

Independent Evaluation of

SDC's Engagement in the Field of Good Governance and Rule of Law from 2017 to 2022

Commissioned by the Evaluation and Controlling Unit
of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Contents:

- I Evaluation Process
- II SDC Senior Management Response
- III Evaluators' Final Report

Case Studies: see Volume 2

Donor	SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Report title	Independent Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Field of Good Governance and Rule of Law from 2017 to 2022
Geographic area	Global
Sector	150: Government & Civil Society
Language	English
Date	January 2024
Author	Nordic Consulting Group, Jemtelandsgade 1, 2300 Copenhagen, Denmark Anne-Lise Klausen (Team Leader), Ayla Olesen Yurtaslan (Expert), Kathryn Nwajiaku-Dahou (Expert), Ed Laws (Expert), Dolf Noppen (Quality Assurance)

Bern, Mai 2024

I Evaluation Process

Evaluations commissioned by the SDC's Board of Directors were introduced in the SDC in 2002 with the aim of providing a more critical and independent assessment of the SDC activities. These Evaluations are conducted according to the OECD DAC Evaluation Standards and are part of the SDC's concept for implementing Article 170 of the Swiss Constitution, which requires Swiss Federal Offices to analyse the effectiveness of their activities. The SDC's **Senior Management** (consisting of the Director General and the heads of SDC's departments) approves the Evaluation Program. The **Evaluation and Controlling Unit**, which reports directly to the Director General, commissions the evaluation, taking care to recruit independent evaluators and manages the evaluation process.

The Evaluation and Controlling Unit identified the primary intended users of the evaluation, and invited them to participate in a **Core Learning Partnership (CLP)**. The Core Learning Partnership actively accompanied the evaluation process. It commented on the evaluation design (Approach Paper); it validated the evaluation methodology (Inception Report); and it provided feedback to the evaluation team on their preliminary findings. During a capitalization workshop and a presentation on the Draft Evaluation Report, the Core Learning Partnership had the opportunity to comment on the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation was carried out according to the evaluation standards specified in the Terms of Reference.

Based on the **Final Report of the Evaluators**, the **Senior Management Response (SMR)** was approved by the SDC's Board of Directors and signed by the SDC Director-General.

The SMR is published together with the **Final Report of the Evaluators**. Further details regarding the evaluation process are available in the evaluation report and its annexes.

Timetable

Step	When
Approach Paper finalized	February 2023
Implementation of the evaluation	February-December 2023
Senior Management Response in SDC	April 2024

II Senior Management Response

Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned an independent evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Field of Good Governance and Rule of Law for the period 2017-2022.

The evaluation's mandate was to look both at SDC's core programmes – in particular in the fields of democratization and decentralization – and the broader portfolio of transversal governance interventions, with a focus on current challenges related to governance and institution building in fragile contexts. Aligned with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, the evaluation has assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of SDC's programmes, with very useful additional reflections on institutional learning. In particular, the evaluation was to address the following key issues:

- Relevance and effectiveness of SDC's governance portfolio, in particular core projects in Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe in the areas of decentralization and democratization → Which are the factors of success? What can be improved?
- The benefit of indirect governance objectives in domains such as agriculture, health and economic development → Do transversal governance components lead to stronger sector intervention outcomes? Do governance-focused humanitarian interventions yield better outcomes?
- Institution building in fragile, post-conflict or authoritarian contexts → How can governance-focused programming yield results in these contexts and contribute to resilient, people-centered local and national institutions and the rule of law? How do governance programs perform in (triple) nexus settings, what is their additional value?

The mandate for this evaluation was granted in February 2023 to a team of the Denmark-based Nordic Consulting Group, which has submitted the final evaluation report on 15 January 2024. The original, optimistic timetable had to be adjusted due to operational impasses in some of the country offices selected for case studies.

A Core Learning Group (CLP) of seven governance and Human Rights-competent employees representing all relevant SDC divisions and led by the Evaluation Manager of SDC's Evaluation and Controlling unit, accompanied the evaluation process. The CLP has been consulted at various instances by the evaluation Team in important key moments such as for the selection of focal countries and desk studies, and on the draft report.

Assessment of the evaluation

SDC appreciates the high quality of this evaluation, which emphasizes certain key points regarding Switzerland's governance work. The evaluation report meets SDC's quality standards and has been positively received. SDC is aware that there have been some security-related limitations in some of the countries selected for case studies. It is also important to stress that the evaluation does not encompass SDC's multilateral governance engagement. SDC's senior management fully or partially accepts the ten recommendations made by the evaluators and is committed to implementing them, taking the following points into consideration.

Main findings

- SDC has **sharpened its conceptual and methodological understanding of governance** since 2015, when the last evaluation was conducted. Today, most governance programmes are underpinned by sound analyses and considerations related to the context evolution, advantages and disadvantages of implementation modalities, ownership and phase-out issues, and coordination with other stakeholders, etc. The case studies show how a close context monitoring is done across country contexts and how this affects programming, as part of SDC's adaptive management approach.
- SDC has **reinforced its focus and commitment on good governance, mainly in bilateral development cooperation**. It is **about to reach the overall target of 75% of its programming marked as governance-focused despite** the fact that **humanitarian interventions** (excluding rapid response, which is a small part of humanitarian programming) **fail to reach their own target percent**. However, re-establishing functional and accountable institutions is particularly relevant in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and in protracted crises, where triple nexus programming is much needed. In contexts where it is not possible to work with such institutions (local or national), transversal governance is still important in establishing mechanisms for aid organisations to be accountable to affected populations and in supporting community-led aid and resilience.
- The evaluation found SDC's approach to governance to be very people-centred, leading to **tangible improvements in the lives of citizens, especially at local level**. In particular, SDC has contributed to increased transparency, accountability and oversight of local governments and, at the same time, higher levels of citizens' engagement and improved satisfaction with municipal services (e.g. in health, waste disposal, and education). In less fragile contexts, the evaluation confirms also important results achieved at national level. There is a balance between duty bearers and rights holders in the governance portfolio, which has strengthened the social contract and allows SDC to adjust its levels of support in the face of rising authoritarianism or democratic reversals. **Attention** should be paid to **strengthen the national level** whenever possible as well as particular **"future" governance challenges** such as democratic anxiety, mis/disinformation, further aspects of digitalisation and governance implications of climate change.
- The evaluation noted, however, that there are only **few engagements with a direct approach on human rights**. In some contexts, SDC consciously does not directly engage on human rights, because of risks of repression or repercussions, among others on its staff and partners. The evaluation observes positive elements from SDC's careful approach in authoritarian contexts, but **cautions against letting sensitive and difficult issues**, such as civil and political rights or free and independent media, **be left out of programmes**.
- The evaluation finds the **governance portfolio to be largely effective**. Results frameworks are set at a realistic and achievable level and are adapted to the realities when required by the context. While results are more predictable and straightforward in stable contexts, they can **also be shown in contexts of authoritarianism or democratic reversals**. There is evidence that **staying engaged can be of value**, even when politics does not align with democratic reforms. In these contexts, effectiveness has largely been tied to SDC's ability to find entry points, processes, and pockets where there is political will to engage on improved governance. Transformative changes and institution building have generally been observed both at local and national levels. **In more challenging contexts** of fragility or democratic reversal, it is more realistic to **focus on strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions** than aiming for transformative change.

- The evaluation observed **few results when it comes to devolution of power from central to local levels through fiscal decentralisation**. SDC often works with the World Bank, the EU or the UN, who are major players on fiscal decentralisation. Here, results are generally mixed, not least because of lack of political will. In terms of budget commitments, a large share of SDC interventions marked as governance-focused are contributions to multilateral International Finance Institutions (IFIs). As contributions to IFIs and core contributions to multilateral organisations have not been covered by the present evaluation, it is important that **governance programmes undertaken by multilateral development partners should be assessed by other evaluations**.
- SDC notes with satisfaction that **transversal governance** is widely acknowledged as relevant and used to improve the effectiveness of sector outcomes. The serious efforts undertaken in this regard since the last independent governance evaluation seem to have borne fruit. However, it still requires further support, **especially in humanitarian aid interventions**, to fine-tune a coherent understanding and approach. A series of measures in this regard, including trainings on transversal governance and showing concrete examples from diverse contexts, has to be developed.
- Switzerland's **Whole of Government approach** has worked well in several contexts, particularly between SDC and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. As their respective mandates and roles offer a considerable potential for synergies, the evaluation **calls for an increased cooperation between SDC and the Peace and Human Rights Division**.
- The evaluation stresses the key **importance of continued learning** for the quality of governance programming and calls for a continued investment into face-to-face interactions and learning journeys, and to continue to share them at international level (e.g., OECD-DAC). At the same time, the evaluation concurs that the whole set of governance guidance, capitalisations and other documentation developed over the years is very relevant and used extensively by SDC staff, especially for analysis and planning.

Key elements of the management response

SDC's Directorate is pleased to note that the evaluation overall gives good marks to SDC on Governance and recognises in particular the conceptual improvements introduced since the last thematic evaluation of this portfolio (2015). The evaluation made **ten recommendations**, all of which were **partially or fully accepted by SDCs directorate**. Concrete measures to implement these recommendations are detailed in annex. The main aspects to focus on are:

- To continue to invest in the strengthening of **transversal governance** within the whole SDC/FDFA, but particularly related to humanitarian aid.
- While keeping a people-centred approach at local level, to **step up engagement at national, regional and global levels** each time relevant and feasible; at regional and global level especially when national-level engagement is restricted.
- To strengthen the role of SDC as a translator of **human rights** standards into locally accepted language, but without reinforcing divisions, and to better express governance results also in terms of human rights results.
- To improve **cooperation with the Peace & Human Rights Division** (*Comité de Pilotage*).

- To develop straightforward narratives (esp. on governance, democracy, staying engaged, locally-led development) towards political actors as well as the broad public, and embed them in a **communication** concept along with the evaluation results.
- To continue to deploy the whole palette of implementation modalities, however with an **increased focus on contributions to local/national actors whenever possible**, to strengthen ownership, sustainability and locally-led development.
- To continue to invest in **knowledge management**, esp. related to the above items, while reducing the number of documents to what is the most relevant, current and user-friendly.

In addition, SDC will take the following steps:

- Send out a formal communication from SDC's Director General to Swiss Representations, HQ sections and WOGA actors to inform them about the main findings, recommendations and implementation measures of the evaluation.
- Accompany the publication of the evaluation report by short and appropriate internal & external communication products (e.g., infographics) to make the content accessible to a non-specialised audience.

SDC's Senior Management thanks the evaluation team and the SDC staff involved for their efforts and commitment.

