure. As well as ensuring a harmonised donor response and to reduce the burden on government, the new structures have also at least in some sectors enabled government to take an increasingly active role in coordinating external support. SDC and fellow donors have benefitted from having systematic and multi-level entry points for policy dialogue. SDC working through the WHO project created capacity within the Ministry of Health to build up evidence-based approaches and engage in policy dialogue internally within Ukraine and also with external development partners. The degree of government leadership varies among the sectors and the platforms are generally still dependent on external financial support.

In the long term, there is some anecdotal evidence that the capacity built at individual and even institutional level could lead to a critical mass of local expertise for domestic policy dialogue. SDC has engaged with many local experts and partners in government and civil society. Over the years, these experts and partners have been exposed to international practice in critical, transparent and evidence-based policy dialogue. Some have then gone to influential positions within and outside government and are already contributing to a healthy domestic process of policy dialogue. A critical mass has not yet been established, and there is always the threat of reversal. Nevertheless, there are prospects, in the longer term, that Ukraine will have developed the routines and sufficient internal capacity for effective domestic policy dialogue.

2.2 Factors

There are several success factors that can be isolated. The most important ones can be grouped as:

Long-term, persistent and flexible support that was in service rather than opposition to government reforms and continued in both favourable and adverse environments. Support to key reforms such as decentralisation and in the health, sector has been provided over more than 15 years, both during periods of high and low government priority. The support was flexible and opportunistic enough to respond to new and unexpected demands such as the need for legislation of virtual assets. It was also flexible enough to find relevant partners and activities in periods when the central government exhibited lower priority for genuine reform, for example developing awareness and readiness for reforms and supporting practical service delivery projects at the local level.

Working at multiple levels with a mix of policy, capacity and investment - the on-the-ground support at local level and especially the practical support to service delivery was a factor that ensured good intelligence on the ground. It also served to enhance the credibility of SDC, because messages and approaches were tested at local level. Working at multiple levels and with a variety of stakeholders also ensured that SDC remained neutral and despite its long presence and frequent changes in the Ukraine government, was sufficiently distant to not take ownership away from the government.

Assumption of niche roles that supported reforms on communication, liaison and information exchange. SDC is a small player compared to other donors. Perhaps because of this, SDC was able to find a niche as an interlocutor between vertical and horizontal levels of government and across civil society. A number of evaluations and stakeholders consulted during this evaluation testify to the value of this liaison and information exchange role. Intensive and professional support to communication of the reforms and their benefits was an important niche that served to reinforce wider support for reforms.

Recruitment and empowerment of national programme officers, as well as support to studies that provided strong evidence based on on-the-ground intelligence, and access to high level personnel. Due to language, continuity of service and personal connection, the national programme officers were highly involved in policy level engagement. SDC recruited and developed programme officers who had the aptitude and skill-set to be effective interlocutors. This, combined with financing studies such as the health assessment study, meant that SDC and the cooperation team as a whole was well equipped with evidence for knowing how to respond to new situations as they arose. For example, based on the experience, at local level, combined with an ability to anticipate and gauge trends, and the strong personal relationships established by national programme staff, SDC was able to seize the opportunity to support, in a timely manner, the digitisation reform in the aftermath of the 2014 revolution. Likewise, SDC's support for increasing the Ministry of Health's capacity in driving the Health Sector Reform was the result of a track

record of project results on the ground and the cooperation team’s realisation for the need to support the Ministry’s health team to be the driver and champion of the reforms.

Recognition and support to setting up of systematic and collective donor policy dialogue entry points. The presence of a functioning mechanism to ensure a collective donor voice with systematic entry points at different levels allowed SDC and the cooperation team to engage using an appropriate mix of high and operational level staff and at the policy level, as well as the political level.

2.3 Lessons learnt

Lessons that arise from the experience in Ukraine include:

- Where policies and reforms are sound, the main emphasis of policy dialogue will be on implementation of reforms and providing international solidarity in times of internal and external opposition to the reforms.
- Long-term, predicable and flexible support that mixes bottom-up investment and capacity development with interventions at higher policy level is effective.
- Support to both the demand and supply side of reforms and policy is relevant as part of the policy dialogue.
- Building up and facilitating domestic capacity for internal policy dialogue is important as is ensuring that development partners keep a distance and do not inadvertently substitute local actors.
- Donor coordination mechanisms, when combined with systematic entry points, increase the effectiveness of policy dialogue
- Recruitment and empowerment of local SDC staff has proven to be effective – training and experience exchange more widely within SDC would be beneficial.

Annex 1 Findings across the evaluation questions

EQ1: Outcomes

<p>EQ1: What were the outcomes and impacts (positive and negative) from policy dialogues as a tool to achieve Swiss development goals</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>1.1 Evidence of positive outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, enhanced understanding of policy issues and other outcomes</p> <p>1.2 Evidence of negative outcomes in terms of changes to policies, practices, behaviours, and enhanced understanding of policy issues, and other unwanted outcomes</p> <p>1.3 Evidence of the extent to which national policy dialogue contributed to the success/failure of SDC’s programme and project objectives</p> <p>1.4 Evidence that positive changes resulting from policy dialogues led to systemic changes and can be considered sustainable</p> <p>1.5 The extent to which the national dialogue actors/agents are capacitated to carry out policy dialogues and own the process</p> <p>1.6 Evidence of impacts from the changes induced by policy dialogue</p>
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<p>Main findings in bullet points (indicator, source of information in brackets)</p>
<p>GENERAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not easy to isolate results due to policy dialogue alone. Where there are results, they have arisen as a combination of different interventions including, but wider than, policy dialogue.(i1.1/1.2). Another difficulty is attribution: while there is evidence that SDC’s engagement in policy dialogue and which then has been instrumental in advancing reforms, the cooperation team does also clearly acknowledge that there is a multitude of actors involved, and that without this multitude, one actor alone cannot, and should not, be expected to leverage results. (i. 1.1) • Policy dialogue is seen as one of the measures for managing risks and in particular how to react to different scenarios (base, better, worse) – this is clear in the 2015-2020 country strategy and also from the EGAP credit proposal where it is stated “<i>In the unlikely case that the future</i>

government does not consider e-governance and e-democracy as priority reform topics, a more active engagement of EGAP in national policy dialogue and joint donor advocacy efforts will be needed.” (Credit proposal 7F-08031.02)(i.1.3)

- **There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between policy dialogue on the one hand, and technical assistance on the other hand.** Across the portfolio, policy dialogue is informed by evidence, experience and a network of trusted and trusting interlocutors, gained through implementing projects at the local level, including in strategy periods preceding the scope of the evaluation. For example, mental health has been a policy issue championed by Switzerland before it became part of a national reform agenda. Now Swiss support is supporting the implementation of this agenda through the project; interlocutors confirm that this provides credibility and momentum to the reform; without this technical support, the agenda would stall. (i. 1.3; stakeholder interviews - triangulation).
- **The Swiss cooperation team (SCO) is actively engaged in identifying potential future areas of policy dialogue.** For example, an informal network of stakeholders is currently brainstorming on areas or aspects that might not have, yet been covered in the health sector reform, but that might be targeted in the future. (2020 Health Sector Assessment, stakeholder interviews).
- **SDC was instrumental in setting up a platform for donor coordination that ensured systematic multi-entry points for policy dialogue.** The donor board within decentralisation and the later three tier coordination structure has enabled a higher degree of government involvement and ownership of the process of coordinating donor support. At the same time, it has provided SDC and other donors with a systematic series of entry points for policy dialogue and helped to ensure that policy messages are coordinated within the donor community. SDC has over the years on a rotating basis taken lead roles in digital transformation and decentralisation. (multiple interviews within SDC, government and other donors, minutes of meeting) Success of the donor coordination platform is uneven, however. In the health sector, the ministry was in the driving seat of international actors’ coordination, this momentum has now stalled (various stakeholder interviews). (i.1.1 /1.5)
- **SDC support was instrumental in institutionalising best practices of policy dialogue.** For example, the Swiss support through the World Bank and the WHO capacitated the MoH to lead inclusive, participatory approaches including all relevant stakeholders, at political and technical levels. These practices are accepted as best practices in the MoH, although there is some evidence, although there is evidence that the ministry is not, yet, able to sustain these on their own (due to a lack of political leadership; a lack of visions; and a lack of resources). (i. 1.5)

HEALTH

- **There has been significant process in the implementation of the health sector reform in Ukraine over the course of the evaluation period.** Arguably one of the most difficult sectors, the reforms have been driven by the Ministry of Health, and Swiss support has been pivotal in enabling the Ministry to advance these reforms. Swiss support has provided the Ministry with the resources necessary to conduct effective policy dialogue with international and national stakeholders. As the reforms brought underway by the projects are systemic and long-term, the effectiveness will have to be assessed separately, and at a later stage. However, Swiss support has contributed to creating the legislative and regulatory framework at national level and the ownership at regional and local levels at the point of delivery of the reforms.
- **The “Policy Dialogue for Better Health Governance” and “Support to Reform and Good Governance in the Health System in Ukraine” projects have created results in support of the first comprehensive sector reform strategy, the 2015-2020 Health Sector Reform Strategy.** They assisted the MoH with both improving the regulatory frameworks, as well as practical implementation of the healthcare reform agenda (health financing, hospital districts, eHealth, NCDs prevention, mental health, medical education, communication) at the national and regional levels (in the areas of primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular diseases and cancer and improving the efficiency of the health care system in selected oblasts). Swiss support was also instrumental in the establishment of the National Health Service of Ukraine, and the Public Health and Mental Health Centers. (SDC Annual report 2017, p. 14; end-of-project report World Bank project “Support to Reform and Good Governance in the Health System in Ukraine” and final report of “Policy Dialogue for Better Health Governance” project implemented through WHO; stakeholder interviews) (I 1.1)
- The SDC management response to the annual report (2017, p4) notes that the Ukrainian minister of Health acknowledged this during a visit to Switzerland (sexual and reproductive health in particular). (I 1.1)

GOVERNANCE - digital transformation

- **There has been significant progress in policy dialogue and advances in implementation of e-governance, e-democracy and open data.** Since 2015, there are more than 6 million users of e-services, 95% of business users are satisfied and 81% acknowledge e-services effectiveness in countering corruption. 88% of families now use the maternity e-service with simplified 10 processes related to maternity registration. The participatory budget has been used by 930,000 citizens and local petitions have attracted about 800,000 users [Source EGAP presentation, 2020]. The newly established Ministry of Digital Transformation has delivered on innovative national policies and the Cabinet of Ministers endorsed the roll-out of the comprehensive implementation structure for the digital transformation of the country through introducing a Chief Digital Transformation Officer (CDTO) position in all ministries, state agencies and oblast and rayon state administrations. This approach can become a major transformation of the public administration towards better efficiency, high-quality service provision and improved transparency. Over 250'000 people used the pilot e-services, with 73% of service users indicating that e-services helped to reduce corruption. A case study presented in the SDC 2017 annual report pointed to 3 main results: i) Coalition on E-democracy drafts the first National Concept for E-democracy in 3 months on a voluntary basis with EGAP providing technical assistance; ii) Face2face consultations in 6 regions and a month-long national online consultation generate inputs and civic feedback from over 400 stakeholders across Ukraine; iii) State Agency for E-Governance actively leads and approves the Concept and In May 2017 - the Concept is officially launched at the Cabinet of Ministers and is in process of being fully adopted by Government. The final review of the EGAP project (December 2018) also confirms noteworthy achievements by the project. (Rahman et al, 2018) (i1.1/1.4/1.5/1.6)
- **Swiss contribution to e-governance has been strong.** Swiss-supported e-democracy platform <https://e-dem.ua/> is used by over 350 communities and the number of citizens participating in decision-making through e-democracy tools has exceeded 1,2 million all over Ukraine. Over 450,000 citizens were engaged in transparent decision making on local participatory budgeting programmes with a total cost of over UAH 130 million. [SDC, Annual report 2020] (i1.1)
- **Opportunities to promote gender equality as part of the e-governance dialogue were not maximised in the first phase but later adjusted.** For example, not enough attention given to balanced participation at workshops and meetings (Rahman et al, 2018). This observation of the review of the first phase of EGAP was taken up into the design of Phase 2. A special programme was designed together with the Ministry of Digital Transformation to promote female leaders in regional digital transformation <https://thedigital.gov.ua/news/unewdigital-nova-spilnota-dlya-tsifrovikh-liderok-krain> (i1.2)
- **Key “protective” results have been achieved through policy dialogue - examples within digital transformation** i) an instance of leakage of personal data which was being wrongly attributed to the digital reforms and which was related to theft of earlier manual registration data. SDC helped ensure that the donor community understood the explanation offered by the government and did not become vocal in inaccurate criticism that could undermine the digital reforms; a special meeting was organised by SDC to present Diia. The donor community views are not directly influential on the ordinary citizen, but they have been found to be influential among politicians and also at ministry and administration level because many of these bodies are dependent on donor funding for delivery. And also, more generally because Ukraine is seeking closer association with the EU and with the Western world. ii) new approaches related to digital transformation were piloted at a small scale at local level that helped provide evidence of what worked and were then ready for wider adoption and replication once the central government was convinced and generally more open to digital transformation: iii) Swiss provided technical support for legislation and building up of an ecosystem of internal policy dialogue on virtual assets. Based on a platform and strategic foresight forum a new law for regulating and bringing greater transparency for virtual assets. This involved business, government, civil society, parliament, banks and around 100 people. A law was adopted (2021) but vetoed down and now being amended for a second reading: iv) The Ukraine reform conference in Lugano is providing a good platform for reinforcing a range of policy messages around key reforms and the role and contribution of digital transformation to these reforms. One innovative mechanism is the showcasing of Ukraine progress and advances in digital transformation. (i1.1/1.4/1.5/1.6)