Bern, April 2024



Patricia Danzi, SDC Director General

Annex: Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

Annex: Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

Recommendation 1		
<p><i>“Seize opportunities to work more directly on strengthening human rights, in particular civil and political rights, where possible. Maintain and further develop indirect approaches (including strategically designed cultural interventions), where more direct engagement on human rights issues could jeopardize safety of partners and staff.”</i></p>		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>SDC recognizes that almost all governance results are ultimately human rights results. A focus on human rights, including civil and political rights, is an integral part of good governance. This aspect is however particularly context-specific and sensitive. SDC sometimes shies away from a very principled approach to working on human rights, and often gives preference to a more indirect approach, minimizing risks for its staff and hoping to have a transformative impact in the long run. The role of SDC as a translator of human rights standards into locally accepted language, with a firm valued position without reinforcing discursive divisions, can be further strengthened. SDC will address this more directly and explicitly <u>whenever possible</u>, and at the same time maintain a “do no harm” approach, to be defined in each context. The following measures will be implemented in close cooperation & coordination with the Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) of the FDFA’s State Secretariat.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When possible and conducive in a given context, identify local champions to translate human rights standards and values into a locally accepted language. Including a systematic use of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), potentially combined with the Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management approach. 2. Internally disseminate examples highlighted by the evaluation of using culture as an entry point for governance/human rights work. 3. Make sure that Governance and Human Rights aspects not only appear in the FDFA regional strategies but are also put in relation (not always done so far), and translate the IZA strategy (esp. part on human rights) into country programmes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heads of Swiss representations in concerned countries with support of PGE section & RTAs 2. Heads of Swiss representations and HQ sections 3. SDC Directorate, Heads of Division/Sections, with support of PGE section 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuous 2. Mid-2024 3. By End of 2026
---	---	---

Recommendations 2 & 6
<p><i>“Strengthen transversal governance in humanitarian and HDP-nexus interventions by capacitating local systems (and local governments when feasible); and promoting coherence and transparent and accountable governance of the aid architecture with a view to responding to emergencies and protracted crises in an inclusive, transparent, and accountable manner.”</i></p> <p><i>“Prioritise governance as a transversal theme and continue to develop staff capacities and resources in particular face-to-face interactions and Learning Journeys. Consider how to strengthen incentives to work on transversal governance in humanitarian settings, hereunder tailoring the transversal governance checklist to be more suited to humanitarian aid.”</i></p>

Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
SDC agrees that transversal governance is an important aspect of programming in all countries of engagement, and particularly in humanitarian settings. It will develop a set of measures along the evaluation's recommendations to continue to apply it, esp. in humanitarian operations which are not rapid responses.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
4. Develop a concept with the colleagues in charge of Swiss Humanitarian Aid Corps and the geographic divisions to improve mainstreaming of transversal governance in humanitarian aid (not rapid response).	4. PGE section / colleagues in charge of SHA (HA operations) / geographic divisions	4. 31.12.2025
5. Update the guidance on transversal governance (TG), including recommendations on TG implementation in relevant sectors, humanitarian interventions and in authoritarian contexts, with concrete measures and examples at different levels and from diverse contexts, also linking to visual capitalisation products.	5. Senior Policy Advisor Governance (PGE section) – together with field representations, HA operations/Competence Centers, HQ geographic and thematic sections.	5. 31.12.2025
6. Review the criteria for the SAP marker “Governance significant”, so that the HA can be better reflected/humanitarian needs.	6. Senior Policy Advisor Governance (PGE section)	6. 31.12.2025
7. Include transversal governance in overall standard trainings (PCM training, one week training from the Thematic Cooperation and the “Ausreiseseminar”), and develop tailored-made internal trainings on transversal governance, particularly for the members of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Corps, as already done in 2023.	7. Senior Policy Advisor Governance (PGE section), HA operations/Competence Centers and SHA experts	7. 31.12.2024, then yearly
8. Spread the good practices developed to clearly mark transversal Governance in Results Frameworks and annual reports in RDM.	8. Senior Policy Advisor Governance (PGE section) / Divisions' staff.	8. 31.10.2024, then yearly

Recommendation 3
<i>“Work closely with WOGA partners, to strengthen synergies and complementarity of mandates, to capitalise on Switzerland’s role in promoting democratic governance in the countries of joint presence. In particular, PHRD and SDC should increase cooperation, particularly on political economy analysis, policy dialogue and advocacy agendas, to promote peacebuilding, good governance and human rights.”</i>

Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
At country level, Swiss representations are working in good coordination with an overall good collaboration between SDC, PHRD and SECO staff. At headquarters level, SDC will further invest on clarifying open questions with regard to complementarity and will seek to improve cooperation and synergies between SDC and PHRD.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
9. Develop a vademecum SDC-PHRD to set and clarify cooperation and synergies between SDC and PHRD at HQ (<i>Comité de Pilotage</i>) and in field offices	9. Senior Policy Advisor FCHR	9. End of 2025
10. In WOGA-related countries of interventions, make sure that joint PEA, policy dialogue and advocacy are done and specifically reported to.	10. Heads of Swiss Representations, HQ desks	10. 31.10.2024 and then yearly
11. Assure that SDC's governance engagements, principles and priorities are well reflected in the upcoming FDFA Guidelines on Democracy, with clear synergies and complementarity with WoGA partners, esp. PHR.	11. Heads of Thematic division and PGE section	11. 31.12.2024

Recommendations 4, 9 & 10		
<p><i>“Strengthen the level of ambition and use of ToCs to clearly show how programmes and governance domains are instrumental in promoting and maintaining good governance and rule of law values in the longer term beyond the synergies between the portfolio of projects in a given context. This may entail reducing the number of projects in the country portfolios as relevant, in order to enhance overall efficiency and coherence, and to free time for other important types of engagements such as leadership roles in coordination, policy dialogue and learning.”</i></p> <p><i>“When aiming for transformative impact on particularly entrenched and politicised issues, draw on political economy analysis (PEA) and consider how to address both the formal (i.e., rules laws and regulations) and informal institutions (i.e., norms, understanding and patterns of interaction between citizens and authorities) underpinning a particular governance dynamic.”</i></p> <p><i>“Communicate clearly about the trade-offs that may be associated with trying to achieve impact on governance in contexts of democratic backsliding, fragility, and/or authoritarianism. Rethink impact in challenging contexts, and in keeping with the people-centred approach and governance principles, focus on realistic objectives and the longer-term engagement and strengthening of the resilience of democratic institutions to withstand external pressures or shocks first, before considering how to achieve more ambitious or transformative results.”</i></p>		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>SDC overall agrees and combines these 3 recommendations together, as all 3 revolve around theories of change, realistic planning and consequent messaging. These are also partially linked to the recommendation 1 related to human rights. However, SDC does not agree that the level of ambition of ToCs has to be <u>systematically</u> strengthened. This is very context-specific, according to what is feasible including int terms of risks.</p> <p>SDC considers its roles in coordination, policy dialogue and learning as equally important and reinforcing the management of projects. SDC agrees that a reduction in number of projects is to be done in many cases. This is ultimately the responsibility and decision of the respective Head of Swiss Representations.</p>		

Since most implementation measures are very context-specific, these recommendations are to be taken into account mainly at country level during mid-term reviews and elaboration of new country programmes. Only the measures below will be deployed for the entire SDC, including also the further promotion of flexible planning and adaptive management, as noted in the findings.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
12. The already existing tools on Political Economy Analysis (PEA), combined with a Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management Approach (CSPM) and/or a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), are to be further promoted and deployed on request for the elaboration of Cooperation Programmes (or mid-term reviews).	12. Heads of Swiss Representations, HQ desks, RTAs, Peace and Governance teams of PGE section	12. 31.12.2025
13. Continue specific trainings on PEA, reviewed with CSPM and HRBA elements.	13. Senior Policy Advisors of PGE section; RTAs	13. 31.12.2024, then yearly
14. In the diverse WoGA fora, better explain the added value of Governance in fragile contexts, based on a communication concept including results' demonstration.	14. SDC Directorate and WoGA partners with support of FDFA Communication and PGE section	14. 31.12.2024
15. Review and if relevant, re-disseminate the set of tools on Informal Local Governance Institutions (ILGIs) developed by the Governance network.	15. Senior Policy Advisor Governance (PGE section)	15. 31.12.2024, then yearly

Recommendation 5		
<i>“Stay engaged at local level in countries with democratic reversals, increasing authoritarianism and fragility and pursue entry points for engagement at national level; when national level engagement is restricted, step up engagement at regional and global levels.”</i>		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>SDC is engaged in Swiss internal and external (among others: OECD-DAC) dialogues and joint learnings on the aspects of engagement in fragile and/or authoritarian/democratic backsliding contexts, both at the general principle and at country-specific levels. The evaluation findings will certainly feed such processes. SDC will continue its context-specific approach based on identified entry points, when possible, increasingly at national or regional/global level. However, SDC does not agree that it has to stay engaged in any case. SDC considers staying engaged in a context - despite the reversals, authoritarianism and fragility – according to its political considerations and feasibility.</p> <p>Most implementation measures are very context-specific. This recommendation is therefore to be taken into account mainly at country level during mid-term reviews and elaboration of new country programmes. Only the measures below will be deployed from HQ.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
16. Based on a communication concept summarizing the evaluation (targets: politicians and the broad public) and providing concrete examples, use the evaluation's findings to	16. SDC Directorate, Governance and Peace teams of	16. Continuous

<p>strengthen the FDFA internal dialogue on the engagement of Switzerland in authoritarian/fragile/conflict-affected countries.</p> <p>17. Continue to disseminate the results of the <i>Learning Journey on working in Authoritarian Contexts (2020-2023)</i> and connect the reflections with the work on fragility (working in politically constrained environments) at OECD-DAC level (INCAF & GOVNET networks).</p>	<p>the PGE section & RTAs, Heads of Swiss Representations, with support of SDC/FDFA Communication.</p> <p>17. Governance and Peace teams of the PGE Section & RTAs</p>	<p>17. 2024-2026</p>
--	--	----------------------

Recommendation 7		
<p><i>“Contributions should be considered as the preferred modality in all phases of governance programming, with careful consideration of advantages and disadvantages in specific contexts.”</i></p>		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>SDC considers that the evaluation did not sufficiently draw a distinction between contributions to multilateral organisations and contributions to local/national actors (including state authorities) and that the advantages/disadvantages of contributions compared to other modalities were not sufficiently addressed.</p> <p>SDC agrees that, in general terms, (governance) portfolios need to promote country ownership, sustainability and accountability to ensure more locally-led development. This corresponds to several international engagements taken by Switzerland on such principles (Paris Declaration of 2004, Busan Principles of 2012, Grand Bargain of 2016). Specific analyses on implementation modalities have to be done in each context, avoiding if possible “easy” solutions of going with usual international intermediaries and daring more to go directly with country partners according to their own priorities, where possible. Therefore, SDC supports in general the recommendation – especially, but not only, in Governance programming - to increase contributions, particularly to local/national actors (including State authorities), but does not necessarily want to increase contributions to multilateral organisations.</p> <p>SDC encourages all of its representations to conduct specific analyses and to reflect carefully on the appropriate modalities, as per the guidance for the elaboration of cooperation programmes. Once the partner risk assessments and audits show that direct contributions to local/national actors are reasonable and with bearable risks, it is encouraged use this modality to improve country ownership, accountability, sustainability and locally-led development. A certain level of coaching/organisational development might be included into the support.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
<p>18. Contribute to the OECD-DAC learning journey’s and SDC’s internal working group on localization and the implementation of the respective recommendations.</p>	<p>18. Senior Policy Advisors of PGE section & RTAs</p>	<p>18. 31.12.2024</p>
<p>19. In Entry Proposals, explicit the partnership’s evolution over phases (for example starting with a mandate and continue with a contribution), within the required exit strategies.</p>	<p>19. & 20. Heads of Swiss Representations, HQ desks (SDC Senior</p>	<p>19. & 20. 31.12.2024 and continuous</p>

20. With proper dialogue with partner countries' authorities, use partner risk assessments and audit requirements to carefully frame contributions with authorities.	Policy Advisor Governance to send out examples)	
--	---	--

Recommendation 8

“Emphasize knowledge management to capitalize on existing knowledge products, systematising cross-country operational learning on core and transversal governance, with greater emphasis on face-to-face exchanges among peers working on challenging contexts.”

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
--------------------	-----------------	----------

There are many ways to share knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of projects. The evaluation concurs that the whole set of governance guidance, capitalisations and other documents developed over the years is very relevant and used extensively by the representations. This will set the basis for knowledge management, complemented by few concrete finetuning measures of existing practices. As global face-to-face (F2F) meetings are no longer conducted, regional F2F and sub-regional exchange processes gain importance and might fulfil some of the needs but fall short for others. As per the evaluation report, internal learning processes in country teams are important and not least for the joint recognition of “failures” and as an input/prerequisite adaptive management.

Parallel to this evaluation, all SDC’s thematic networks have been migrating to new platforms, including a full cleaning of documents. The PGE networks (including Governance) have just finished their own migration as per end of April 2024. The platform now merges 6 previous networks, has reduced its number of documents by about 75% keeping only the most current and useful ones, and is more efficient and user-friendly. This helps to keep knowledge useful and to-the-point. It will be introduced to all PGE networks’ members by end of May 2024 and all former networks’ sharewebs will be then deactivated.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
21. Continue facilitating learning processes that respond to the needs of cooperation offices, building on the experiences and lessons learned available, including regional and sub-regional face to face exchanges	21. Governance Team of the PGE Section & RTAs	21. Continuous
22. In project’s evaluations, foster internal peer-to-peer opportunities. If relevant, based on evaluation’s results, organise cross exchanges with other relevant representations including country government’s representatives. Report on them with annual reports.	22. Heads of Swiss Representations, RTAs, HQ desks	22. Continuous
23. Important capitalisations are to be systematically shared with the geographic divisions and the PGE section, who organize regular webinar or other forms of knowledge exchange.	23. Heads of Swiss Representations, HQ desks, Governance team of PGE section	23. Continuous
24. Introduce the new platform to PGE networks’ members. On request, revise remaining documents and reduce their length and complexity.	24. PGE Senior Advisors	24. End of May 2024 and then, continuous

III Evaluators' Final Report

Commissioned by the Specialist Service Evaluation and Controlling
of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Nordic Consulting Group A/S, DK-Copenhagen

ncg@ncg.dk

Authors:

Anne-Lise Klausen (Team Leader), Ayla Olesen Yurtaslan (Expert), Kathryn Nwajiaku-Dahou (Expert), Ed Laws (Expert), Dolf Noppen (Quality Assurance)

January 2024

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	<i>i</i>
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	2
2.1 Evaluation scope	2
2.2 Approach and methods	3
3. Background	5
3.1 Governance - the foundation for sustainable development	5
3.2 Brief overview of SDC's governance portfolio	6
4. Relevance of the governance portfolio	8
4.1 SDC's 'people-centred approach' to governance	8
4.2 Planning for relevance	10
4.3 Adaptation for relevance	11
4.4 Innovation for relevance	12
4.5 Relevance of transversal governance	13
4.6 Local government strengthening and humanitarian action	14
5. Alignment, political will, complementarity & coordination	16
5.1 Alignment with country priorities and political will in partner governments.	16
5.2 Complementarity and coordination with WOGA partners	18
5.3 Theories of Change as a means of programme coherence	20
5.4 SDC and coordination	20
6. Achievement of results	22
6.1 SDC delivers results from the "stable" to more the "fragile" contexts	23
6.2 Decentralisation & local governance	24
6.3 Strengthening national democratic institutions & processes	25
6.4 Expanding democratic & civic space	26
6.5 Strengthening sector outcomes through transversal governance.	27
7. Efficiency and learning	29
7.1 Modalities of cooperation	29
7.2 Learning and replication	31
8. Impact	34
8.1 Impact on people's lives and communities functioning	34
8.2 Contribution to transformative changes and institution building	36
9. Sustainability	39
 Annex 1: Bibliography	 42
Annex 2: Portfolio Analysis	53
Annex 3: Approach & Methodology	60
Annex 4: List of persons interviewed (available on request only)	62

The 8 country case study reports are found in a separate volume. See Volume 2.

List of Abbreviations

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CHF	Swiss Franc
CLP	Core Learning Partnership group
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DDLG	SDC Network on Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
E+C	Evaluation and Controlling Unit, SDC
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Governance and Decentralisation Programme, Mongolia
HJPC	High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
HQ	Headquarters
IC	International Cooperation (Strategy)
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MENA	Middle East North Africa
NCG	Nordic Consulting Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PGE	Peace Governance Equality Network, SDC
PHRD	Peace and Human Rights Division
SCO	Swiss Cooperation Office
SDC	Swiss Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SRBM	Strengthening Representative Bodies in Mongolia project
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically
UN	United Nations
UoTM	Union of Tyre Municipality, Lebanon
WOGA	Whole of Government Approach

Executive Summary

Introduction.

The *Independent Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Field of Good Governance and Rule of Law* encompasses the period 2017 – 2022. It covers the full portfolio of governance engagements during the period at a strategic level, selecting eight country case studies to provide in-depth, project-level analysis. The Evaluation undertook field visits in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, and Rwanda, with hybrid fieldwork in Burkina Faso; 'light' desk studies were conducted for Lebanon, Laos, Tunisia, and Mongolia.

Portfolio overview.

Agency-wide, good governance has constituted one of SDC's core areas of work during the evaluation period. Since the last evaluation of SDC's governance portfolio in 2014/15, SDC has sharpened its conceptual and methodological understanding of governance issues and challenges. In the current *IC Strategy (2021-2024)*, SDC has reinforced its focus and commitment on good governance, setting an internal target for the proportion of development cooperation and humanitarian aid that should contribute to, or focus on governance. Overall, SDC aims for 75 percent of commitments in bilateral cooperation and humanitarian assistance to be coded with the policy marker governance - "principal" (core objective) or "significant" (important component). A minimum of 20 percent of commitments should represent "principal" governance engagements. Considering only bilateral cooperation (without humanitarian aid), the target is 85 percent combined, of which 25 percent of the total should be "principal".

The Evaluation's portfolio analysis found that over half of SDC's spending in 2017 (52 percent) was marked as governance-related, using SDC's governance policy marker, either as the 'principal' objective or as a 'significant/transversal' objective. By 2021, governance-related engagements amounted to 70 percent of SDC's spending, bringing SDC closer to the overall 75 percent target. A lower target was set for humanitarian aid, where 45 percent should be governance-related (i.e., 'significant' and 'principal' together), and 5 percent should be 'principal' governance. The Evaluation finds that SDC's humanitarian aid is still far away from reaching these targets, with only 4 percent of the humanitarian budget marked as governance related.

Relevance.

The portfolio has a strong focus on the local level, where governance programmes are the closest to citizens or specific target groups. The 'people-centred approach' is relevant, as it is aligned to the needs and rights of local target groups, ultimately linking governance engagements to the provision of tangible improvements in their lives. There is a balance between engaging duty bearers and rights holders in the governance portfolio, which allows SDC the manoeuvre room to pivot and shift types and levels of support in the face of rising authoritarianism or democratic reversals. While ensuring that the respect for human rights and fundamental liberties are defined as common, strategic objectives for Swiss development cooperation, the Evaluation found few engagements in the sample that address these human rights directly. Instead, it appears that SDC consciously opts for tactical shifts away from direct engagement on human rights, because of the risk of repression or repercussions. **See Recommendation 1.**

Programmes are underpinned by sound analyses and an appropriate mix of considerations. SDC often continues to work with the same topics and partners, which may have reduced the risk appetite to address "emerging" governance challenges. Engagements are mainly in those areas where SDC has experience and expertise, consciously considering - and selecting areas where Switzerland has an added value, which is commendable. SDC is recognised for both its strong expertise and a tradition of engaging on decentralisation, which is also where other partners see the Swiss comparative advantage. In contexts of

democratic reversal or backslide, or whenever there is an escalation of conflict, 'going local' is the fallback for SDC to stay engaged. Across country contexts, reflection takes place on how the contexts are evolving, and how these developments in turn affect programming, as part of SDC's adaptive management approach.

Significant efforts have been invested by SDC to strengthen transversal governance. The Evaluation saw positive examples in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Lebanon of strategically using humanitarian aid to strengthen (local) governance outcomes, underscoring a focus on localisation and a nexus approach. **See Recommendation 2.**

Coherence

The programmes are well-aligned with partner countries' priorities, in contexts where there is a basis for alignment on good governance issues, such as Mongolia. However, critical reflection is needed on the depth of political will as a precursor to alignment, particularly important in the face of isomorphic mimicry, where particularly authoritarian governments mimic successful systems, while conflating form and functions. In such cases, SDC and other donors meet the "right" official policies on paper, while, in practice, the reality shows lack of political will and incentives to pursue reforms. The Bosnia and Herzegovina case from the sample demonstrates this point. In authoritarian contexts – hereunder Laos and Rwanda – alignment to (official) national priorities is not always desirable, nor has it been the basis for engagement.

The sample indicates that lack of political will or incentives at national level to implement specific governance reforms has been a challenge across all of the country contexts, although to varying degrees. Nonetheless, lack of political will at national level has not impeded SDC and partners' ability to engage strategically on decentralisation; entry points have been found at the local level, where the political will is present or technical and administrative reforms can be implemented. In those countries where civil society and media space is restricted, the political will to concede civic space is limited. While this space tends to be strictly controlled, particularly in authoritarian contexts, SDC has often managed to find entry points.

Overall, SDC has an ability to find space to stay engaged in a meaningful way in challenging contexts, signalling a capacity to Think and Work Politically (TWP). However, in interviews conducted by the Evaluation, concern was expressed related to the risk of staying engaged, and whether SDC vocally contests democratic reversals at country level, when scaling down national level engagement in favour of local governance. In such cases, the Evaluation notes the importance of signalling the values of democracy through other levels, means and actors in the Swiss system. More gradual democratic backsliding poses a challenge for SDC and donors to pinpoint when red lines are crossed, and how to respond.

The Swiss Whole of Government approach (WOGA) and collaboration has worked well in several of the contexts, particularly between SDC and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). WOGA complementarity, especially with PHRD and SECO, enables Switzerland to stand stronger at country level with a fuller palette of mandates, expertise, and funds. The degree of collaboration and coordination with PHRD varies to a greater extent than is the case with SECO, even though their respective mandates and roles potentially offer more synergies on governance issues. **See Recommendation 3.**

Although, there is a causal logic running across multiple projects/programmes indicating how they connect, a well-articulated narrative of how the 'sum of parts' leads to the overall portfolio-level ambitions or vision that the SCOs have on governance is often lacking. Governance projects and programmes are indeed relevant vehicles for addressing governance challenges, but there is a broader palette of tools that are relevant for SDC and WOGA partners. Tying these into a strong theory of change and operational mode with a broader range of stakeholders and instruments would strengthen the narrative and coherence of SDC's governance approach. In practice, such processes are advancing in SDC. Theories of Change therefore remain a relevant tool to assess the plausibility of the

relevance and impact of a programme while staying focused on good governance as a long-term objective in a challenging context. **See Recommendation 4.**

SDC plays a constructive role in coordination with other donors and in coordination mechanisms where governments are involved. Active coordination is a deliberate and positive agenda for SDC. Other donors express that SDC “punches above its weight”, and from SDC’s perspective, coordination is viewed as strategic, raising the profile of Switzerland in the governance domain and in other sectors.

Effectiveness.

Across the sample, the governance portfolio has largely been effective. Results frameworks are set at a realistic and achievable level and are adapted to the realities in each context. In particular, SDC has positive results in improving the accountability, transparency, and oversight of local government, while at the same time strengthening mechanisms for citizen engagement and participation at this level.

While results are easier to come by in stable contexts, SDC also has results to show from contexts that are authoritarian, or that have experienced democratic reversals. The Evaluation found evidence of the value of staying engaged, even when political incentives work against democratic governance reforms. In these contexts, effectiveness has largely been tied to SDC’s ability to find entry points, processes, and pockets where there is political will to engage on governance reforms, whether at national, sub-national or local level. Pivoting away from national level engagements toward local government and working on ‘technical’ engagements that are perceived to be less politicised has also proven to be effective.