DECENTRALISATION

- **There has been significant and concrete policy-related advances with implementation of decentralisation related reforms.** Strong policy commitment to better governance and service provision facilitated the participatory elaboration of over 35 legal acts which constitute the “decentralisation reform package”. Several rounds of municipal amalgamation since 2015 have led

to the creation of 831 merged territorial communities covering 3,796 smaller units and a population of about seven million. Thanks to financial decentralisation, average local revenues tripled over three years and the share of local budgets in the consolidated state budget increased by 20% in four years. Decentralisation, which was launched in 2014, enjoys the support of 58% of the population thanks to tangible improvements in service delivery and local infrastructure. Women's effective participation in public life was promoted through the establishment of a network of local female leaders. Lessons: 1) peacebuilding, protection and decentralisation interconnect in multiple ways to promote social cohesion and for the benefit of IDPs, including in participatory post-conflict reconstruction and delivery of local services; 2) a simultaneous vertical (different state levels) and horizontal (multiple stakeholders at each level) approach to promoting democratic institutions is most effective; 3) concrete contributions to strengthening public integrity through e-governance and e-democracy also serve to leverage citizen trust in public institutions. (i1.1/1.4/1.5/1.6)

- **There have been transformational changes and benefits arising from progress in decentralisation – Swiss policy dialogue has had a role but as one of many other factors.** The DESPRO impact assessment report (2021) notes “The administrative and fiscal decentralization triggered a change in mindset – a systemic change – amongst local community leaders, who realized that they are now responsible for their own development and have the resources at their disposal to affect change.” The report also notes that there have been reversals and slowdowns in the progress and there remains much to be done. The evaluation concludes based on interviews that the DESPRO project has made a significant contribution to “successful conceptualization and implementation of the decentralization reform.”. In particular the decentralization reform has fundamentally changed the political and social set-up in Ukraine. (i1.1/1.4/1.5/1.6)
- **Key “protective” results have been achieved through policy dialogue** - Examples include: i) opposition to amalgamation of communities that threatened the reforms was successfully reduced by issuing a joint donor statement in 2017 that provide vocal support to the government position: ii) opposition to fiscal decentralisation involving transfer of 60% of income tax to the local level was successfully reduced by a twitter storm from donors (instrumentalized by SDC) that leant international credibility to the government plans: iii) SDC advised and supported the government to consult with the Council of Europe over the issue of the legal personality at rayon level and obtain clarification on the guidelines and demands of the European charter of local self-government – this allowed the government to confidently pursue a pragmatic way forward by avoiding complicated new arrangements. (Interviews SDC; independent consultants (MS), Sida expert (SD), documentary evidence on donor statement and minutes of coordination meeting) (i1.1)

Quotes:

“We have to acknowledge that the policy reforms in digital transformation are very much advanced, and we don’t have much to say content-wise – our role is to protect the reforms, when they are moving in the right direction” SDC cooperation team (IP)

EQ2: Factors/practices

<p>EQ2: What are the factors/practices that supported/hindered outcomes from policy dialogues?</p>	<p>Indicators: <u>Context related</u> 2.1 The extent to which <u>national policy dialogue aims and content</u> were well grounded in the context and relevant for the partner in pursuing development priorities as well as relevant from the point of view of Swiss development policy goals and SDC’s programme and project objectives 2.2 The extent to which the <u>national policy dialogue processes</u> were well grounded in the context and building on understanding of context, including timing and choice of partners 2.3 The extent to which internationally agreed goals e.g., SDGs, conventions, humanitarian principles enabled national policy dialogues <u>Actor related</u> 2.4 The extent to which policy dialogues with multilateral institutions (globally and nationally) and in the context of global programmes were coherent and supported SDC policy goals at the national level</p>
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	<p>2.5 The extent to which SDC working with other development partners in developing joint policy messages and conducting joint policy dialogues enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of policy dialogues</p> <p>2.6 The extent to which working with national partner country actors, including other than the government, supported national policy dialogue outcomes</p> <p><u>Internal capacity related</u></p> <p>2.7 The extent to which Swiss ways of working, including long-term partnerships, broker, and bridge builder, is a high value asset and door-opener for Swiss engagement in policy dialogue</p> <p>2.8 The extent to which knowledge and Swiss comparative advantages and domestic expertise supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p> <p>2.9 The extent to which Swiss political dialogue with partner countries supported outcomes of SDC policy dialogues and projects/programmes</p> <p>2.10 The extent to which SDC's policy dialogue activities were systematically and sufficiently coordinated internally (including SDC HQ and Swiss cooperation team (SCO)) and with other Swiss government counterparts (WOGA), as well as non-Government entities where relevant</p> <p>2.11 The extent to which SDC's procedures (including for preparation and development of strategies for policy dialogues) and modalities were value-for-money and conducive to implementing policy dialogues</p> <p>2.12 The extent to which SDC staff guidance, staff training, and capacities supported outcomes of policy dialogue</p>
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Main findings in bullet points (indicator & source of information in brackets)	
<p>GENERAL</p> <p><u>Context related</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDC contributed, through a niche role, in providing support to strategic communication of the reforms both to the general public and to line ministries and regional authorities. (interviews SDC, Sida/EU) (i2.1) • Whilst high-level engagement was important, instability at the top also meant that engagement at an operational level was needed- Considering the frequent political changes it is crucial to rely on strong relations at the operational middle-management level within Ministries and at municipalities. Strengthening these relations allows for continuity and stability. (SDC, Annual report 2020). The evaluation of SDC cooperation (2015-2019) also recommends (#4). (i2.2) • Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, as well as the WHO health system building blocks are seen as potential entry points for policy dialogue. <i>“The promotion of Agenda 2030 is another field of engagement with the UN. Ukraine will be presenting bits voluntary national review at the HLPF (High Level Political Forum) in 2020. This will give the international community in Kyiv an opportunity to engage in policy dialogue with the Government on a number of issues.”</i> SDC annual report 2019, p22 (i2.3) <p><u>Actor related</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A watching and response-reaction approach rather than a deliberative agenda for where the overall environment is favourable, and the main issue is not policy change but policy implementation. A team approach has also ensured that even if the policy dialogue agenda is not formally written down, it is understood, and a creative response can be made in the face of new opportunities or challenges e.g., the 3 examples from decentralisation and digital transformation (see results EQ1). In this context coming up with many new ideas was not what was needed by Ukraine, even though the Swiss cooperation team (SCO) is actively gauging emerging issues that might later feed into policy dialogue around reform agendas (SDC, interviews PD/PI/NR/HE; 2020 Health Sector Assessment and informal practitioner network on health organised by Swiss cooperation team (SCO)) (i2.2) • The importance of working closely with other donors and making use of opportunities for high-level entry points is recognised. As noted in the 2015-20 country strategy, <i>“Policy dialogue ...will be continued and reinforced within the framework of donor coordination and at the bilateral level.”</i> And <i>“take advantage of its high-level profile in donor coordination mechanisms and</i> 	

its well-established non-partisan position, reinforced notably by the 2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship” (p. 23). (i2.5)

- **A mix of formal and informal coordination and meeting space** - The presence of multiple entry points (high level and operational) arising from the 3-tier structure and the presence of both formal and informal meetings was found helpful. Informal meetings ensured a tighter donor coordination as well as an opportunity to keep formal meetings short and effective as potential misunderstandings had been ironed out in advance. (SDC interviews (HE/NR/IP)) (i2.4-2.6)
- **Advocacy by doing is a deliberate strategy especially in the humanitarian field** - Switzerland has been using its humanitarian transports for “advocacy by doing”, demonstrating commitment to take action and to raise awareness about the ongoing conflict and persisting humanitarian needs through effective and targeted communication and visibility activities (SDC Annual report 2018, p21) (i2.6)
- **Building up a critical mass of local expertise that can advise on reforms and in later years evolve to engage in policy dialogue from within government and civil society.** The expertise was contracted to support SDC projects and as a side effect a number of the key people have later assumed influential positions in government (including at deputy minister level) and civil society. In this way, there are signs that a longer term and sustainable capacity for policy monitoring and dialogue within Ukraine has been built up – at the moment it is linked to a number of individuals but over the years this cadre has expanded and there are prospects of a critical mass in the future. (SDC, interviews PD/PI/NR/HE) (i2.6)
- **Personal relations and contacts established during earlier phases of projects have often led to high level access in later years** - the ability for Swiss cooperation team (SCO) to provide quick support to the emerging digital transformation agenda in 2014 is an example. However, too personalised relations can become a liability, in particular when these become strained and threaten the delivery of project objectives, and clearer mitigating action might have to be taken (SDC, interviews PD/PI/IP; health sector project stakeholder interviews) (i2.4-6)

Internal capacity-related

- **Policy dialogue is referred to as a process, the actual agenda or expected changes are not or less often explicitly identified.** An exception is the statement that “*the 2014 Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, to focus on inclusiveness and cohesion.*” (2015-18 country strategy, p. 23). SDC frames its support as a contribution to the achievement of Ukraine of its national reform agenda (which is often set by existing international standards, including those set by the Council of Europe; the UN, the WHO, of which Ukraine is a member). (i2.11, project documentation, stakeholder interviews)
- **The results country strategy frameworks do not consistently identify policy dialogue results.** In the 2011-2014 country strategy, there is less mention of policy dialogue than in later strategies, and it does not appear in the results framework. In later country strategies, policy dialogue features more strongly, and results are partly identified in the results framework. The results are usually framed as the setting-up or carrying-out of dialogue as opposed to success in making changes. However, the role of policy dialogue in achieving systemic and broader impact has been acknowledged across all strategy periods (2011-14 country strategy, p. 21). (i2.11)
- **Annual reports provide a summary overview of changes in the political, economic, social, humanitarian and environmental situation.** (i2.11)
- **High-level visits were found to be instrumental in advancing policy dialogue.** For example, the annual report 2020 notes the state visit of the Swiss President increased the “visibility and credibility of Switzerland at the highest political level and strengthening the bilateral relations, which is an important basis on which Policy Dialogue can build.” (i2.9)
- **Recruiting and empowering politically savvy national programme officers as part of the cooperation team** – much of the most effective policy dialogue and influence has been carried out by national programme officers. They have ensured good intelligence on the ground, and they have cultivated good contacts in government that has allowed trust, complex messaging and honest exchange of views. There is a challenge, however, in ensuring results when personal relations are less conducive to results (i2.10)
- **Elections and sudden change in government can provide opportunities for policy dialogue on difficult reforms especially if support is flexible enough to respond**– changes in government have led to loss of continuity in key government staff (most notably in the health sector after 2019) but have also led to new opportunities for influence in supporting new administrations in their desire to obtain quick results and advances – especially true of digital transformation (SDC, interviews IP/NR) (i2.7)