SDC programmes have strengthened the social contract between duty bearers and rights holders. Significant contributions were seen to enhance transparency and accountability of local governments, strengthen citizens’ level of engagement in local decision-making and increase satisfaction with priority services. There are expectedly fewer results when it comes to devolution of power from central to local levels through fiscal decentralisation. SDC often works with the World Bank, the EU, or the UN, who are all major players when it comes to supporting these reforms. Results of such engagement are generally mixed, not least because of lack of political will.

While the Evaluation sees the strongest results at the local level, SDC has also been effective in strengthening democratic institutions and processes at the national level. National-level engagements have proven successful, particularly in more stable contexts. In more challenging contexts, SDC was also able to achieve results in strengthening national level democratic institutions, but political will has played a critical role in enabling or hindering successes.

On human rights, civic space, and free media, SDC’s engagements are carefully curated around a balance of negotiating acceptance by the government and quietly exerting pressure. SDC’s approach is to walk a fine line between promoting democratic and civic space without ‘overstepping’ and placing partners in danger. It is a dilemma for SDC and other donors working in challenging situations to stay within what regimes/governments find acceptable, while at the same time make meaningful and real contributions on contentious issues such as human rights. The Evaluation sees the cautious approach in authoritarian contexts leading to incremental gains, but would caution against letting sensitive and difficult issues, such as political rights or free media, be crowded out of programmes; it is important to maintain focus on these topics, even in challenging contexts. **See Recommendation 5.**

Transversal governance (TG) is an effective way for SDC to achieve governance results, one that can play an even bigger role going forward. Three key points emerged on the effectiveness of TG: First, linking governance to a sector can make governance issues more concrete, thereby enabling more tangible results for citizens, and stronger buy-in from public actors. Second, transversal governance is an important way to stay engaged and deliver

results in challenging contexts, because it involves finding ‘alternative’ sectoral entry points to engage on governance, where SDC has more traction. Third, because SDC works through partners (and for stronger internal conceptual clarity) there is a need to be very precise about TG and develop specific objectives, outcomes, indicators, and timelines to show results. **See Recommendation 6.**

Efficiency.

SDC teams use a mix of modalities strategically and, over time, there has been a shift, especially from mandates, toward greater use of contributions, which have specific advantages in challenging contexts. The use of contributions is a way to share risks and capitalise on the positive aspects of partnerships, and to boost SDC’s leverage as a relatively small donor.

SDC works closely with likeminded donors. Working together with multilaterals, not least World Bank IDA projects, gives SDC both direct and indirect access to decisionmakers, and leverage, but also limits SDC’s influence on efficiency. Initial delays can result in more ownership and buy-in from government. SDC’s long term engagement, with potential for 12-year project cycles, is important with regard to looking at efficiency as being closely linked to impact and sustainability, noting that governance reforms are about long processes, ownership and changes of attitudes.

It is difficult for the Evaluation to gauge the “efficiency” of the governance portfolio in the strict sense of the evaluation criterion. Nevertheless, it was found that SDC staff are very observant regarding projects’ level of value for money. Staff follow projects closely to ensure efficiency and avoid wastage of resources and projects are being adapted, or discontinued, if found ineffective. There are many, often small projects in the governance portfolios. From an internal efficiency point of view, reducing the number of governance projects could free up resources for staff to engage more in policy dialogue, co-ordination, and analysis, which are important supplements to projects. **See Recommendation 7.**

Learning.

SDC has, since the last evaluation of the governance portfolio (2015), invested considerable effort and resources into the development of learning tools and guidance documents. In the Evaluation’s e-survey, eighty percent of staff responded that they use the materials in their work and for a range of operational purposes, in particular for analysis and planning. The learning materials and tools are impressive, and the Evaluation concurs with field-based staff that they are an important and valuable resource, especially when working in challenging contexts. The insights and reflections from the *Learning Journey on Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts* were, for example, highly appreciated by staff.

There is evidence that projects learn from each other and replicate through several mechanisms. Despite several good examples, learning exchanges are not systematic, but driven by individual teams. The importance of including government staff was seen as particularly important. On transversal governance, more in-person exchanges and training to share experiences and learnings across contexts were called for. Internal learning processes in country teams are important and not least for the joint recognition of “failures” and as an input/prerequisite to adaptive management. **See Recommendation 8.**

Impact.

SDC’s governance work at the local level delivers impact in terms of positive behavioural and attitudinal changes in how citizens and local authorities interact. The clearest examples of impact follow from the promotion of transparency and accountability in local governance, and more responsive approaches to municipal service delivery. This impact in the sample reflects broader changes in the awareness of their respective rights and responsibilities, and greater appreciation of the need for, and value of citizen participation and local government transparency. In a number of instances, these changes were associated with tangible improvements in service outcomes in areas including health, waste disposal, and

education. Connecting outcomes on accountability to a specific sector in this manner makes the beneficial impact of decentralisation more immediate and obvious for citizens and communities. Efforts have been made to extend impact to vulnerable or marginalised individuals or groups, i.e., to leave no one behind. However, such impacts are mixed. In the most challenging or rapidly deteriorating contexts, where state structures have largely broken down and the overall balance of power is in flux, SDC's support is able to demonstrate short-term results, but long-term impact remains uncertain. Instances of negative, unintended impact from SDC projects were not observed in the case countries.

Across the country sample, there is some evidence that SDC is contributing to transformative changes and institution building. Although there are exceptions, the impact is seen most clearly at the local level, and with a focus on informal institutions (norms, understandings, and patterns of interaction between citizens and local authorities), rather than formal institutions (rules, laws, or regulations). Some of these changes to informal institutions can be described as transformative, particularly when starting from a low baseline, as in Laos. There is also evidence that SDC and partners have contributed to strengthening formal institutions at national or subnational level, for example in Mongolia. **See Recommendation 9.**

In more challenging contexts of fragility or democratic reversal, it may be more realistic to focus on strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions to withstand external pressures or shocks, rather than aiming for transformative change. **See Recommendation 10.**

Sustainability.

Naturally, there are better prospects for sustainability when SDC supports reforms that have strong central government ownership; when stakeholders are self-motivated for a reform agenda or practices that have been introduced; or when SDC has anchored its governance work in platforms or actors that are less affected by political and economic turbulence. The Evaluation sees stronger ownership and thus greater potential for sustainable changes at the local level. SDC has achieved potentially sustainable results in deteriorating environments when it has found entry points and reform champions that are less affected by political and/or economic turbulence, at the national level or below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Work more directly to strengthen human rights, while ensuring that such engagements do not jeopardize safety of partners and staff. Maintain and further develop indirect approaches, including strategically designed cultural interventions.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
Medium (1-3 years)	SCOs and SDC Senior Leadership

Recommendation 2. Strengthen transversal governance in humanitarian and HDP-nexus interventions by capacitating local systems (and local governments when feasible).

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SCOs and SDC leadership working in emergencies and protracted crisis situations

Recommendation 3. Work closely with WOGA partners to strengthen synergies and complementarity of mandates, to capitalise on Switzerland’s different instruments. In particular, PHRD and SDC should increase cooperation, particularly on political economy analysis, policy dialogue and advocacy agendas, to promote peacebuilding, good governance, and human rights.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SDC Senior Leadership with WOGA partners

Recommendation 4. Strengthen the level of ambition and use of Theories of Change to clearly show how SDC, by drawing on different instruments, can bring about higher-level changes. This may entail reducing the number of projects in the country portfolios, to enhance efficiency and coherence, and free time for leadership roles in coordination, policy dialogue and learning.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SCOs

Recommendation 5. Stay engaged at local level in countries experiencing democratic reversals, increasing authoritarianism and fragility. Pursue entry points for engagement at national level, and when national level engagement is restricted, step-up engagement at regional and global levels.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SDC Senior Leadership, PGE and SCOs

Recommendation 6. Prioritise governance as a transversal theme and continue to develop staff capacities and resources in particular through face-to-face interactions and Learning Journeys. Consider how to strengthen incentives to work on transversal governance in humanitarian settings hereunder tailoring the transversal governance checklist to be more suited to humanitarian aid.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	PGE and SCOs

Recommendation 7. Contributions should be considered as the preferred modality in governance programming, with careful consideration of advantages and disadvantages in specific contexts.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
Medium (1-3 year)	SCOs

Recommendation 8. Emphasize knowledge management to capitalize on existing knowledge products, systematising cross-country operational learning on core and transversal governance, with greater emphasis on face-to-face exchanges among peers.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	PGE

Recommendation 9. Draw on political economy analysis (PEA) and consider how to address *both* the *formal* (i.e., rules laws and regulations) and *informal* institutions (i.e., norms, understanding and patterns of interaction between citizens and authorities) to have a sustainable impact.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
Medium (1-3 year)	SCOs

Recommendation 10. Communicate clearly about the trade-offs that may be associated with trying to achieve impact on governance in complex contexts. Rethink impact in challenging contexts, in keeping with the people-centred approach and governance principles, by focusing on strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions to withstand external pressures or shocks.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SDC Senior Leadership, PGE, and SCOs

1. Introduction

Nordic Consulting Group (NCG), together with Overseas Development Institute (ODI), was commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to undertake an independent evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Field of Good Governance and Rule of Law 2017-2021/2022. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to inform the process of strategic steering, foster institutional learning and contribute to accountability towards the Swiss Parliament and public. In the context of the current Swiss Strategy for International Cooperation 2021-24 (IC Strategy), the Evaluation aims to provide insights on the implementation of the thematic priority area Rule of Law and promoting peace, governance, and gender equality (Objective 4), and contribute to the final report on the implementation of the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy.

The Evaluation was carried out between February 2023 and January 2024. The evaluation team included Anne-Lise Klausen (team leader), Ayla Olesen Yurtaslan, Ed Laws, and Kathryn Nwajiaku-Dahou, supported by local experts, Indira Dugum, Thomas Ouedraogo, and Celestin Pouya. Dolf Noppen was responsible for Quality Assurance. The Evaluation was overseen by the Evaluation and Controlling Unit (E+C) of SDC, with support, quality assurance and additional oversight by a Core Learning Partnership (CLP) group of SDC peers.

The Evaluation has benefitted greatly from the support by the evaluation management, the CLP members, and SDC staff, both at HQ and field level, as well as from partners. The staff of the Swiss Cooperation Offices (SCOs) in the case study countries were instrumental in supporting and facilitating the analysis and fieldwork. Thanks also to all those interviewed, who gave freely of their valuable time.

The Evaluation is independent, and the report does not express the official views of SDC.

2. Methodology

2.1 Evaluation scope

The Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Field of Good Governance and Rule of Law encompasses the period 2017 – 2022¹, covering the full portfolio of governance engagements during the period at a strategic level, with eight country case studies to provide in-depth analysis. The Evaluation undertook field visits in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, and Rwanda, with hybrid fieldwork in Burkina Faso. For the remaining four cases - Lebanon, Laos, Mongolia, and Tunisia – the Evaluation carried out 'light' desk studies. Box 1 presents the Evaluation Questions, which were defined by the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) in SDC. The Evaluation excluded multilateral engagements, which should be seen as a limitation of the scope.

BOX 1.

The Evaluation Questions.

The **Evaluation Questions** are listed below following the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria:

1. RELEVANCE - Is the intervention doing the right things?

- 1.1. To which extent are governance programs adapted to the local contexts and in line with the needs and rights of local target groups?
- 1.2. How relevant are SDC's governance programs as a tool to achieve SDC's development goals?

2. COHERENCE - How well does the intervention fit?

- 2.1. To what degree are SDC's governance programs complementary and coordinated with other Swiss WOGA partners in particular in nexus settings?
- 2.2. How well are SDC's governance programs (officially) aligned with partner countries' priorities? Is there political will in the partner government to implement governance reforms? Local/national ownership? Are SDC programs complementary to other donor's strategies and interventions?
- 2.3. In the spirit of localisation, to what extent does SDC work with and strengthen local governments (compared to other actors) in humanitarian programmes in protracted crises?