- **SDC was very close to government and with other donors had in some way part ownership of reforms but managed to avoid an ownership takeover.** With long continuity, highly skilled and motivated expertise, access to easy-to-use grant funding SDC and gaps in government commitment there was a danger the SDC/donors would take over policy ownership. This was partly avoided by: i) working with many stakeholders at different levels from local government to parliamentary committees and non- government organisations so a neutral non-partisan position had to be established: ii) working at local level with practical implementation in water and waste management so that the local authorities linked service delivery advances with the reforms smoothing the way to them taking and exhibiting ownership of both. (i2.7.11)
- **There was very little staff training and guidance, it was learning by doing.** Some staff express a desire for training and guidance. (i2.12)

GOVERNANCE

- **EGAP had a specific “National policy dialogue Component” and a number of policy dialogue instruments:** i) Policy Dialogue Round Tables; ii) Crowdsourced or our own Analytics/ Infographics; iii) Coalition building of like-minded; iv) stakeholder Consultations; v) Public Opinion Surveys; vi) Online Consultations; vii) E-polling; viii) Inter-regional Dialogues feeding into National, Parliamentary Dialogues (case study presented in the SDC 2017 Annual report. The component also allowed a specific policy dialogue outcome “National policies on e-governance and e-democracy are developed in an inclusive manner, taking into account the needs expressed by sub-national authorities”. As well as the output level Credit proposal 7F-08031.02. The operational committee noted “*The policy dialogue component is essential for the success of the programme, and it is crucial that the Swiss cooperation team (SCO) closely supports the activities of the consultant which is in charge of conducting this dialogue.*” Credit proposal 7F-08031.02.(p14)
- **A policy dialogue component combined with hands on operational components to good effect.** The external evaluation of 2018 noted the importance of Component C4: National Policy Dialogue: enhancing inclusive and results oriented national dialogue on e-governance and e-democracy when taken together with 3 other components on e-services, capacity development and e-democracy. Both supply and demand sides were addressed. (Rahman et al 2018, p6)
- **A whole of government approach was identified as an important factor in an evaluation of EGAP** – “The programme design for next phase should retain the systemic whole-of-government approach” (Rahman et al 2018). Also relevant is the close connection to the Swiss support to decentralisation as each supported each other.
- **Working at both national and regional level was found useful but time consuming and not without challenges given the hierarchal nature of policy setting and change.** (Rahman et al, 2018, p17). The evaluation of SDC cooperation strategy in Ukraine (2015-19) recommended that more effort should be put into policy dialogue at deconcentrated/decentralised level (recommendation 4)
- **EGAP had a favourable policy environment** – it was something the Ukrainians wanted to do. It also accorded well with the SDC strategy of 2015-18. (Rahman et al, 2018, p17)
- **Inherent flexibilities were built into the project design to take account of evolution in the advances in decentralisation** e.g., the regional coordinators had operational flexibility, something which also led to a bottom up dynamic. (Rahman et al, 2018, p19)
- **International technical assistance coordination at both sector and operational levels has been used to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of support to digital transformation agenda.** SDC co-chairs Sectoral Working Group on Digital Transformation which reviews priorities and progress in state policy implementation, coordinate joint donor activities within existing programmes/projects and preparation of the future ones. On project-specific coordination, a donor project indicated that they appreciated intensive information sharing on planned activities and coordinated efforts with EGAP almost on a weekly basis to avoid duplication of activities and funding in development of e-services for Diia. “*In fact, for the last 4-5 years EGAP and TAPAS have been the mainstay for the development of a digital society in Ukraine.*”(donor project manager)
- **Programme management and backstopping and complexity in delivery arrangements affected the results** (as for all projects) (Rahman et al, 2018)

- **Sustainability was enhanced by not ignoring institutional capacity and communication to users of the services and ensuring that the benefits were immediate.** Analysis arising from the external evaluation of 2018.

DECENTRALISATION

- **Decentralisation had an indicator on policy proposals.** The 2015-18 country strategy included policy dialogue indicators in the results framework e.g., “Number of policy proposals and legal amendments related to decentralization reforms submitted.and adopted” which obliged a follow up on progress on policy related matters. As noted elsewhere the approach of integrating policy dialogue related indicators into the results framework was not followed up in the 2020-23 country strategy.
- **Switzerland played a donor coordinating role in decentralisation that has supported policy dialogue aims –** *“With their presence or even facilitative role, the Swiss cooperation staff is engaged in donor coordination with supporting the thematic subgroups and driving for information exchange and enhanced coordination. The evaluation team found that in the decentralization sector Switzerland played a crucial role in donor coordination”* Evaluation of cooperation strategy, Ukraine, 2015-19, p46. The joint donor statement on decentralisation which was signed in 2017 is a practical sign of success in coordinating a harmonised approach.
- **Swiss support played an intermediary and information exchange role.** The evaluation emphasises the intermediary role of DESPRO but also notes that this role at some stage has to be taken on by national actors. The evaluation does not explicitly refer to policy dialogue but does note that the project was: i) designed to serve the reforms: ii) made good use of national actors. The evaluation (SDC, 2021) also notes that DESPRO helped to 'elevate' on the ground experiences to the national level policy dialogue - *“This strategy was pursued in DESPRO, successfully in solid waste management and inter-municipal cooperation, and less successfully in water supply and sanitation. Under DESPRO, the information flow went however also and crucially in the other direction, i.e., from the macro- to the micro-level, as an information campaign helped explain the decentralization to the people and local self-governments. As the information flow went in both directions, DESPRO effectively operated an informational 'elevator' with information going up and down the different levels of government and society.* “p24
- **Strong technical insight, long engagement and familiarity with the topic was an important factor.** The evaluation (SDC,2021) notes this enabled DESPRO to become deeply embedded in the policy dialogue and had an intrinsic knowledge and capability to act in the political context of decentralisation reform (p42).
- **Not giving up and ensuring some continuity during periods when the government did not strongly support decentralisation.** During the period under President Viktor Yanukovich, SDC still continued a skeleton support to decentralisation for example by supporting service provision at the local and regional levels. This meant that SDC had good access and high credibility with the new government when the situation changed in 2014.(DESPRO evaluation reports 2018, 2021; interviews MS)
- **Policy dialogue at the level of local government and through use of information campaigns was found to be effective.** The evaluation (SDC,2021) notes *“DESPRO's support to the information campaign on decentralization also helped convince local self-government on the merits of decentralization.* “p44. The credit proposal (7F-04661.04) also foresaw the involvement of local state government in policy dialogue (p68) after 10 years of support
- **Technical support in drafting policy documents and legislative acts and facilitating consensus building and decision making were factors of success in promoting reforms –** as noted by the evaluation (SDC,2021, p2)
- **A key factor was the favourable policy context -** the project was able to be of value and be of service to the government because it was pushing in the same direction (SDC,2021, p26, multiple interviews).
- **A flexible and agile project management allowed DESPRO to adapt to and take advantages of opportunities and changes –** adaptive management was key as noted by the evaluation (SDC,2021, p27) *“ The SCO in Ukraine perceives DESPRO as agile and an example in adaptive management” – “The most prominent example of this was and remains DESPRO's shift from working mainly with MinRegion between 2007-2009, to working with the expert community, LSG associations and the Parliamentary Committee on Local Self-Governance between 2010-2013 (when central government buy-in into the decentralization reform was weak), and returning to its collaboration with MinRegion (while maintaining its cooperation with the other stakeholders) when*

the decentralization reform was enacted by the government from 2014 onwards. Section 3.3 concluded that this adaptability (or flexibility) stems from DESPRO's capability, credibility, delegated authority, and mentality. ". In the words of the evaluation: DESPRO also followed the stop-and-go rhythm of Ukrainian policy making. An example noted in the phase 4 credit proposal is that support in earlier phases had led to a small initiative on developing inter-party dialogue on decentralization reform based on policy analysis (p2)

- **Mix of practical support to water and waste management combined with higher level administrative reforms gave good intelligence and credibility to policy dialogue -**

HEALTH

- **The main policy dialogue over the evaluation period was to support reforms laid out in the Ukrainian Health Sector Reform Strategy 2015-2020.** "... strengthening the performance of the health care system, advocating for good governance principles (equitable access to primary health care services and transparency). (2015 country strategy; project documents and end-of-project reports from Swiss cooperation team (SCO), WHO, WB)
- **The main vehicle/vector for policy dialogue are the high-level multilateral agencies, i.e., WHO, the World Bank and UNICEF.** "Main implementing partners are the WHO and UNICEF (these organisations can provide an added value in the areas of policy dialogue and communication with the Government of Ukraine), Swiss NGOs and experts active in the area of health promotion and disease prevention, local non-governmental organisations with proven capacities for effective projects implementation. Swiss expertise is actively promoted. As noted in the SDC annual report (2017, p.16) "SDC role in the process of the healthcare policy dialogue to be analysed in close relation to the Policy Dialogue project and clear positioning among other development partners identified. Partnership, coordination and synergies with the WB, WHO, USAID and other international partners, which have an important role to play at the policy level and in the healthcare reform, shall be actively promoted. Efforts related to the healthcare reform agenda need to be coordinated with national and regional stakeholders" Main question was the subcontracting of WHO to do the policy dialogue a good thing? The cooperation strategy evaluation 2015-19 seems to suggest that it was a good move (p39)
- **Health had a specific Policy Dialogue Project- "Policy Dialogue for Better Health Governance", which worked at the intersection of technical assistance and policy dialogue by funding expertise/studies to inform policy dialogue and evidence-based policy-making.** An ongoing trilateral project (WHO/WB/SDC) supports policy dialogue to maintain momentum for health sector reform, including for the development of a follow-up Health Sector Reform Strategy up to 2030.
- **In the donor coordination structure established in 2020 with considerable support from SDC (see above),** Switzerland plans to shape policy dialogue in the sub-sector working group on medical education and human resources, issues that have emerged as crucial from SDC projects, including those implemented by bilateral donors. (SDC Annual Report 2020, p. 13; stakeholder interviews during evaluation mission).
- **Policy dialogue in health has also had an aim to maintain reforms not just promote new policy** "*close monitoring and advocacy from international partners is needed in order prevent possible delays or even reversing healthcare reforms agenda.*" SDC annual report 2019, p11
- **The environment for policy dialogue in health care (and other domains) is more challenging than in in other countries in the region.** Policy dialogue is in its nature a long-term, sustained effort, but the highly volatile political environment of Ukraine, including considerable turnover at senior level – 4 health ministers since 2019 alone; shifting priorities; and the pressure to deliver reforms within extremely short periods of time are not conducive to such a sustained engagement.
- **The national government priorities are important -** With the reform of the Ukrainian healthcare system high on the government's agenda, Switzerland's ongoing support to the MoH is relevant and well-received (SDC annual report, 2017)

Citations:

“Where possible a broader (national) impact is to be sought through innovative and replicable approaches and a targeted policy dialogue” 2011-14 country strategy

In the current instable political environment, consistent policy dialogue is only possible if development partners join forces and give coherent messages and statements. Thus, it will stay important to continue investing in an active coordination of development partners and the consolidation of the 3-tier structure. For next year, it will be important to better integrate the IFI’s in the development partner coordination structure. Annual report 2020

We kept the office open during the period prior to 2014 when there was no government interest in pursuing decentralisation – this meant that we were ready to react and support when government changed.” (Swiss cooperation team)

Policy dialogue for us is a process of constant gardening (Swiss cooperation team)

If you want to influence you need to have good intelligence on the ground (Swiss cooperation team)

“The Swiss are champions on liaising with government and donors. Switzerland is very successful in coordination and information sharing; it is rare in a donor” Donor project manager (SD)

EQ3: Lessons learned

<p>Q3 What are the lessons learned and how were they applied?</p>	<p>Indicators:</p> <p>3.1 The extent to which SDC identified lessons and best practices in policy dialogues with regards to processes and reaching outcomes</p> <p>3.2 The extent to which SDC applied such lessons in its policy dialogue activities across the organisation and shared knowledge with other government agencies engaged in policy dialogue activities</p>
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<p>Main findings in bullet points (indicator & source of information in brackets)</p>
<p>HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WHO implemented project faced considerable challenges at first. SDC commissioned an external evaluation which was then strategically used to guide improvements on the “Policy Dialogue for Better Health Governance” project, thus ensuring that the project delivered to expectations. A key consideration has been that the WHO is the leading multi-lateral organisation on health sector reforms and thus, should assume, and be seen as assuming the lead on these reforms in Ukraine. This rationale is also supported by the membership of Ukraine in WHO, and which gives legitimacy and weight to the organisation’s work at country-level. • The ongoing mental health project is continuing to practice inclusive policy dialogue processes in support of the Mental Health Action Plan. This work is led by the consortium implementing the MH4U project. The project implementation team and the Ministry of Health acknowledge that at present, there are no resources inside the Ministry to carry this work out by themselves, similar to the work done in the “Policy Dialogue for Better Health Governance” project. This, then, seems a pragmatic approach, so long as it is acknowledged that this model distorts the responsibilities and that it therefore can only be temporary. (i. 3.1 stakeholder interviews) • There should be reflection on how to de-personalise relationships when these are strained and threaten the achievement of project outcomes. While projects across the portfolio pride themselves in their excellent long-term relationships of trust, there needs to be a plan when this is not working. An ongoing project on medical education reform, one of the key priorities for the health sector reform and where Switzerland was pitched to assume the coordination in the respective sub-sectoral donor coordination group, appears to have run into problems that appear at least in part to be caused by strained inter-personal relations. There needs to be a review of how to move beyond this point to focus on policy outcomes that this project has set out to achieve.