3. EFFECTIVENESS - Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

- 3.1. To what degree can governance objectives be achieved in challenging (authoritarian, post-conflict, fragile) contexts? Which approaches and strategies are the most effective? Is there a coherent Theory of change at programme level? Is it aligned with the overall governance understanding and vision of SDC?
- 3.2. How effective are governance components in strengthening sector program outcomes? Can transversal governance components improve the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions? If yes, then how? Identify examples of good practices.

4. EFFICIENCY - How well are resources being used?

- 4.1. Which modalities of cooperation – contributions, mandates, budgetary support, private sector engagement and other partnerships – are particularly conducive to achieving outcomes in governance programs?
- 4.2. To which extent do SDC funded programs learn/replicate from each other? And how? Is there learning from other donors?

¹ Initially, the Evaluation scope was set to cover 2017 to 2021; however, after inception interviews, it was evident that in certain case countries, contextual developments that occurred after 2021 had a significant impact on the governance portfolio, making it relevant to expand the scope to cover 2022.

5. IMPACT – What difference does the intervention make?

- 5.1. Which effects of programs (intended or unintended, positive negative) can be observed regarding people's lives and communities' functioning changed? (inclusion, participation, and human rights)
- 5.2. To what degree do SDC's governance programs contribute to transformative changes and (local) institution building? What are hindering and enabling factors?

6. SUSTAINABILITY - Will the benefits last?

- 6.1. To what extent are SDC governance interventions owned by partner governments (supported through their budgets) and part of national/local systems or policy environment?
- 6.2. To what degree can achieved program results persist under a deteriorated context? What are the factors that facilitate lasting change through governance interventions?

7. BENCHMARKING

- 7.1. How do SDC's approaches and performance in good governance programming compare with like-minded donors' programs? Where could SDC improve by learning from other development partners?

2.2 Approach and methods

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), the Evaluation has been carried out in accordance with the updated (2019) OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria and Principles², with key elements of a developmental evaluation approach. The process was structured in three main phases: (i) the inception phase; (ii) the data collection phase, involving field visits, desk study, and an e-survey; and (iii) the synthesis and reporting phase. The Evaluation applied a mixed-methods, and comparative case-study design, drawing on a combination of data collection methods, to support triangulation and corroboration of key findings. The methods were predominantly qualitative in the form of key informant interviews and desk reviews, supplemented by quantitative data collected through an e-survey and portfolio analysis. See Annex 3 for more details on Approach and Methodology. The evaluation drew on five key methods:

1. **Desk review** of literature and documentation related to SDC's governance portfolio; research and policy documents on governance from SDC and other donors; and relevant evaluations of Swiss engagement³.
2. **Portfolio analysis**, based on data provided by SDC, covering the entire portfolio of governance interventions, on the basis of SDC's internal codification system (SAP) policy marker⁴ on good governance. See the full portfolio analysis in Annex 2.
3. **Key stakeholder interviews**, undertaken throughout the evaluation process, both at the strategic level in Bern and in the case study countries with SDC staff and partners, and available Whole of Government partners. In total, the Evaluation interviewed/spoke to 199 individuals. A list of interviewees can be found in Annex 4.

² OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation. (2019). *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria*

³ Including the Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Governance Programming and Mainstreaming from 2015; and the 2022 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in National Policy Dialogue 2013-2020.

⁴ The SAP policy marker is a tool that is applied to monitor and track resources allocated for dedicated governance programmes (coded as 'principal' governance), and transversal governance (coded as 'significant' governance).

4. **Country case studies**, covering eight specific country contexts as a representative sample of SDC's governance portfolio. For the eight country contexts, the Evaluation (i) reviewed key documents including Credit Proposals, annual and end of phase reports (EPRORs), external evaluations and reviews; and Annual Reports for the Cooperation Strategy/Programme; (ii) interviewed relevant stakeholders at HQ and field level. See the Case Study Reports in Volume 2.
5. **E-survey**, disseminated to all members of the Peace, Governance and Equality (PGE) network at field and HQ level, assessing perceptions on transversal governance and learning aspects.

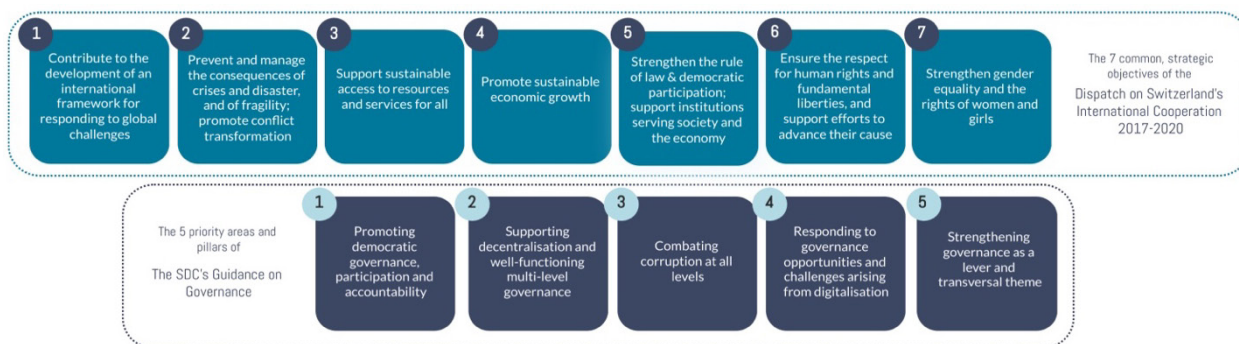
3. Background

3.1 Governance - the foundation for sustainable development

Agency-wide, good governance constitutes one of SDC’s core areas of work during the evaluation period; in fact, several common, strategic objectives of the Swiss International Cooperation (IC) Strategy 2017-2020 relate directly to governance.⁵ SDC operates from the understanding that inclusive and accountable governance is a fundamental precondition for delivering sustainable development, and therefore must be at the core of responses to today’s complex development challenges⁶. For this reason, the IC Strategy 2017-2020 included governance as a *mandatory* transversal theme for all cooperation programmes. Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that governance cuts across most of the common, strategic objectives of Swiss development cooperation, particularly objectives 3, 5, 6, and 7 (see Figure 1).

Since the 2014-15 Evaluation of SDC’s Performance in Governance Programming and Mainstreaming, SDC has sharpened its conceptual and methodological understanding of governance issues and challenges. The 2020 SDC Guidance on Governance articulates the link between governance, exclusion, and multidimensional poverty, gender equality, armed conflict, and violence, as well as economic growth. It defines five priority areas or pillars of SDC’s work on governance, which are (i) Promoting democratic governance, participation, and accountability; (ii) Supporting decentralization and well-functioning multi-level governance; (iii) Combating corruption on all levels; (iv) Responding to governance opportunities and challenges from digitalization; and (v) Strengthening governance as a lever and transversal theme. Considerable efforts have also been invested to improve conceptual clarity, develop standards and procedures, and build human resources to accompany the focus on governance as a mandatory *transversal* theme.

FIGURE 1: Objectives of Swiss International Cooperation, and SDC’s Governance Pillars



⁵ There are no major changes in the new IC Strategy (2021-2024), where governance is an integral part of objective 4, *promoting peace, good governance and gender equality*, and Sub-objective 10, on *promoting good governance and rule of law and strengthening civil society*.

⁶ SDC. (2020). *The SDC's Guidance on Governance*.

3.2 Brief overview of SDC's governance portfolio

This section highlights a few trends from the portfolio analysis conducted by the Evaluation, to give an overview of how the governance priorities are weighted, as well as the relative size and emphasis given to governance. A more comprehensive overview is provided in Annex 2, Portfolio Analysis.

In the current IC Strategy (2021-2024), SDC has reinforced its focus and commitment on good governance, setting an internal target for bilateral cooperation and humanitarian assistance to target governance. Overall, SDC aims for 75 percent of commitments in bilateral cooperation and humanitarian assistance to be governance-related, meaning it is categorized with SDC's policy marker on governance as either "principal" governance (i.e. governance as a core objective) or "significant" governance (i.e., governance as an important component). Moreover, with the target, a minimum of 20 percent of commitments should represent "principal" governance engagements. Considering only bilateral cooperation (without humanitarian aid), the target is 85% combined and 25% "principal". For interventions under Humanitarian Aid, the targets are 45% and 5%, respectively.

SDC's portfolio on good governance has increased considerably over the last decade, according to the portfolio analysis. Tracking the use of SDC's internal policy marker on governance, the Evaluation found that approximately half of SDC's spending in 2017 (52 percent) was marked as governance-related, either as the 'principal' or a 'significant/transversal'⁷ objective. Toward the end of the Evaluation period, in 2021, governance-related engagements amounted to 70 percent of SDC's spending, close to reaching the target of 75 percent (see Figure 2 below).

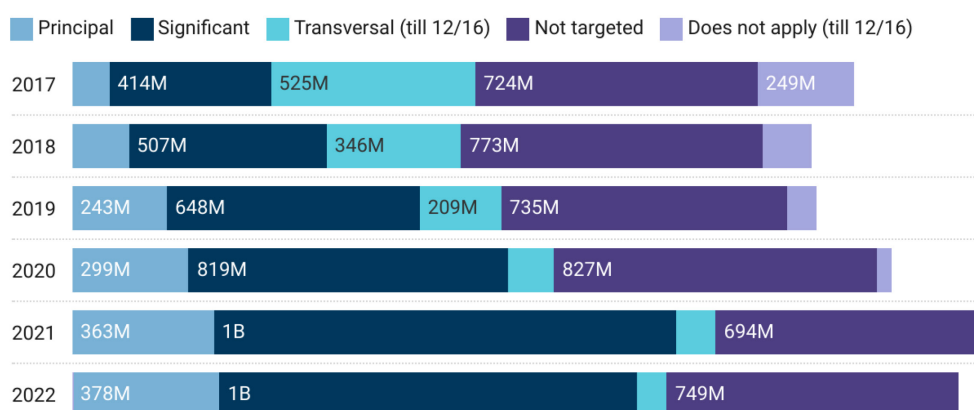


FIGURE 2: Actual governance spending by year (from 2017 to 2022), across all of SDC, based on policy marker on governance.

Lower targets were set for Swiss humanitarian aid, where 45% should be governance-related, and 5% should be 'principal' governance. The portfolio analysis indicated that SDC's humanitarian aid is further away from reaching these targets, with only 4 percent of the humanitarian budget marked as governance-related, with virtually no humanitarian funding toward core governance engagements. The Evaluation provides analysis on how transversal governance has been applied in humanitarian settings in Section 4.6.

Both portfolio level analysis and evidence from the country contexts indicate that there is far more attention to Pillars 1 (Democratic governance, participation, and accountability) and Pillar 2 (Decentralisation) than the other governance pillars.

⁷ Prior to the introduction of the policy marker in 2017, the governance portfolio engagements with a significant contribution to governance were coded as 'Transversal'. Therefore, in Figure 2 above, funding to transversal governance involved the combination of support that has been coded 'Significant' and 'Transversal'.

Together, these two pillars are the most prominent areas of Swiss core governance support, accounting for close to half of all governance support during the evaluation period (see portfolio analysis). On the other hand, Pillar 3 (Anti-corruption) and Pillar 4 (Digitalisation) are in the project sample treated as transversal governance, rather than as standalone, core governance pillars. For example, while SDC at times integrates anti-corruption into programming as a direct objective, (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the justice sector), there is evidence to support the view that anti-corruption is equally effective when applied as a transversal theme (see Section 6.5.) Likewise, digital platforms were harnessed across the project sample (for example in Laos and Mongolia) as a means to strengthen the evidence-base available to decision-makers when drafting policies.