DECENTRALISATION

A webinar (2021) presented some key lessons learnt of relevance to policy dialogue:

- Timing -As decentralisation is a political reform, for it to be successful it needs the right timing to be conceived, right mind-set and political will in the society to exist and be nurtured, and a right champion with a credible team to launch and push the reform.
- Coordinate and continuous support -A structured government-donors coordination, cooperation and continued support to the reform was vital for the success of the decentralization reform.
- Clear government vision - In particular, a clear vision for decentralization from the government, reflected in a Common Results Framework is essential for effective coordination between donors and government.
- Communication - A large-scale communication campaign was crucial in Ukraine as lack of communication efforts and poor understanding of the reform's principles led to poor support of the decentralization and local self-government (LSG) reform by the Ukrainians in its initial stage.
- Trust – generate and then build on trust to give the communication credibility – focus on the evidence of benefits not just avoidance of costs.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

A lesson learnt exercise on the EGAP programme summarised a range of lessons learnt:

- Rotational Leadership in multi-member coalitions is key so that every organization gets a chance to lead the joint process and to create team-building.
- Combining mutually reinforcing offline & online participatory instruments in policy making process is possible and important.
- Establishing constructive relationships with state authorities is a process that can take time and patience, but it is valuable and necessary in policy making.
- Financial motivation is not always the best glue in holding a coalition together; motivated and committed 'core group', enjoyable working environment are.
- Policy-making is an interactive process needing multiple inputs and collaboration; investing into positive, constructive relationships with all stakeholders is critical.

“The easy part is to get the dialogue going – now comes the hard part of defining the substance.” (Swiss cooperation team)

EQ4: Peers

EQ4: What are the experiences of peers in conducting national policy dialogues, and are there lessons to be learned?	Indicators: 4.1 Evidence of good practices in policy dialogue from other donors that can inspire SDC practices 4.2 The extent to which policy dialogue processes and outcomes of other development partners' efforts contributed to SDC ways of conducting policy dialogue 4.3 The extent to which the Swiss approach to policy dialogues was more effective/less effective than peers' 4.4 The extent to which SDC collaborated with others in exchanging knowledge on good/bad practices and developing existing practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of policy dialogues
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Main findings in bullet points (indicator & source of information in brackets)

GENERAL

- Generally, SDC is viewed, by all interviewed as a highly constructive development partner with high expertise, flexibility and long term and predictable support. Government and implementing agents found that SDC approaches to policy were more effective (i4.1-4.3)
- The main factors that, according to a donor project manager (DM), enabled their effective policy dialogue are quite similar to those of SDC's: the long-term presence in specific sector (commitment), trust relationship, competence of the staff engaged, flexibility for good responsiveness to emerging requests, and financial capabilities. (i4.1)
- The coordination platforms initiated by SDC facilitated knowledge exchange on good practice on policy dialogue (i.4.4)

Additional case studies

Albania

Albania – role of Swiss development cooperation’s policy dialogue in support to decentralisation and territorial-administrative reform

Context: Swiss development cooperation has been engaged in decentralisation and territorial-administrative reform (TAR) in Albania for more than 20 years. An SCO-commissioned capitalisation exercise identifies impacts of the Swiss contribution at three levels: a) at the level of citizens, who are benefiting from better service provision at municipal level such as waste management and access to clean drinking water, but also through newly digitalised administrative services that are more efficient and less prone to corruption; b) at the level of those who run local government, through the improvement of these stakeholders’ capacities to better serve citizens; and c) at the national level, where numerous contributions have been made to anchor decentralisation in legislation and policies, such as strategic development plans. (*Source: 2020 Capitalisation Exercise*)

Factors of success:

Consistency and long-term commitment, rooted in a firm belief in the values and benefits of decentralisation. Stakeholders unanimously described Switzerland as the “frontrunner” on the subject—it has been an early champion of decentralisation and territorial and administrative reform, even when decentralisation was not prominent on the EU integration and accession agenda. Switzerland has been consistently committed to decentralisation over the course of more than 20 years. Stakeholders suggested that this commitment is rooted in the philosophy that it is at the local level that democracy and the will of the people finds its clearest expression (Helvetas). The aim is to fundamentally transform power relations, and to transfer power to the people/citizens. Switzerland also considers there to be a nexus between decentralisation and local economic development.

Switzerland has been very prudent in its involvement, brokering knowledge, technical solutions, and empowering Albanian stakeholders at all levels of intervention. Stakeholders suggested that the clear line was that they offered technical assistance to the government to what is a very political reform (with electoral precincts at the core of the opposition to it), but never themselves got involved in political processes or steering political dialogue. As one stakeholder put it “*Switzerland would never assume the role of a domestic actor – this would go against the core of what they believe in.*” Stakeholders noted that the Swiss cooperation invested “*a lot of time to assess the challenges of decentralisation in a very comprehensive, thorough way. I have never seen an organisation that goes so deep into assessments in a participatory way. For us, they are ‘la force tranquille’, steady, reliable, thorough.*” (Albanian civil society stakeholder). Stakeholders also highlighted the fact that the Swiss cooperation is empowering local stakeholders by listening, and by giving them a voice. An example of Switzerland’s participatory approach was provided in connection with the existence of two associations of municipalities – and where one association has only one member. Switzerland never denied the legitimacy of this association and was consistent in advocating dialogue with both (“*Switzerland tries to work with more than one messenger*”). And Swiss support brokered know-how that could inform policy solutions, including “moonshot projects” that tried to look “outside the box” (Albanian civil society stakeholder). A key principle, according to stakeholders, is the idea to always “bring more than one policy scenario” to the table – and the Albanian partners decide. At the local level, different actors were supported, which allowed them to grow. “*We believe that this approach is more sustainable, because the*

policies that result from this are better anchored in the Albanian realities and are better owned.”

Switzerland has been very prudent in HOW they get involved. Stakeholders suggested that the clear line was that Switzerland offered technical assistance to the government to what is a very political reform (with electoral precincts at the core of the opposition to it), but never themselves got involved in political processes or steering political dialogue. As one stakeholder put it “Switzerland would never assume the role of a domestic actor – this would go against the core of what they believe in.”

Multi-layered approach to support to decentralisation. The above impacts have been achieved through assistance at each of the three levels – at the citizen level, a Helvetas-implemented Decentralisation and Local Development Programme (DLDP), spanning over several phases, piloted service delivery solutions in Northern Albania that served as examples for other municipalities; a UNDP-implemented multi-donor pool-funded project to which Switzerland contributed, Sustaining and Advancing Local Governance Reform (STAR), worked to increase the capacities of local governments; and a Swiss contribution to the Council of Europe leveraged the organisation’s expertise to align Albanian legislation and policies with international standards and best practices. Policy dialogues have been supported at each of the three impact levels.

Impartiality made Switzerland a trusted and credible lead on donor coordination. Switzerland played a key role in donor coordination around decentralisation. Stakeholders attest that Switzerland managed this role very smoothly, including the coordination of development partners with competing agendas and personalities (Council of Europe and UNDP), and thus, leveraging partners’ respective clout to the maximum possible.

Lessons learned:

While stakeholders recognised the “Swiss way of doing things”, some felt that this approach stood in tension to the urgency of the reforms, and that approaching them in a slow way hampered peoples’ lives not changing quick enough for the better.

Peers:

Stakeholders described three types of donors in Albania:

- USAID, working in a results-oriented way, with a lot of financial clout and political power. These ingredients get things done quickly.
- EU, which can apply conditionality and is performance oriented.
- Switzerland, and like-minded donors such as Sweden, which have their own way of doing things, brings a high level of technical expertise to policy dialogue, but does not work or take an overtly political stance, and in the view of some observers “never takes the role of a system-actor.

Burundi

Case study⁵¹ Burundi – the role of Switzerland in preventing violence after the 2020 elections and supporting the subsequent reengagement of the international community in Burundi

Context: When elections were due to take place in 2020, Burundi has been in a political and economic crisis since 2015. Most of the gains made since the end of the civil war in 2005 had been undone with a shift to authoritarian rule and human rights violations. As election approached the government intimidated and repressed the opposition and shut down social media. The opposition parties, politicians, and their supporters faced harassment, intimidation, and assassinations in Burundi, and many opposition politicians and groups operated in exile.⁵² Government extremely suspicious as to the intent of the international community: EU, and US in particular. Election observers barred from entering the country. The elections were won by the ruling party, but soon after the out-going president died. This opened for the in-coming President Ndayishimiye to recalibrate Burundi's relationship with the international community.

Switzerland has since long been engaged in Burundi through a SCO office reporting to the ambassador in Kenya. There had for a long time been a smaller primarily humanitarian programme and cooperation with civil society including on the protection of human rights as part of Switzerland's Great Lakes Region engagement. At the same time Switzerland was the chair of the Peace Building Commission Burundi configuration in New York.

Two notable outcomes of Swiss engagement in Burundi 2020-2021:

Ensuring a **joint international appeal to all actors in Burundi** to resolve disagreements regarding the outcome of the elections in a peaceful manner through a joint statement published ahead of the elections, attached.

Reengagement of Burundi with the international community 2020/2021. Burundi not any longer a regular agenda item on the UNSC and the UNHRC Commission of Enquiry, that was never accepted by the Burundi government, exchanged with a rapporteur.

Factors of success:

Switzerland seen as neutral and credible. Kept relations with government and opposition through all the years. Switzerland stayed with a small programme when some bilateral donors exited. Whether it was the Swiss ambassador visiting Bujumbura, the chair of the PBC, or the SCO in Bujumbura, they all interacted with all parties - government, opposition, and civil society. The role of Switzerland in the context of PBC was seen as fair with clear messaging on human rights violations and impunity.

The integrity of the individuals also played an important role.

Willingness to take risks. It was not a popular decision in the international community in Bujumbura to stay neutral in the light of continued human rights violations. But Switzerland insisted on neutrality. As the elections approached and violence seemed eminent, Switzerland (SCO, FDFA, Ambassador Kenya, and Swiss Permanent Representation in New York) decided to seek the international community's support for a joint statement denouncing violence in the aftermath of elections. UN NY was initially sceptical.

"But it seemed like the most plausible way to let the opposition know that they would not enjoy support, if they retorted to violence." The international community actors knew that it

⁵¹ Sources: Head SCO Boris Maver; UNRC Office Pacome Passy Bujumbura; SDC Cedrine Beney; Ambassador Jürg Lauber (former Representative in NY and chair PBC); UNRC Gary Cornille Jamaica previously in Bujumbura; Annual reports Great Lakes

⁵² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/burundi/freedom-world/2021>

was a fine line – if reignition of a civil war should be avoided. It shows risk willingness to go for a statement that only addresses the peaceful resolution of differences after having been through elections that were widely perceived as flawed.