4. Relevance of the governance portfolio

The following chapter assesses the relevance of SDC's governance portfolio. First, it assesses the extent to which governance programmes have been adapted to the local context and are in line with the needs and rights of local target groups. (Section 4.1). Subsequent sections consider how SDC's governance programmes are planned and designed for relevance (Section 4.2), and how adaptations and innovations take place (Sections 4.3- 4.4). The final two sections of the chapter focus on transversal governance, and whether it is a relevant tool in sector programmes (Section 4.5), and in humanitarian contexts, through strengthening of local governments (Section 4.6).

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- The portfolio has a strong focus on the local level, where governance programmes are the closest to citizens or specific target groups. The 'people-centred approach' is relevant and aligned to the needs and rights of local target groups.
- The portfolio is balanced between engaging duty bearers and rights holders giving SDC the manoeuvre room to pivot and shift types and levels of support in the face of rising authoritarianism or democratic reversals.
- While ensuring that the respect for human rights and fundamental liberties are defined as common, strategic objectives for Swiss development cooperation, there are relatively few engagements in the evaluation sample that address these key rights directly.
- Programmes are underpinned by sound analyses and an appropriate mix of considerations.
- SDC often continues to work with the same topics and partners, which may have reduced the risk appetite to address "emerging" governance challenges.
- SDC has taken on adaptive management in challenging contexts, - often by 'going more local'. Proactive approaches, deliberate experimentation and innovation have emerged in the sample and show a way forward for SDC.
- Transversal governance (TG) as a mandatory theme across sectoral interventions is a highly relevant approach. Although few, there are positive examples in the sample of SDC's experience of strengthening local governments through humanitarian action. The trade-off of perceived neutrality and independence seems to be principled, rather than realistic and practical in view of localisation and multiple protracted crises.

4.1 SDC's 'people-centred approach' to governance

SDC's governance portfolio has a strong focus on the local level, where governance programmes are the closest to citizens or specific target groups. The '*people-centred approach*' is relevant, as it aligned to the needs and rights of local target groups, ultimately providing more tangible improvements in their lives. It is indeed a well-known strength and advantage of a local governance approach that there are clear and well-articulated links between an intervention, and the intended impact to improve the well-being of all people and all groups of society i.e., Leave No One Behind (LNOB). Across the countries included in the Evaluation, Swiss support to local governance has *inter alia* been relevant in addressing public budgeting and public service provision, platforms for citizen participation and accountability, and mechanisms for disaster risk reduction. However, engagement at the local level is not always sufficient to bring about transformative changes towards good governance (discussed further in Chapter 8).

SDC's systemic approach to governance highlights working on governance dynamics with a multi-level perspective⁸, and being aware of power dimensions, an ambition which is also articulated at a strategic level across all the country contexts. In practice, the development of strong vertical linkages in SDC's governance programming is challenged by a variety of contingent factors, particularly in contexts characterised by democratic reversal or backsliding. In the absence of opportunities to support vertical linkages and accountability, SDC is strategically smart in building horizontal links between local governments (inter alia seen in Kyrgyzstan and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The governance portfolio is balanced between engaging duty bearers and rights holders giving SDC the manoeuvre room to pivot and shift types and levels of support in the face of rising authoritarianism or democratic reversals. The governance portfolio also pays attention to the link between governance, conflict prevention, and transitional justice where the focus is on strengthening the state-citizen compact. In Rwanda, this is how SDC frames its engagement with professionalisation and expansion of the space for 'responsible' media, in light of the double-edged role media played in the Rwandan genocide.

There is a hesitancy to address human rights issues head-on, particularly in instances of democratic reversal, where such engagement on human rights is seen as 'risky' for SDC and for partners. While ensuring the respect for human rights and fundamental liberties is defined as a strategic objective for Swiss development cooperation, there are relatively few engagements in the evaluation sample that address these *directly*. In Burkina Faso after the 2022 coup, for example, or in Tunisia (after 2021), SDC has opted for tactical shifts away from the direct approach to human rights *in the short term*,¹¹ because of risk of repression or repercussions.¹² Similar experiences were highlighted from Burundi in SDC's Learning Journey on Staying Engaged, where the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) made a conscious decision to shift away from human rights language.¹³ In contrast, the Learning Journey highlighted experience from Nicaragua, where the portfolio was adapted to *strengthen* focus on human rights; however, rather than focus this engagement at the national level, the SCO shifted toward supporting human rights

BOX 2.

Culture: an entry point to work on human rights

SDC's *Culture and Development Policy* (2016)⁹ presents an innovative and unique way to address governance and human rights, from the viewpoint that an independent, diverse, and inclusive culture sector can contribute to development, democratic transition, social cohesion, and peace. A 2022 review of SDC's support to artistic and cultural expression highlighted the value and opportunities presented by using culture as an entry point in contexts of political polarisation and democratic backsliding or reversals. On governance, the key message was that cultural projects can provide openings and space for freedom of expression and free assembly, and they are often subject to less government control than more 'traditional' governance projects.¹⁰

⁸ As articulated in the *2020 Guidance on Governance*, and in most, if not all, country or regional cooperation strategies/ programmes.

⁹ SDC. (2016). *SDC Culture and Development Policy*.

¹⁰ SDC. (2022). *Overview of the SDC's support to artistic and cultural expression in the South and the East in 2022*.

¹¹ While human rights elements are mainstreamed to varying degrees throughout SDC's governance portfolios at country and regional level (for example, through the application of the governance principles (transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, effectiveness/efficiency, equality and non-discrimination/inclusion), dedicated human rights and gender equality engagements are few in the Evaluation's project sample.

¹² The ET notes that after the evaluation period, the SCOs in both Tunisia and Burkina Faso have stepped up work that directly addresses human rights, in the form of a free media engagement in Tunisia, and contributions to the High Commissioner for Human Rights and support to local peacebuilding initiatives in Burkina Faso.

¹³ SDC. (2023). *Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts. Learnings from SDC Experiences*. p. 5.

through supranational institutions that monitor the human rights situation.¹⁴ Another way to engage on human rights involves finding non-traditional entry points as in Burkina Faso, where SDC indirectly does so through cultural support, which educates citizens on governance and their rights, and in Rwanda, where the upcoming culture programme is taken as a strategic entry point to support the freedom of expression (Box 2).

4.2 Planning for relevance

SDC's governance programmes are underpinned by sound analyses and an appropriate mix of considerations. SDC's country teams follow and take stock of contextual developments in-country, evidenced in annual reports and related analyses (e.g., MERV). Programming planning and choices are based on a combination of (i) context analysis and political economy analysis (PEA) (as stated above), stakeholder consultation, and identification of opportunities; (ii) experience from earlier phases; (iii) mapping or awareness of existing donor programming to consolidate efforts and/or reduce overlaps; (iv) awareness and availability of potential partners; and (v) reflections of Switzerland's niche or comparative advantage on specific governance topics. The degree to which the analyses conducted are *systematic* could not be ascertained by the Evaluation, because as said in interviews there may not be one major PEA report but several inputs which together constitute a holistic understanding in real time. Choices are also contingent on other factors, particularly in situations of rising insecurity.

SDC often continues to work with the same topics and partners, which may have reduced the risk appetite to address "emerging" governance challenges. SDC focuses on areas where SDC already has experience and expertise, – i.e., opting to engage on what may be considered safer choices for SDC – i.e., consciously reflecting on- and selecting areas where the Switzerland has an added value, which is commendable. For example, in several country contexts, SDC has decided not to engage on access to justice and rule of law, leaving it to other like-minded donors who have a stronger profile to engage on justice sector issues. In contrast, SDC is recognised for their strong expertise with, and a tradition of engaging on decentralisation, which is where others see the Swiss comparative advantage.

The flip side of this approach is that SDC's governance portfolios may not be daring enough to be at the forefront of addressing governance challenges of the future. Such challenges are both context-specific, complex, multifaceted, and imminent. Interviewees alluded to the need for a "scan of the horizon" to identify issues to be tackled in governance programming, also exploring the role of development cooperation at a time when global powers and high-level political and security interests have taken centre stage and seem to threaten development gains. The future of governance and rule of law programming will depend on a variety of "new" factors such as technological advancements, geopolitical changes, continued democratic reversals and rising authoritarianism, and the interlinkages between climate change and governance (see Box 3).

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

BOX 3.

Future governance challenges

Democratic “anxiety”: A study by the Pew Research Center discusses global public opinion in an era of democratic anxiety. That report reveals four key insights into how citizens think about democratic governance: for many, democracy is not delivering. People like democracy, but their commitment to it is often not very strong; political and social divisions are amplifying the challenges of contemporary democracy; and people want a stronger public voice in politics and policymaking.¹⁵

Mis/disinformation: The rapidly spreading and deliberate manipulation of information for political purposes inter alia through social media furthers anti-democratic trends at considerable and increasing scale, this calls for interventions at several fronts and sectors.¹⁶ An issue is also misinformation which may not be deliberate.

Digitalisation: Just transitions that unlock the value of data and protect against digital harms have become good governance challenges.¹⁷ Digitalisation is already one of SDC’s governance priority areas¹⁸, but digital governance challenges (and opportunities) will increase in importance in the coming years. Topics include access for large groups of poorer populations, management of transitions according to democratic principles, and the protection against digital harms, incl. use of data for unlimited, non-transparent control of populations.

Governance and climate change: Climate justice and environmental governance will continue to grow in significance, and pressure existing legislation and policy making. As a crisis multiplier, climate change will have spill over effects that present interconnected governance challenges, hereunder durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced and equality of access to resources.

4.3 Adaptation for relevance

SDC has taken on adaptive management in challenging contexts, - often by ‘going more local’. Across country contexts, reflection takes place on how the contexts are evolving, and how these developments in turn affect programming. SDC standard is to use Conflict Sensitive Programme Management as an important analytical tool and basis for adaptation. The case studies on Tunisia and Burkina Faso illustrate SDC’s ability to adjust and diversify the governance portfolio when faced with increasing fragility, volatility, and conflict, e.g., by engaging more with civil society, media, etc. In contexts of democratic reversal or backsliding, or when there is an escalation of conflict, ‘going local’ is fallback for SDC to stay

BOX 4.

When the going gets rough, SDC goes local.

In May 2020, SDC’s Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes culminated in a synthesis report which concluded, “*When the national situation worsens, SDC usually tends to stay engaged in authoritarian contexts by reducing its operations, strengthening its work at the local level while disengaging from the national level.*”¹⁹

¹⁵ Wike, R. and J. Fetterolf. (2021). *Global Public Opinion in an Era of Democratic Anxiety*. Pew Research Centre’s Global Attitudes Project. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/12/07/global-public-opinion-in-an-era-of-democratic-anxiety/> on Jan 11 2024.

¹⁶ Matasick, C., C. Alfonsi and A. Bellantoni (2020), *Governance responses to disinformation: How open government principles can inform policy options*, OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 39, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d6237c85-en>.

¹⁷ OECD (2021), *Development Co-operation Report 2021: Shaping a Just Digital Transformation*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ce08832f-en>.

¹⁸ See examples of SDC’s digitalization engagements within the governance portfolio here: Hernandez, K. and Roberts, T. (2022) *Mapping of SDC’s Projects in Digitalisation and Governance*, Bern: SDC Governance Network.

¹⁹ SDC. (2020). *Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes – Synthesis Report*.

engaged.²⁰ In the Kyrgyz case, SDC made the decision to cease programmatic work with the national parliament and MPs due to an increasing push toward centralisation of power. If the constitutional balance of power is re-established, as some stakeholders expect, then some of the entry points and relationships that SDC previously has invested significant time and resources in developing, may no longer be viable, although this remains to be seen. The alternative would have been to maintain a small window of engagement.