Similarly, in light of the continued fragile political situation in Burundi with a president under considerable pressure from hardliners in his own party, it is a risk to invite the foreign minister for a visit to Switzerland for meetings with his Swiss counterpart and support a change of the Burundi status in the context of the UNHRC. There is a risk that the promises that the President has given with regards to fighting corruption, dealing with covid 19, follow-up on impunity etc. will never materialize, and the good offices of Switzerland being misused. Weighing these risks and Swiss interests in general, Switzerland decides to engage in the reengagement of Burundi by invite the minister of foreign affairs while at the same time initiating concrete actions to improve the human rights situation in Burundi. Important considerations were, the simultaneous decision of the EU and France so also open up for reengagement with the Burundi government.

A WOGA approach was instrumental in weighing risks and taking decisions that was politically acceptable in Switzerland. All interlocutors on the Swiss side point to the cooperation between Bujumbura, Nairobi, Bern, and New York in designing and implementing the strategy. Close coordination, drawing on the complementary roles of Switzerland in Bujumbura and in New York, using all instruments (political dialogue, policy dialogue, and support for civil society as well as humanitarian programmes) were important elements for success.

The right partners: Get countries on board that matters to both parties. Switzerland wanted to work with the African Ambassadors – Kenya and Tanzania. This also followed from strong AU engagement. Both the Kenyan and the Tanzanian ambassadors enjoyed a level of trust with the “paranoid” president and his hard-line entourage. The participation of the African Ambassadors also played a large role in soliciting the support of others, including China.

Use all opportunities for building trust with all parties: SCO had some engagement with the president’s entourage as they were interested in seeing a nutrition programme supported by Switzerland go forward. SCO also kept close contact with civil society and human rights defenders.

Lessons learned:

Long term presence and interactions with all parties are important aspects of credibility

Combining political and development instruments work – on the political front taking the risk and inviting the FM as well as finding compromises in UNHCR supported with proactive stance on development funding for Burundi.

The importance of the right people in the right place at the right time. Switzerland had the contacts and network that made action possible. SCO office widely engaged on political issues also and kept in close contact with the UNRC office throughout.

Peers:

Switzerland not being a member of the EU allows it to act alone and in accordance with Switzerland’s history of neutrality.

Central Asia

Case Study⁵³ Blue Peace – Central Asia – contribution and factor analysis⁵⁴

Project background, challenges and policy dialogue objectives – the Blue Peace in Central Asia Initiative (BPCA) was launched to promote an informed dialogue among the five Central Asian countries in the face of growing water scarcity and increasing competition for water resources. To support the initiative a High-Level Dialogue Platform was created with the aim of building structured mid- and high-level dialogues among the countries. As part of the dialogue platform, BPCA also provides expertise and knowledge products that can be used in the dialogue. SDC took a lead in supporting the BPCA and the high-level dialogue platform. The policy dialogue aimed at triggering conversation **beyond the water sector** and raising issues to the level of the decision-makers. Transforming water from a potential source of conflict into a potential instrument of cooperation and peace and recognising water as an enabling factor for regional sustainable socio-economic development, stability, and peace, as a contributor to the region's resilience to the current and future. It was also noted that a coherent approach between the development partners, including international financing institutions (IFIs), was essential. (Ref 3,4). The Blue Peace Central Asia BPCA initiative is built on a top-down as well as “medium-up” approach focusing on a three tracks: political process (political track: high level dialogue), technical issues (operational track: smart water practices) and learning matters (educational track: new generation agents of change). The policy dialogue through a combination of the tracks aimed at areas such as: enhancing the sharing and use of open-source data; use of benefit sharing as an approach; increasing understanding and commitment to improving water efficiency; recognition of water as a nexus with energy and agriculture and, enhancing transboundary cooperation in water management e.g. through multi reservoir management. More recently, the topic of the climate change impact on the water cycle and its consequences on the socio-economic development become a more prominent and accepted point of conversation.

Significant changes or absence of change

Despite significant support over more than 7 years, the results of the political track not clear or easy to grasp. The capitalisation study (ref 1) noted that *“Internal stakeholders (SDC staff involved) in the field find that the successes have been marginal”*. Nevertheless, it is pointed out that although there has not been a breakthrough Switzerland did manage to engage the relevant ministers on specific regional transboundary issues. And it is considered both by SDC's managers, development partners and others that these dialog events are an opportunity to float ideas and bringing elements that open up a discussion on transboundary water management by using international experience. It was also noted that the diplomatic front end of BPCA was constructive in enabling SDC to engage in the transboundary cooperation in Chu-Talas river basin and concrete measures such as: installing water flow measurements to provide ‘real’ data’ to support the management of the river basin and, initiating joint management of a small lake on the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in a highly militarized area. Tools have also been introduced such as the water footprint and the Blue Peace Index. The aim of such the index is to increase the awareness on the benefits of cooperation and attracting financial resources for sustainable and resilient

⁵³ Note this case study is specific to the topic of national policy dialogue for the purposes of the thematic evaluation of. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the outcome and results of the Blue Peace Central Asia Initiative -for that the reader is referred to the capitalisation study.

Sources and references: 1) Sthlm Policy Group, Capitalisation of 7 years of Blue Peace Central Asia Initiative, 2014-2020, June 2021; 2) Interview with Ursula Läubli EDA; 3) <http://www.bluepeace-centralasia.ch/> (accessed 13.10.2021), 4) <https://carececo.org/en/main/activity/projects/sekretariat-platformy-dialoga-vysokogo-urovnnya-shveytsarskoy-initsiativy-blue-peace-central-asia/> accessed 13.10.2021. 5)

Correspondence and interview with Guy Bonvin, Special envoy.

investment forms for water cooperation ultimately contributing to a more peaceful and stable society. The capitalisation study notes that “*SDC management consider these small examples extremely relevant for showing the countries in the region that when they talk to each other then they can find local solutions. Thus, BPCA is considered a facilitator by demonstrating that credible data and local solutions can make a difference*”.

The study concludes that the main achievement of the political pillar is the positioning of BPCA within the regional context. Also important was strengthening the position/visibility of Switzerland as a national/regional actor in the water sector at large. It notes that whilst this does not mean that everyone knows of BPCA, many stakeholders see a place for Switzerland in the water sector in Central Asia. Other development partners emphasise the importance of the political pillar for keeping up the momentum for dialogue on water in the region.

Contributing factors – There are many contributing factors, some linked to the context and some to the design and implementation of the policy dialogue.

A central contextual factor is a weak political commitment among countries to back up their political statements in real actions or a willingness to openly discuss and engage in transboundary water management. Some actors have concluded that “*Central Asia does not seem to be ripe yet for a “big regional cooperation format”, and cooperation still focuses on bilateral relations, mainly serving immediate national interest*” (ref 1). Another factor is that Central Asia is not a region yet where ‘soft power’ or ‘soft components’ buy influence as much as ‘hard components’ such as investments in infrastructure (ref 1). A linked challenge facing the political pillar, according to all stakeholders, is that in Central Asia personal relations supersede institutional relations. Some of those interviewed during the capitalisation study felt little progress was made within this pillar, but also recognized the long period required for building up personal relations and networks.

Design and implementation factors include:

- General agreement among all stakeholders that BPCA was too ambitious and unrealistic at the outset of the initiative. BPCA’s original ideas to bring key policy- and decision makers in Central Asia together to find solutions to regional water management did not reflect the complexity on the ground and was beyond Switzerland’s readiness or convening capacity to mobilize required resources.
- It was not clear at the outset about what Switzerland wanted to achieve with BPCA – a topic that has been referred to the “Swiss DNA and lack of charismatic leadership”. It tended to change with changing personnel and was not consistent within the different Swiss agencies.
- The resources needed were not well defined and it was difficult to commit sufficient resources beyond the special envoy and regional water advisers.
- The cooperation within WoGA was not sufficiently aligned partly due to insufficient coordination and dialogue about operational priorities at the national and regional levels – Again this has been referred to as: “*the DNA Switzerland of highly decentralisation and no clear leadership – it is good to react quickly and with flexibility - it is less good to share a vision.*” The expectation that through tools such as the blue peace index that multi-lateral finance could be attracted to bring hard cash to support the policy dialogue were not met in part because the international finance institutions were too risk adverse given the political complexity – although this might change.
- In general, there were a number of assumptions made that were not fully tested at least until the political economy analysis was undertaken.
- A tension between a political and development approach. The capitalisation study found that “*Water is highly political in Central Asia and therefore BPCA must remain to be a political initiative with Swiss backing that can draw on the development*

instruments to achieve” and that “After seven years of implementing BPCA most stakeholders agree that BPCA is a long-term endeavour that needs to be understood as a political initiative. However, BPCA is increasingly seen as a development initiative by many members of SDC that is expected to follow the logic and requirements of a results-based management.”

- The political and the operational pillars did work as well together as expected. Whilst they can mutually reinforce each other there is a need to unpack the assumptions even more to understand what projects can interest the policy makers enough to commit themselves to a certain level of cooperation

Positive factors included:

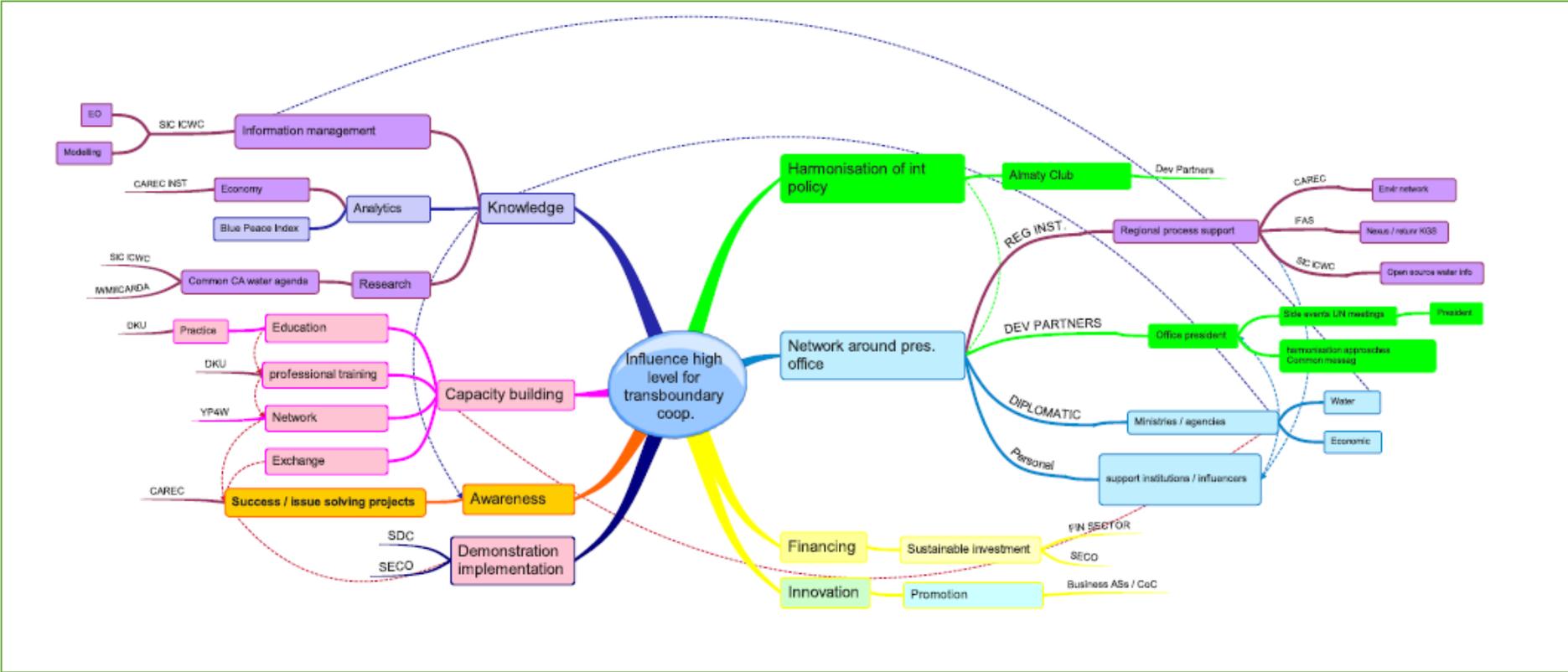
- A pragmatic and proactive approach that looked a opportunities for Swiss engagement e.g., supporting bilateral cooperation within river basins rather than full regional cooperation and using such successes as building blocks for wider cooperation
- Active cooperation with development partners e.g., the Almaty club of donors – a pragmatic way to address the challenge of lack of official counterpart for coordination at the regional level, to address a very fragmented donors/projects landscape, and donors (geopolitically) driven action
- Funding of a political economy analysis after some years that exposed key assumptions and provided a more realistic framework for understanding what external actors could achieve
- The credibility arising from long term and persistent Swiss support. Many development partners emphasized that *“Switzerland’s high-level approach is a ‘must’ because it helps to keep a momentum but also provides an important complementarity to other international initiatives by the World Bank, the European Union or the German GIZ”*. (Ref 1)

Influence of SDC support – Generally speaking, SDC find it difficult to assess the relevance and sustainability of what was achieved. Clearly the long and persistent support has been an important positive factor and one that is recognised widely by all stakeholders.