There is no right or wrong here – the key message is that staying engaged requires a case-by-case strategic decision and weighing of trade-offs involved. These considerations were also reflected on in the SDC *Learning Journey on Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts*. Experience from Nicaragua pointed to the value of keeping a small percentage of the portfolio in partnership with government authorities – albeit with more rigid restrictions on its implementation – because this was seen as a way to “keep an entry ticket” to engage in political dialogue with authorities.²¹ It was noted to the Evaluation that there is not always agreement between the SCO and HQ on the need and degree of adaptation. It was said that HQ takes a more careful and conservative stand on adaptations.

Shift of stakeholder engagement i.e., pivoting between duty bearers and rights holders, and turning to civil society actors, has been an ‘automatic’ adaptation choice in authoritarian contexts, prescribed to by many donors in the past, including SDC. This point was also highlighted in the lessons from SDC’s *Learning Journey on Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts*. Such an approach requires careful and critical analysis, both in relation to institutional and programmatic risks and to actual achievements in the long run²² (see Box 5). The Laos and Rwanda cases exemplify different responses from the State when donors, bypassing the State, engage significantly with civil society.

BOX 54.

State versus non-state – donor approaches in non-democratic contexts

A (2021) *Mapping of democratization support* commissioned by Sida, highlights some of the trade-offs that donors face in engagement with state versus non-state actors. While several donors express a preference to work with civil society actors in non-democratic settings, there is also a recognition that one must not always refrain from working with the State in authoritarian regimes. EU officials, for example, highlighted that a balance needs to be made between shifting toward civil society, and remaining focused on the needs of the population, which may require State involvement.²³

4.4 Innovation for relevance

Emergent examples of proactive approaches, deliberate experimentation and innovation in the sample show a way forward for SDC. The SCO in Rwanda, taking a PEA as the point of departure, and an analysis of what the country would need to become more *democratic*, the SCO has re-defined the overall objective and portfolio, accordingly, including the instruments of engagement. The result is the closure of several projects and a deeper rethink, which has shaped a more ‘daring’ portfolio with more focus on media reform, support to independent radio stations, political dialogue, and acceleration of relations with central government, and strengthening the capacity of local organisations to conduct evidence-based policy dialogues. In many ways, the approach breaks new ground, in a

²⁰ This is both based on the findings from the Evaluation case countries, but also reiterated in several SDC Learning Journey reports, including the *Synthesis Report - Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes* from May 2020.

²¹ SDC. (2023). *Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts. Learnings from SDC Experiences*. p. 7.

²² Cheeseman, N., and M. Desrosiers. (2023). *How (not) to engage with authoritarian states*. Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited (WFD). <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/how-not-engage-authoritarian-states>

²³ Cornell, A. (2021). *Mapping of democratization support*. Sida Evaluation 2021:05. p. 38 -39.

context where governance historically (since 1994-95) has been closely related to peacebuilding and reconciliation after the genocide. The Evaluation sees the approach as both politically smart, and a step toward more deliberate (rather than reactive) adaptation, that could lead to *transformative changes*. Such approaches may be underway by other SCOs, but in the cases assessed by the Evaluation, Rwanda came out as a proactive mover in this regard.

In a situation of rapid democratic reversal, as in Burkina Faso, SDC demonstrated capacity to experiment and adapt its approach. In 2017, SDC invested in Presimetre, a project that was part of an ambition to reinforce socio-economic accountability of elected officials, with a view to align with citizens' demands for greater accountability and delivery of promises by the elected representatives. The approach, however, was heavily criticized by EU and acknowledged by SDC's governance team to be too elite-focused. This led to a shift in the second phase of the project, to supporting a community radio focused programme (through Foundation Hironnelle)²⁴. The fact that the programme was able to pivot and adopt this new approach is testament to SDC's capacity to learn and adapt.

4.5 Relevance of transversal governance

Transversal governance (TG) as a mandatory theme across sectoral interventions is a highly relevant approach. The project sample illustrates that there is a high degree of interpretation by individual SCOs on how TG can be operationalised. SDC staff across SCOs and HQ affirmed the relevance of transversal governance: in fact, 88 percent of respondents to the Evaluation's e-survey (strongly or partially) agree that it is relevant to have as a transversal theme, and likewise 82 percent (strongly or partially) agree that transversal governance improves SDC's effectiveness on sector outcomes. The effectiveness of TG is assessed in Chapter 6.

BOX 65.

2015 Evaluation findings on Transversal Governance

The 2015 Evaluation found: "For its part, the SDC's governance mainstreaming was generally judged by the team to be solid but not optimal; often innovative, but too often uneven. This work suffers from lack of clear commitment from the SDC management to governance mainstreaming, along with a lack of incentives (and sanctions) for staff to do this work effectively. Updated definitions and guidance on coding, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation in governance mainstreaming are also required, as are increased staff and resources for governance-related networks at headquarters and in regions". Here quoted from SDC's Guidance on Governance (2020) Annex 4.

During the years since that evaluation, there has been considerable focus on TG including implementing the recommendations of the evaluation. This Evaluation notes that the implementation of the recommendation has further illustrated the relevance of TG and led to results, although more can be done in terms of operationalisation (see below and Chapter 6).²⁵

²⁴ Fondation Hironnelle formed partnerships with Burkina radio/TV stations (Radio Yafa) to create projects which focused on "reinforcing democracy and civic mindedness of people, especially young people and marginalised communities".

²⁵ SDC. (2020). *Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes – Synthesis Report*.

Significant efforts have been invested by SDC to strengthen the transversal governance perspective during the evaluation period. ²⁶ The SDC approach to transversal governance is based on an ambitious process of adopting a systems development approach based on the dimensions of structure, processes and actors, which involves according to interviews, a thorough analysis; working with multiple actors and fostering interlinkages at multiple levels; working on politics and power imbalances and following a value-based approach. In terms of programming, it calls for contextualised, sequential activities and systematic inclusion in sector programmes and thereby also in the work of implementing partners, which is desirable yet also very difficult to steer in practice with the resources available in country offices and the complex and volatile contexts of operations, and as said by a staff “everything we do can be interpreted as transversal governance”. The Evaluation did find, both in interviews and SDC documents, that TG as a term is applied with wide range of definitions: management support, institutional reorganisations, capacity building, legislative reform, support to human rights through a sector intervention: workers’ rights, child rights, settlement rights, refugee rights (Lebanon, Rwanda, BiH). Keeping the terminology flexible and wide in practice allows for flexibility allowing manoeuvre room for different levels of engagement, based on the context.

4.6 Local government strengthening and humanitarian action

While the question regarding how and if SDC works with and strengthens local governments in humanitarian action is discussed in this section, it bears mentioning that few of the case study countries receive humanitarian funding. Only one context provided opportunity for analysis of actual humanitarian programming in a protracted crisis situation (Lebanon).

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina – a context where SDC has a significant core governance portfolio within a broader bilateral development cooperation programme – there has been a relative ease of incorporating governance components into an additional, one-off, emergency response project. The project in question addresses the healthcare needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and therefore aligns well with SDC’s pre-existing portfolio on health, which has a strong focus on systems strengthening (transversal governance). Strengthening national systems, the project supports the 3-year Transition Plan for a Bosnian Herzegovinian Government-led Migration Response. Even though political incentives and fragmentation have made it difficult to arrive at a point where the transition can take place, the project highlights signs of progress, seen in more ownership and responsibility taken on by the Government.

BOX 76.

Transversal governance in humanitarian settings?

Since the war started in Ukraine, Humanitarian Aid has naturally been a major player in the country. A key dilemma is if and possibly how the long term and successful support to local governments inter alia to digital democracy (through E-GAP) and programmes on health and WASH, should be capitalised on as entry points for humanitarian aid noting that the crisis is becoming protracted. The pros and cons are that humanitarian aid may be more effective and sustainable in the long run through cooperation with local government actors; on the other hand, humanitarian aid could jeopardise its independence and neutrality by going the route of cooperation. The Evaluation has no views on the right or wrong, but the point is that such dilemmas show the complexity of a Nexus Approach in reality.

²⁶ In 2021 alone, a series of learning documents were produced to support the operationalisation of TG, hereunder a [1.5 pager summary on TG](#), papers on [Governance Analysis](#), [Policy Dialogue on monitoring and reporting](#); a [policy note on the Political Economy Approach](#), the [Political Economy Analysis](#), and the paper on [“Thinking and working politically”](#), as well as the 2 papers on [“Adaptive Management”](#) .

While there is a transversal governance (systems strengthening) perspective in the project, the SCO highlighted a contradiction in the time and resources required to thoroughly apply the transversal governance to emergency response. Emergency relief projects of that nature are short-term, and there is pressure to react quickly to emerging needs. For a 6-month project, which already took several months to plan and approve, the SCO therefore opted not to apply the governance policy marker nor to devote additional time to applying the transversal governance guidance and checklist. The Evaluation did not see other similar instances in the sample, but it nevertheless points to an area where SDC can evolve to strengthen incentives (or remove disincentives) for humanitarians to consider political economy dimensions.

An example was highlighted by the SCO in Lebanon of the relevance, (and impact and sustainability) of working with the Union of Tyre Municipality (UoTM) on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). The partnership started in 2007 (as a direct action) after the war between Israel and Lebanon (2006) and aimed at enhancing the response capacities of UoTM. The project supported local communities' emergency responses, while strengthening local government's legitimacy vis-à-vis the population in supporting emergency responses. The TG element was the support to building up the management and the governance system of the Response Unit. The project was closed in 2021, but at that point the Response Unit worked well, and although the Unit was never institutionalised as intended through the Swiss support, it is organisationally sustainable in the sense that it is operational and impactful. The Response Unit was supported to engage in the Covid 19 activities, and it played a role after the Beirut Blast. A lesson learned by SDC in Lebanon is that while formal institutional sustainability is questioned and doubtful in Lebanon, some local governments/municipalities continue to be operational. In ongoing projects SDC engages in particular with second tier civil servants who still come to work, and working at this level helps secure basic levels of services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Work more directly to strengthen human rights, while ensuring that such engagements do not jeopardize safety of partners and staff. Maintain and further develop indirect approaches, including strategically designed cultural interventions.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
Medium (1-3 years)	SCOs and SDC Senior Leadership

Recommendation 2. Strengthen transversal governance in humanitarian and HDP-nexus interventions by capacitating local systems (and local governments when feasible).

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SCOs and SDC leadership working in emergencies and protracted crisis situations

5. Alignment, political will, complementarity & coordination

This chapter assesses the coherence of SDC's governance portfolio. The first section (5.1) considers the external coherence of the governance portfolio, considering the degree to which SDC's governance engagements have been (officially) aligned with country priorities, and experienced political will to implement reforms within partner governments (5.1). Thereafter, the chapter turns to internal coherence, with a section (5.2) considering the degree of complementarity and coordination with Whole-of-Government partners, followed by an assessment of governance programme theories of change (5.3). The final section (5.4) briefly explores SDC's role in coordination, complementarity to other donor's strategies and interventions.

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- SDC's governance programmes are well-aligned with partner countries' priorities (at different levels), in contexts where there is a basis for alignment on good governance issues.
- Where official national priorities and political will run contra to priorities at decentralised levels of government, SDC programmes align with sub-national level priorities.
- Lack of political will or incentives at national level has been a challenge across all country contexts; however, the Evaluation has a positive view of SDC's ability to find space to stay engaged in a meaningful way in challenging contexts, signalling a capacity to Think and Work Politically (TWP).
- WOGA complementarity, especially with the PHRD and SECO, enables Switzerland to stand stronger at country level with a fuller palette of mandates, expertise, and funds. Interviewees emphasised both positive examples as well as fragmentation and missed opportunities.
- SDC has a strong capacity and capitalizes on the role, when taking lead in coordination fora on governance and reform agendas.