Lessons learnt – these can be summarised as:

- A strong Swiss WOGA and a joint development partner approach are needed to match the scale of challenges
- A deep understanding of the political economy context, of the value at work and of the legal thinking is an absolute must – but we are not necessarily ready to learn – rotation is destroying the knowledge.
- Regional policy dialogue suffered both from a lack of institutional anchorage both in the region itself and within the Swiss support (with competing national agendas)

Figure 4 Influencing high level policy makers towards transboundary water management (Source Sthlm, 2021)



Latin America

Case Study⁵⁵- Latin America - El Agua nos Une – contribution and factor analysis⁵⁶

Project background, challenges, and policy dialogue objectives – SuizAgua, now named, “*El Agua nos Une*” (2016-2021) conducted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) seeks to influence water governance through four lines of action: i. corporate water stewardship in five countries: Colombia, Peru, México, Chile & Brazil, ii. Community of Practice on water management in Latin America, iii. Strengthening Public Policy instruments in Colombia to monitor water quality and quantity, and iv. Investment in eco-systemic services in Colombia - “miPáramo”-. The project works under the Global Programme Water (GPW) to respond to global challenges and stakeholder engagement concerning water management. *El Agua Nos Une* has been implemented along with private companies in Latin America, public institutions, local communities, civil organizations, local implementing partners, and environmental consultants. (Ref 1,2,4).

For its first and main line of action, “*El Agua nos Une*” operates as a public-private partnership that works to identify and tackle water-related risks by evaluating and reducing the water footprint in productive processes; motivating companies to invest in improving water efficiency, treatment, and reuse. Besides, it identifies and develops opportunities to improve water management and to preserve strategic water-related ecosystems at the local level, as a collective action. The initiative also works to strengthen policy implementation for water monitoring by public institutions, in the Colombian case, as well as, developing voluntary schemes to incentivize corporate water stewardship, in Peru and Chile. Furthermore, the partnership shares and learns from the collective knowledge generated through this process.

SDC’s role is promoting, monitoring, and engaging in policy dialogue at a local, national, and regional level. For instance, the SDC seek to position corporate water stewardship among various political and cooperation platforms such as the Pacific Alliance (Ref 2). At all levels, “*El Agua nos Une*” seeks to build strong relationships among the stakeholders. At a local and national level, the programme uses a “bottom-up approach” to influence policy dialogue through practices and experiences on the ground. The SDC maps significant players in water governance and strengthens their capabilities to make informed decisions and capitalize on their knowledge, to fulfil their responsibilities (Ref 4).

The initiative primarily focuses on promoting dialogue by sharing technical information and creating a common language for a shared goal. E.g., i) through the application of the water footprint international standard (ISO 14046), ii) by contributing to the standardization of institutional water monitoring and data availability, iii) monitoring ecosystem services, such as water regulation, and the impact of conservation actions and livelihoods improvement. The policy dialogue is centred on sharing and adopting best practices, knowledge, and contributions to strengthen instruments. “*El Agua nos Une*” creates an environment that brings together different stakeholders and places water stewardship on the public agenda.

⁵⁵ Note this case study is specific to the topic of national policy dialogue for the purposes of the thematic evaluation of. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the outcome and results of the Blue Peace Central Asia Initiative -for that the reader is referred to the capitalisation study.

Sources and references: 1) External Evaluation *El Agua nos Une* – SuizAgua LidaPatty International Consulting, 2) Interview with Martin Jaggi, SDC 3) *El Agua nos Une* – SuizAgua Latin America 2016 – 2021 Processes, success factors and challenges of the SDC’s water management project in Latin America, 4) Interview with Diana Rojas, SDC Colombia, 5) Hydrological assessment, IDEAM <http://www.ideam.gov.co/web/agua/evaluacion-recurso-hidrico>.

Policy dialogue among private and public counterparts is key for the SDC. The programme has a strong focus on building conversations using real-world examples and best practices, to make sustainable changes regarding water management and sustainability. “El Agua nos Une” is known for choosing specific and important stakeholders (medium and large enterprises and local organizations with technical and contextual knowledge). Therefore, technical assistance provides a means for mutually beneficial exchange, where all actors can learn from each other (Ref 4).

Significant changes or absence of change

In the past ten years, national governments and international platforms have started to make water management and conservation part of their priorities. With this shift in thinking, SDC strongly believes that strengthening local organizations, medium and large enterprises, public institutions, and business associations capacities is essential (Ref 4) to engage in dialogue at all spheres, to achieve a meaningful change, reinforcing everyone’s responsibility and role.

- **Knowledge exchange:** Stakeholders from different spheres share knowledge on corporate water management, creating a common language (by using the ISO 14046 as an example) and sharing best practices and innovative technological solutions.
- **Policy:** The configuration of new public policy instruments such as the Blue Certificate in Peru, in Chile, the creation of a Clean Production Agreement referred to as the Blue Certificate (APL 3) (Ref 1). In Colombia, a contribution from the National Water Study (ENA in Spanish), a public policy instrument developed by the IDEAM, is based on the axes and strategies of the National Policy for Integrated Water Resource Management. Its purpose is to contribute to the National Development Plan and the National Policy for Integrated Management of Water Resources promoted by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS). The ENA is a widely consulted water policy instrument to analyse water availability, uses and risks. Along the same line, the Water Quantity and Quality Monitoring Institutional Programme (PIRMA for its initials in Spanish) in Colombia was formulated in a participative manner as a national pilot programme (PIRMA). The pilot had policy influence as it contains the Regional Water Assessments (ERA). These assessments are implemented by the IDEAM and are intended to become a technical input for planning and decision-making in the authority of the Regional Environmental Authorities (CAR). Both above-mentioned instruments seek to generate systematic information to facilitate the articulation of Information Systems within the environmental authorities at the regional and national levels (Ref 4, 5).
- **International and Regional Platforms:** Project partners have formed alliances with the Global Compact of the United Nations and its Water Action Hub to amplify the quality and access to the partner companies’ shared information on water technologies and good practices. Furthermore, the issue has been raised as part of the Pacific Alliance with hopes of elevating this matter among global and political venues. At the Pacific Alliance, the project, and the Swiss Government as an observer, have communicated and directly worked with the Business Council of the Pacific Alliance (CEAP) and the Environment and Green Growth Group (GTMACV). In this way, there are policy results on influencing the private sector. Those spaces promoted the “Water Footprint” working group of CEAP, whose objectives are: i) Strengthen the institutions and instruments for water management (efficient use, pollution reduction, etc.); ii.) Motivate companies, through evidence, to incorporate water management as a business strategy, strengthening the management of physical, reputational, and regulatory risks (Ref 1).

Contributing factors – There are many contributing factors, some linked to the context and some to the design and implementation of the policy dialogue.

Design and implementation factors include (Ref 2,4):

- Put forward new concepts and introduce innovations that gives entry points and engagement for informed/evidence-based decision making. To influence the policy dialogue there must be factual support to make implementation sustainable (leading by example, so changes are more easily incorporated into public policy).
- Use theoretical as well as bottom-up, practical approaches to place water management policies and practices into the public agenda.
- Ensure articulation among the Swiss representation in the countries and SDC's Whole-of-Government Approach (WOGA) allows raising the level of the directive committees and partner engagement.
- Motivated SDC staff, on the ground, provide resourceful partnerships and entry points to more pertinent actions to enhance policy dialogue.
- Competent implementing partners (choose the right ones who have commitment and knowledge to provide technical support with high quality standards).
- Look for opportunities where SDC can contribute to the policy conversation and influence positive change.
- Work with a variety of actors, not just government, but also with the private sector (e.g., water stewardship) - making use of technical entry points (Pacific Alliance) and feed into messages from the technical to the political level. Civil society is also relevant as actors and allies.
- Bring together high-level political actors from Switzerland as well as from all five partner nations and mobilize them.
- Strengthen the position of Switzerland reinforcing the message - "the Swiss are working on this ..." which can reach the political level.
- Promote strong, trust-based relationships. Recognition from the Peruvian and Colombian governments for the Swiss Cooperation's project WASH and corporate water management and the practical evidence and data to confirm its success.

On the challenging side (Ref 2,4):

- Socio economic instability and constant changes in government offices/officers. *"Regional outreach means that the SDC engages in National Policy Dialogue in each country and at a regional policy dialogue - although it is complicated due to the differences in political views (right /left wing)"* (Ref 2).
- Time and limited resources.
- Not having staff in all countries might be a setback on the process. However, the initiative has strong allies and implementing partners in every country that are moving forward dialogue among the most relevant stakeholders.
- Confusion what Policy Dialogue is and the level it should operate, however, it can be an advantage as it does not limit the scope. The SDC believes that the most important change is a change in behaviour then policy.

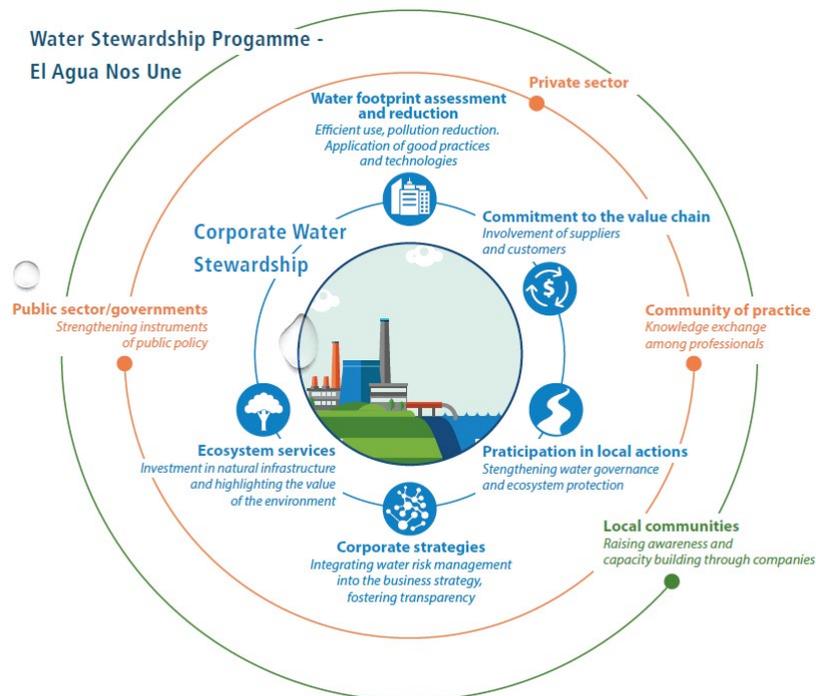
Influence of SDC support.

SDC expertise is recognized on water management. The know-how and technical expertise of the Swiss cooperation in this matter have enriched the discussion as water has become a niche for the cooperation in Latin America. In this sense, the SDC has a comparative advantage over other cooperation agencies, not only in terms of technical knowledge but in the way the Swiss government is presented as a diplomatic body (whole governance approach) (Ref 4).

Lessons learnt – these can be summarised as:

- Engaging with local partners that recognize the gaps and the context of each country is significant to achieve results.
- Policy dialogue is a step-by-step process, making significant changes in public policy takes time. The main starting point is creating common ground for all the stakeholders allowing them to communicate in the same language, share inputs and show results.
- Change comes from the example, not everything has to be done from scratch.
- Developing voluntary instruments and tools for corporate water management is shown to motivate the private sector to go beyond the command-and-control norms, while those evolve.

Figure 5 El Agua nos Une – SuizaAgua Latin America 2016-2021. SDC, RéSEAU, 2021)



Mongolia

Case Study⁵⁷ - Governance and decentralisation - Mongolia – contribution and factor analysis⁵⁸

Project background, challenges and policy dialogue objectives – The governance and decentralisation programme had three components: Decentralization Policy Support Project (DPSP): Urban Governance Project (UGP), and Civic Engagement Project (CEP). The second phase of the project took place from 2015 to 2020 as a continuation of an earlier 4-year phase. The main policy dialogue related aims were to support the Mongolian reform agenda for more empowered, democratic, and accountable local governments that provide services responding to citizens' needs. The three components were linked with complementary objectives.

- DPSP supports the decentralisation and democratization reforms by developing and supporting the implementation of a comprehensive and coherent decentralization policy.
- CEP aims to strengthen democratisation through policy and implementation support focused on citizen engagement.
- UGP, covers underserved areas by providing implementation support to the reform agenda by strengthening local governance processes with emphasis on capacity improvement and policy support as needed.

Significant changes or absence of change – There were changes a policy level, within the legal environment, the strengthening of implementation and citizen engagement:

- **Policy** – the state policy for decentralisation was adopted in 2016 with the key decentralization principles reflected in the Sustainable Development Vision of Mongolia-2030 (2016).
- **Legal environment** - As a follow-up of constitutional amendments (2019), the revised Law on Administrative and Territorial Units and Their Governance (LATUG), was approved by the Parliament (December 2020). This is considered significant advance towards ensuring decentralisation reform and strengthening local governance by transferring financial, administrative and property management powers. The ownership of the decentralization agenda on the part of the Government and Parliament has strengthened with the Cabinet Secretariat leading the decentralization agenda and closely working with the newly established Parliament's Working Group on Decentralization to further consolidate legal environment for decentralization.
- **Strengthened implementation** - Following the approval of the Decentralisation strategy, the government approved the functional re-allocation methodology, which will play an important role in advancing the decentralisation reform by ensuring clarity and adherence to principles in the allocation of roles and resources. Transfers to the local development funds were negatively affected by economic recession in the years 2013-17 but have since started to recover. The revised Civil Service Law with the overall aim to enforce merit principles in civil service, tighten accountability at all levels, and maintain a professional and stable civil service is underway. These measures are expected to improve the performance and responsiveness of government at all levels. Of particular notes is that protection systems to address violence against women have

⁵⁷ Note this case study is specific to the topic of national policy dialogue for the purposes of the thematic evaluation of. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the outcome and results of the Governance and decentralisation programme - for that the reader is referred to the end of project phase report and other documentation.

Sources and references: 1) End of project report – governance and decentralisation programme 7F-08183.02 (April 2019); (2) Interviews with Zolzaya Lkhagvasuren National Programme officer and Gabriella Spirli ex-deputy director of cooperation, Mongolia; 3) Briefing notes assembled by Zolzaya Lkhagvasuren.

been strengthened and funds for the implementation of the Law on Combating Domestic Violence are now allocated in the state and local budgets.

- **Citizen engagement** - the first phase of the civic engagement project, implemented in partnership with Office of the President, sought to strengthen the legislative framework for citizen engagement through elaboration of the Law on Implementation of Citizens' Political Rights. However, the draft law which would have enabled the implementation of constitutional provisions on direct participation of citizens in state affairs, was not supported by the Parliament due to political reasons. Instead, the new government opted to adopt an alternative known as the deliberative polling⁵⁹ which has only been partly implemented in practice. Major steps were taken to improve the legal and regulatory framework for citizen engagement in Mongolia, including a clearer identification of implementation and accountability mechanisms. In addition to the effort of creating a better-defined legal environment, the government launched the national programme on improving public legal education to strengthen public knowledge of citizen engagement laws and regulations. The programme, which includes provisions of user-friendly information, training, and assistance, aims to enhance opportunities for citizens to engage in public affairs in an informed and meaningful way. However, implementation varies throughout the country due to insufficient financial and human resources, poor political leadership and commitment

Lessons and contributing factors linked to SDC policy dialogue – There are many contributing factors, some linked to the context and some to the design and implementation of the policy dialogue.

Strong personal relations – with SCO access to the highest political levels right up to the president led to remarkable influence during the first phase. But this was also, with a change in government, a contributory reason for the Law on Implementation of Citizens' Political Rights not being passed in favour of an alternative approach.

Technical assistance in implementing policy – Highly skilled Swiss expertise was brought in to support the functional analysis process and in the first phase to develop the draft of the Law on Implementation of Citizens' Political Rights. As an example of how technical assistance was helpful in policy implementation: through extensive support the project supported by SDC laid the ground for improved policy environment for citizen participation through elaborating a package of amendments in over 100 laws with the aim to specify concrete mechanisms to ensure implementation of “dormant” provisions related to citizen participation and make the overall regulatory framework for democratic participation more coherent and effective. This ensured a greater degree of readiness for government and local governments to implement the national policies and laws.

Proactive and skilled policy dialogue – The SCO self-implementation approach which was necessary due to scarce implementation capacity in Mongolia ensured that the SCO had an overview of the policy context and was able to take proactive steps and mix political and policy dialogue when needed. Added to this was the presence of highly qualified and astute national programme officers that were able to ensure continuity over the years, effective communication of policy messages and an appreciation of the country context. Along the implementation, partners and project implementation units have become quite capable and committed to implement these highly technical, complicated projects with ambitious goals.

Leading donor role – SDC, although not the only donor in the domains that it operated, was a relatively large donor and able to project significant influence.

Project ambition and complexity – the governance and decentralisation programme was broad in scope and had, in hindsight, high ambitions.

59 <https://cdd.stanford.edu/what-is-deliberative-polling/>

Deep seated issues beyond a project scope and horizon - Pasture management could not be taken in isolation of the wider land management context. Attempting to make changes in pasture management that would have significant environmental and economic benefits could not be done without addressing wider political and social concerns on land management as a whole. SDC did not have the mandate and resources to tackle issues at this level. This contributed to the pasture management draft law supported by SDC not being approved. However, with the policy support of the SDC governance projects the Animal Tax Law was adopted.

Development partner coordination – a technical rivalry of ideas between the deliberative polling concept of Stanford University and Centre for Democracy Studies, Aarau⁶⁰ meant that the government at different stages was being advised in different directions. This is not necessarily problematic as it can also be good for the government to be offered alternatives. Although direct tangible result, which is the approval of the said law, was not achieved, the concept is widely promoted – as witnessed by the revision of LATUG, which includes the agenda initiative by local citizens.

Lessons learnt – the lessons learnt are closely related to the factors above:

- **Beware of relying on personal relations** – and ensure awareness/alignment with the electoral cycle
- **Empower local SCO staff** – for continuity and insight
- **There are some things SDC, and donors cannot do** – projects are short in horizon, mandate and resources, they also need to have aimed that match these limitations. Keep it simple.
- Alignment with Government policies/strategic goals/visions has been an important factor bearing in mind the level of political leadership and willingness. In some cases, it is important to consider the views of political parties in promoting programme goals.
- **Development partner coordination** – Although not formally donors, Stanford University and the Centre for Democracy Studies, Aarau and the donors financing them are also relevant when it comes to coordination, and it illustrates the need to coordinate a wider range of development actors.

⁶⁰ <https://www.zdaarau.ch/en/>

Serbia

Case study - SDC in Governance sector in Serbia⁶¹

In the 2013-2020 period, SDC worked to advance governance at national and local levels. The support targeted state systems for the most part and aimed for better local governance, decentralisation, social inclusion, parliamentary reforms and public finance management. SDC worked either directly with state institutions or through national and international organisations.

To foster local governance reforms, SDC worked with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local self-governance, municipalities, assemblies and provided core funding to the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), an association dedicated to developing local self-government and advocating their interests at the national level. The SCTM has for many years been the key SDC partner for improving management capacities of subnational governments and for linking their interest to national legislation.

To enhance social inclusion, SDC collaborated directly with the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU) of the Government of the Republic of Serbia since the Unit was established in 2009. Support to parliamentary reforms was channelled through a UNDP-implemented project on strengthening oversight function and transparency of domestic parliaments, including the National Assembly.

In response to a shrinking space for civil society in Serbia, SDC, in 2019, started a CSO programme “*For an Active Civil Society – Together*” (ACT), implemented by a Swiss NGO Helvetas and a local NGO called Civic Initiatives that are engaging in policy dialogue. The new CSO programme constitutes a considerable shift from mainly working with government institutions to working with non-state actors.

Findings

In response to the increasingly authoritarian context, SDC has expanded its activities on the subnational level, works more with non-state actors and promotes less-sensitive topics on the national level. SDC expanded its activities on the local level supporting local governments and assemblies in local governance reforms and advocating for social inclusion and civil society involvement in decision-making processes. A notable success has been reported - SDC contributed to a successful transfer of responsibility to levy and manage property tax at the local level. Local Governments increased their income thanks to the transferred competencies to their citizens in property tax management by Amendments to the Law on Property initiated by SDC partners.

More recently, and as noted earlier, SDC started the programme ACT in response to the deteriorating civil society environment.

On the national level, SDC/SCO has engaged in less-risky dialogues around global issues such as climate change; climate-resilient cities with the Ministry of Mining and Energy. However, there is a long way and joint effort of development partners required for ensuring sustained government structures in charge of elaborating a dedicated national plan for sustainable development and coordinating its implementation and monitoring, including preparing Voluntary National Reports (VNRs).

⁶¹ Sources: Richard Kohli (SCO Serbia); Sascha Muller (former Head of Governance SCO Serbia); Petar Vasilev (SCO Serbia); Melina Papageorgiou (current Head of Governance Domain, SCO Serbia); Biljana Djusic-Radmilovic (SCO Serbia); Jovana Mihajlovic (SCO Serbia)
Documents: Annual reports 2013-2020; Cooperation strategies; End of phase 2 report for Parliament project; Credit proposals for Parliament project

There is no well-established, coordinated, coherent and harmonized system for donor coordination in Serbia. Coordination with other donors takes place through sector working groups co-led by the Ministry of European Integration. Switzerland participates in working groups relevant to its cooperation programme with Serbia and currently co-leads the Human Resources and Social Development Sector Working Group. Yet, the quality of these coordination mechanisms is unsatisfactory. A system for a joint donor response to backsliding democracy has not been established. However, while preparing new interventions, SDC aims at fostering a joint UN approach, possibly in partnerships with other donors such as GIZ, Sida, Norway and USAID. Further, SDC will start a civil society resilience project together with USAID in 2022.

The donor community has, in general, not been outspoken as regards backsliding democracy in Serbia. A few joint public statement on worrying political developments in the country could the interlocutors recall. SDC has kept its well-recognised neutral position, well painted by the below quotes:

“Switzerland is often too neutral when we need fast and firm reactions.”

“Switzerland needs to step up and push more for its own values, that is my personal opinion.”

“Policy dialogue dilemma – we need to remain engaged but also increase our engagement with non-state actors but there is a danger of getting caught in between.”

“There is a thin line between naming the issues and endangering the overall good cooperation Switzerland and Serbia have had.”

Policy dialogue in Serbia has mainly been a project-led process carried out by implementing partners. SDC mainly delegates policy dialogue activities to the implementing partners also when working with government institutions such as the Ministry of Public Administration and Local self-governance that SDC supported in the development of its reform strategy and action plan. There was a regular and open dialogue with the unit in the Ministry carried out by SDC partner SCTM on, among others, a strong drive on digitalization, which is a topic of high interest to the government, and the prime minister itself. In the case of the Parliament project, policy dialogue has been, for the most part, carried out through UNDP. In the words of one of the interviewees: *“We (SCO) work on a technical level, we do not conduct concrete policy dialogue to influence on laws and regulations, for that you need to have experts; we rely on our partners”*. Yet, UNDP and SCO have, in a coordinated action, informed the Director/ Deputy Secretary-General of the National Assembly about the significant shifts in topics supported by the project. In the Parliament project, SDC linked up with the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), an influential local think-tank recognised by the international community, that works on policy influencing by means of monitoring the Parliament’s performance and sharing credible information and data with influential international stakeholders.

In terms of policy dialogue, the results of Swiss support for parliament reforms have been rather modest. The Project was able to deliver mainly at a technical level which can be attributed to deteriorating political context and ‘presidentialisation’ of the government system including the Parliament, i.e., the concentration of power in the hands of one man and his political party, as well as insufficient engagement of UNDP in policy dialogue. During the implementation of the project, the government and the parliament showed limited demand for reforming the electoral process, a precondition for institutional strengthening of the Parliament’s oversight and representative function. UNDP managed to successfully advocate for some changes in the local governance law in 2018, which resulted in some strengthening of the local assemblies. They also managed to contribute to changes in some regulations in local assemblies, i.e., to accommodate e-parliaments in a couple of municipalities and to contribute to the amendment of electoral law to increase gender quota from 33% to 40%. But

other than that UNDP has not been very active in policy influencing or political dialogue. It was also noted, by the end of phase report, (2020) that *“the biggest failure of the Project was that it did not recognize and foresee rapidly evolving political context and that it failed to use political economy approach in order to respond to it”*. One of the interviewees stressed out that there is a general challenge in collaborating with UN: *“SDC tends to read context better than UN; we were more critical to changes in the context, while their stance was fairly influenced by the relationship they had with the government; they were not willing to adapt, the push came from our side”*.

SDC collaborates with a well-established and recognised local organization (SCTM) in upstreaming local issues. SCTM acts as a bridge between the central and local levels by integrating local level interests in numerous national laws and policies. SCTM is recognised by the central government as an important actor to consult when legislation concerning local governments is drafted. Since 2014, SCTM integrated local government (LG) interests into numerous laws and policies, such as Housing Law in 2017. It supported LGs to implement laws on administrative efficiency, anti-corruption, budgeting and LG employment, strengthening LGs legitimacy and division of labour between central and local governments. SDC is the only core funder of the SCTM and thus deemed with a significant role in their results. However, the exact contribution is difficult to measure, also because the SCTM work covers all local governments of the country and implements projects funded by other donors, which is why the results achieved are reported under country results in SDC annual reports.

SDC did not manage to institutionalise SIPRU within the government system. Cooperation and support to the Social Inclusion and Poverty reduction Unit affiliated with the prime minister's office have, so far, not led to the institutionalisation of it within the government. Successful anchoring of the Unit within the administration requires internal systematisation and reorganisation for which the government was not ready. Although a legal solution has been identified in the form of a new sector within the Ministry of Labour, Veterans and Social Affairs, it is not clear how optimal, i.e., viable and sustainable such a model is. Swiss long support to the Unit ended in December 2021. The absence of a timely long-term solution and a set of measures and policies enacted by the government indicate lack of political will and low interest in the topic. As one of the interviewees pointed out: *“We used all diplomatic means, send letters, but the responses were slow, it also took a long time to get meetings with the government in place”*. The project lacked active support from the EU. There was no pressure and motivation from their side to push for reforms that would allow for the institutionalisation of the Unit. EU was more focused on technical and thematic aspects than on sustainable solutions. That may have been the case because the EU is not as strong advocate of Serbia EU integration as it used to be. One of the interlocutors noted that it looks as if the EU got tired of Serbia "sitting on two chairs". The project goal devaluated in the absence of EU push and advocacy for sustainable solutions. All donors have, in general, worked independently in pursuit of their agendas and objectives. However, staying engaged got to a certain extent paid off as many harmful initiatives in the preparation of laws and policies the Unit stopped.

Factors that led/ could lead to success:

- **Parliament project:** Being there at the right moment despite the challenging context. A project being close to decision-makers; closely involved with members of the parliament who saw it as an opportunity to advance the agenda which was then perceived as a step forward – government saw it also as an opportunity to show a good track record in the face of the international community, for example, gender quota. A partnership with the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), a local civil society organisation exposed to powerful international stakeholders such as the EU and US.

- Working in a less exposed environment and on topics where there is high citizen demand. “Cooperation depends on the Ministry we’re dealing with”. (e.g., promotion of globally relevant issues)
- Local reforms/ digitalisation - strong support and push from the government
- Support to local governance reforms – Comprehensive approach - good context analysis; recognising good momentum for actions; engagement of a broader range of stakeholders; bottom-up approach and capacitated partners (e.g., SCTM). Working with partners that can fast mobilise a wide range of stakeholders and collect their views on proposed laws, regulations etc. – this in particular important in the context of Serbia where law-making procedure is fast and short (e.g., SCTM).

Factors that hindered success:

- Parliament project - Unfavourable context - deteriorating political context and ‘presidentialisation’ of the government system including the Parliament, i.e., the concentration of power in the hands of one man and his political party, as well as the opposition boycott of the Parliamentary elections in 2020.
- SIPRU – The lack of political interest in topics promoted via SIPRU; weak donor coordination: all donors working on their own agendas; regional dynamics; a desire of Serbia to at the same time please the EU while on the other side adopting own agendas; EU and the UN system too technical, with no sufficient focus on viable solutions.
- Support to Local Government reforms – A new organisational structure of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local self-governance set by the current Minister has to a large extent slowed down the project.

Lessons learnt:

Parliament project -. The new planned UN joint programme will be used to position UN agencies and Switzerland more strategically, beyond their current traditional, technical approach and involve other partners in the new programme, a more active policy dialogue, as well as fostering UN-system reform and a different role of UN agencies.

SIPRU – The institutionalisation of the Unit required a strong, unified and persistent effort of development partners, in particular the EU. Successful anchoring of the Unit within the administration requires internal systematisation and reorganisation for which the government was not ready.

Syria

Case study⁶² Syria – the Humanitarian Advocacy Action Plan

The context:

Switzerland is an important factor in delivering humanitarian assistance to Syria. SDC is currently co-chairing a couple of working groups – among which the Syria Donor Working Group (SYDWG) co-chaired with UK is the most important. This is the forum for discussion of delivery of humanitarian assistance inside Syria amongst bilateral donors. Switzerland is a medium size donor.

Switzerland is the only bilateral humanitarian donor present in Syria through a SCO. After political consideration, Switzerland in 2017 decided to open a SCO in Damascus. At the same time, they engaged in tripartite technical meetings with Syria and Iran. Care is taken to ensure that the SCO is not perceived as an Embassy, contacts with Syrian authorities are kept at a technical level and only when high level delegations visit, there are political/policy dialogues at higher levels. Switzerland provides humanitarian assistance to all parts of Syria, including North East and North West which are dealt with from the regional office in Amman. Due to Swiss presence in Damascus, SCO has been able to move around in the country extending the technical dialogue to governors and local level where the views on the current Syrian Governments varies.

Humanitarian assistance in Syria is delivered in accordance with the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) developed by the UN with inputs from a wide range of partners. The HRP has three strategic objectives 1) save lives; 2) enhance protection; and 3) increase resilience and access to services. In particular, the latter objective continues to be a source of discussion amongst donors as to how far to go towards rehabilitation and reconstruction. Over time, donors gradually moved towards a more coherent view, and countries initially reluctant to fund resilience are increasingly doing so. Switzerland from the outset has been able to fund all three objectives.

A Humanitarian Advocacy Plan on Syria was developed by FDFA in the summer of 2021 in order to 1) give strategic guidance to on-going dialogue efforts on humanitarian activities in Syria vis-à-vis other donors and actors in Syria as well as the interactions with Syrian authorities, and 2) ensure coherence between Swiss actors as regards advocacy messaging in diverse contexts. The Advocacy Plan sets out an extensive list of topics that could be included in dialogues with actors in Syria and outside Syria. The Plan does not yet include specific messages to be used in the various interactions – this will have to be planned in each case bearing in mind the specific risks related to engaging with each of the stakeholders. The document does not preclude CH/SDC from reacting to new and important developments and to advocate on ad hoc issues. The intention is to revisit the plan during the year to make sure it is fully updated and relevant. Monitoring will be done “light”, with focus on qualitative reporting of key achievements and challenges.

⁶² Sources: Head of SCO Amman Andre Huber; Previously based in Damascus Patrice Moix; FCDO Andrew Wilson; Humanitarian Advocacy Plan – internal summer 2021; UN Humanitarian Response Plan Syrian Arab Republic December 2020

<p>Examples of areas for advocacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure respect for implementation of International Humanitarian Law Ensure access to internally displaced people Stop violence of child rights Ensure availability, safety, and quality educational infrastructure Ensure access to learning for out of school children, incl. from camps. Prevent the complete collapse of infrastructure for essential services 	<p>Primary target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governments of Syria, Russia, Turkey, Iran Government of Syria, AANES (Autonomous Adm. Region North-East Syria) Government of Syria, AANES, Governments of origin Non-likeminded donors (France and US) AANES political level Donors
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The list gives an idea of the breath of the scope of the Action Plan, as well as the many different actors to engage with. The plan also set out venues such as bilateral meetings, UN entity governing organs, and SYDWG. It is firmly based on international humanitarian principles and human rights at the same time it is forward leaning in terms of the contributing to all the pillars of the UN Humanitarian Response Plan.

The presence and the activities in the humanitarian field should be seen in the context of a potentially broader role of Switzerland in the Syrian situation. For some years 2016-2018 Switzerland engaged in a tripartite working group involving Syria, Iran, and Switzerland. Currently no new efforts are on-going.

Swiss influence in the context of Syria:

Swiss leverage with the Syrian authorities based on the presence and the activities of Switzerland is currently thought to be non-existent due to the geopolitical situation and the role of Russia.

Nevertheless, Switzerland continues to play an important role as a humanitarian donor using its presence in Damascus and dialogue with Syrian authorities and leaders in the autonomous regions to press for humanitarian principles and human rights inside Syria. Some notable and recognised outcomes are contributions to enhanced access for humanitarian aid to large parts of Syria as well as visas to humanitarian workers from INGOs.

Switzerland has also effectively used its influence as a co-chair of the SYDWG to push for International humanitarian principles be met, and for implementation of all three pillars of the UN HRP including gradually over time contributed to ensure broader donor accept of the support also for resilience while at the same time not venturing into reconstruction. SDC has high value in the donor group due to presence in Damascus and knowledge of what happens inside Syria, including through access to local authorities, something other donors are lacking.

The presence of Switzerland as co-chair of the SYDWG also lends credibility to the work of the group with other humanitarian partners. Based on a proposal by INGOs a dialogue process is now starting up on Humanitarian Recovery, where donors and implementing NGOs will try to better define the boundaries of what can be supported. The dialogue is intended to ensure that NGOs do not ask for funding that cannot be supported due to national political pressure. This would probably not have been possible had the donor group been led by donors with a more restrictive interpretation of what can be termed resilience under the UN HRP.

Switzerland provides a global public good by investing so heavily in donor coordination – in return they get influence which they effectively use to shape the agenda. This despite quite limited staff resources compared to large donors and UN agencies.

Switzerland in such humanitarian settings applies a strictly technical approach to delivery of humanitarian aid in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Being an impartial partner and talking to all parties implies that difficult issues must be raised with all partners. Before the Action Plan this was not always the case. The Swiss system allows for quite large flexibility, where it is left to the leader of the delegation/ambassador to decide on what to say and how to say it in different meetings and fora. The development of the Plan brought the FDFA closer to defining Swiss objectives and setting out areas of dialogue.

The Plan has clearly strengthened a WOGA approach to dealing with Syria. The development of the plan has been useful in this regard. The Plan is only now being implemented, and it is too early to draw meaningful conclusions on its impact.

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