5.1 Alignment with country priorities and political will in partner governments.

SDC's governance programmes are well-aligned with partner countries' priorities (at different levels), in contexts where there is a basis for alignment on good governance issues. SDC in Mongolia for example has aligned with government policies with good results, such as the support to implementation of new legislation around domestic violence and gender-based violence, and support to decentralisation. The alignment with governance priorities in Mongolia also speaks to the relatively high degree of democratic governance in that country compared to the other countries in the sample. In general donors, including SDC, seek to align with official legislation, policy frameworks and strategies of different institutions and across levels of engagement.

Critical reflection is needed on the depth of political will as a precursor to alignment, particularly important in the face of isomorphic mimicry, where particularly authoritarian governments mimic successful systems, while conflating form and functions.²⁷ Donors may align to the "right" official policies on paper, while the reality shows

²⁷ Andrews, M. et al. (2017) *Looking like a state: The seduction of isomorphic mimicry. Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action.* Oxford Academic: 2017. Online edition: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198747482.003.0003>.

lack of political will and incentives to pursue reforms in practice. Bosnia and Herzegovina the point. Its recent EU candidature status lends a common framework for engagement, officially recognized by the government, through the EU *acquis process*. Thus, official alignment is there on paper, but the political will at national level paints a different picture. SDC's municipal governance engagement has repeatedly been met with lack of political will and progress toward the establishment of a countrywide reform agenda for decentralisation and local governance reforms, also noting that seventy percent of the EU *acquis* requirements need to be implemented at the municipal level).

In several contexts – hereunder Laos, and Rwanda – alignment to (official) national priorities is not always desirable, nor has it been the basis for engagement. Laos presents a context where alignment is difficult, because as the SCO explains, the Government's main interest for development cooperation is economic development (without governance, human rights, inclusion, etc.), as a way to bolster its own legitimacy. While SDC and partners have been able to engage e.g., on civil society support, it has taken a long time to build trust, and navigate the relationship with the Government that sees civil society as an opportunity for service provision but has little tolerance for civil society as a watchdog. Similarly, in Rwanda, SDC is carefully pushing the boundaries for the media to be more independent, an example of non-alignment that can be sustained because the government recognizes the importance of a core of media professionals and institutions to counterbalance the role of social media.

The sample indicates that lack of political will or incentives at national level to implement *specific* governance reforms has been a challenge across all country contexts. However, lack of political will at *national* level does not necessarily impede SDC and partners' ability to engage strategically on decentralisation at other levels; in several of the country contexts, the SCO was able to identify entry points at the local level, where the political will was present or technical and administrative reforms still could be implemented.²⁸ For example, in Kyrgyzstan, SDC's engagement at local level is strategically "*misaligned*" with the trajectory at the national level, towards increasing centralisation of power – while decentralization remains in line with stated priorities of local government. SDC's focus on decentralisation in Kyrgyzstan has not been met with any strong resistance at the national or central level, as the central government sees the value in (and therefore allows) SDC's decentralisation engagement on responsive and accountable budgeting and service provision at local level insofar that it reduces citizen dissatisfaction. Likewise, in Burkina Faso, the government has not blocked the continuation of SDC's programming with local government, despite restricting space for decentralisation by eroding the authority and funding to local government. SDC continues to work in line with some government priorities (despite the political upheavals and military coups), which has left communication channels open; this has led to good examples of active engagement by SDC to shape the definition of government policy (e.g., Labour Intensive Public Works / Employment policy framework) and decentralisation policy.

Civil society and media space is restricted to varying degrees and political will to open up the civic and media space is generally limited. This space tends to be strictly controlled, particularly in authoritarian contexts, but SDC has found entry points. In Laos, SDC is now re-engaging on expanding civic space and citizen participation, although not without contestation from the government. The SCO and partners, while optimistic in terms of the progress that is being made, express a great deal of reserve when it comes to pushing *too hard* against the grain. In Rwanda, the government reacted to donors (including

²⁸ It should be mentioned that in strong autocratic contexts, the local level tends to be under the control of the national level, and in such cases, lack of political may also restrict SDC's ability to engage on governance reforms and decentralization at local level. Moreover, at worst, falling back to work at local level in such contexts (in the face of rising authoritarianism/ autocratic tendencies) may even serve to strengthen the State's control over the local level. However, no such examples were found within the sample of countries covered by the Evaluation.

SDC) establishing a Civil Society Basket Fund, setting up its own parallel fund as a signal of control while preventing the donor fund from becoming operational. Subsequently, SDC has taken a different approach and supports a consortium of local civil society under the umbrella of *Never Again Rwanda*, building their capacity to conduct evidence-based dialogue and establish relationships both with parliamentarians and the executive to facilitate reforms.

Overall, these examples highlight a more general ability of SDC to find space to stay engaged in a meaningful way in challenging contexts, signalling a capacity to Think and Work Politically (TWP). However, in interviews conducted by the Evaluation, concern was expressed with regard to the risk of staying engaged, and whether SDC speaks out loudly enough on democratic reversals at country level, when scaling down national level engagement (“has sufficient risk appetite” as said in one interview). In general, gradual democratic reversals pose challenges for donors to pinpoint *when* there are red lines, and *how* to respond (see Box 8). This issue is complex, and the Evaluation notes the importance of signalling the values of democracy through other levels, means and actors in the Swiss system²⁹.

BOX 8.

Autocratisation - “big bang” versus slow-moving “democratic erosion”

In their analysis of *How (not) to engage in authoritarian states*, Cheeseman and Desrosiers highlight a pitfall in how donors react in the face of gradual democratic erosion. While the international community is quick to react to very sudden and drastic democratic reversals, as is the case in a military coup, there is often little or no response in the face of the slower, more gradual autocratising trends in-country. “Because there is no clear “moment” to galvanise international attention, and autocratising leaders are good at hiding their intentions, it is common for democratic erosion to trigger no significant changes in the way that foreign aid is distributed”.³⁰

5.2 Complementarity and coordination with WOGA partners

WOGA collaboration has worked well in several of the contexts, particularly evident between SDC and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). A good example was seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the synergies, coherence, and collaborative approach between SDC and SECO is apparent in the local governance portfolio. SDC’s engagement focuses on improvement to municipal governance through a performance-based approach, and high performing municipalities have then been ‘rewarded’ through large investments in water and waste-water management infrastructure (through a SECO collaboration with development banks). Strong communication across different levels, from Head of Cooperation down to individual programme officers in the governance domain were highlighted as key to this positive collaboration. In other contexts, SDC and SECO also find coherence in their collaboration.

WOGA complementarity, especially with the PHRD and SECO, enables Switzerland to stand stronger at country level with a fuller palette of mandates, expertise, and funds³¹. Interviewees emphasised both positive examples as well as fragmentation and missed opportunities. The importance of a strong WOGA is further noted by SDC in the *Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes*, which recommended that the Political Directorate should “promote a joint understanding of Swiss goals in authoritarian contexts, and to identify

²⁹ Cheeseman, N., and M. Desrosiers. (2023). *How (not) to engage with authoritarian states*. Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited (WFD). <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/how-not-engage-authoritarian-states>, Recommendation 5, p9

³⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

³¹ A limitation of the evaluation process was the lack of opportunity to interview more PHRD staff. Two PHRD staff were interviewed at country level, but nobody was available at HQ.

areas for political-sensitive WOGA engagement³². The recommendation refers to the institutional differences and organisational set-up within Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), which cannot automatically be coordinated according to aspirations in SDC programmes at country level. It was found in several interviews, but with less evidence in the country sample, that there is a perceived division of labour between SDC and PHRD. PHRD is seen as the main actor to work on peace and human rights, in particular political rights, and is engaged at local, national, and international levels in challenging environments. SDC's area of work on rights and peace (often in the form of social cohesion), is more at local level and through sectoral engagements. When SDC works at national level with peace and rights dimensions at a larger scale, it appears to be most common, when PHRD is not present together with SDC at country level. PHRD is present in fewer country contexts than SDC and have relatively small budgets. With regard to SECO and SDC, they are both present in some country contexts, but SECO has less presence in fragile contexts³³.

BOX 9.

Bad cop, good cop – a way forward for WOGA?

SDC's *Learning Journey on Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts* highlights the value of WOGA engagement in multi-stakeholder and multi-level dialogues, suggesting that WoGA partners can use their specific mandates and entry points to promote human rights in different ways with authoritarian governments. While SDC's role can be to engage with the authoritarian government ("good cop"), PHRD has a more critical voice on human rights issues at national and international levels, with reference to international human rights standards ("bad cop").³⁴

The degree of collaboration and coordination with PHRD varies to a greater extent than is the case with SECO, despite the view that their respective mandates and roles potentially offer more synergies on governance issues. In Tunisia there is positive collaboration with PHRD in the field of prevention of violent extremism (PVE) which is part of the core governance programme. In Burkina Faso, SDC and PHRD, have also worked together to develop the new programme on peace building and social cohesion. Staff training on conflict sensitivity has been enabling for linking the governance programme to peacebuilding. In Lebanon, there are varying degrees of collaboration, but some positive examples to build on, both on conflict mediation in the Bekaa Valley and the joint reviews of new SDC projects, which strengthens the joint understanding of the context and the complexities of operating in the political crisis. The degree to which there is complementarity and collaboration with WOGA partners, especially between SDC and PHRD seem to come down to the interest of individual SCO and staff, in cases where both are present. In all cases, triple nexus approaches, i.e., strategic, long term and synergetic co-operation were not fully capitalised on due to different time frames, topics and objectives, institutional cultures, resources, and presence, in spite of staff and local management interested in promoting such synergies³⁵.

There is not necessarily concurrence between SDC priority countries and ambassadorial presence, which is a limiting factor for SDC's use of political dialogue. In Laos, there is a SCO, but no Swiss Embassy (Laos is covered by the Embassy in

³² SDC. (2020). *Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes – Synthesis Report*.

³³ Guidance and learning tools are available on WOGA collaboration in the areas of governance, the Evaluation was made aware of guidance on Public Financial Management between SDC and SECO: <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/SECO%20SDC%20Guidance%20Public%20Financial%20Management.pdf>, and on election support between SDC and PHRD: <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/DDLG%20analysis%20electoral%20assistance%20Feb%202012.pdf>

³⁴ SDC. (2022). *Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts. Learnings from SDC Experiences*. p. 7.

³⁵ The Evaluation had limited engagement with PHRD staff. In addition to the findings of this Evaluation the ET draws on work conducted in the Learning Journey on the Triple Nexus.

Bangkok). Thus, the options for the SCO to draw on a wider palette of instruments, particularly in relation to political instruments, is reduced. The political dialogue has been instrumental in granting space for the citizen engagement (CEGGA) intervention, as SDC, BMZ, and the EU after long negotiations with the government on the programme. The SCO stressed that SDC is a technical agency, and the political dialogue needs to be coordinated with the political and diplomatic actors of FDFA, which is more straight forward when there is diplomatic mission in country. Other countries in the sample face a similar situation, like Burkina Faso, where there is no Swiss Embassy, even though the country is perceived as strategically important to Switzerland's engagement in the Sahel.

5.3 Theories of Change as a means of programme coherence

Across contexts, the newest iterations of cooperation programmes have improved the narratives on portfolio-wide coherence through the application of theories of change at the governance portfolio level. Nevertheless, ToCs do not appear to have been used as 'living tools' for continuously reassessing causal assumption and adapting programmes accordingly. ToC narratives, if they are tangible and well-crafted (i.e., including both clear causal assumptions and risks), are a suitable tool for strategic level planning on the anticipated direction of travel for a programme. In Tunisia, ToCs have now guided two phases of the cooperation programme and the underpinning assumptions are well aligned to the governance understanding and vision of SDC. However, the caveat is that the ToCs fall short in appreciating the volatility of, and underlying tensions that influence the political and governance environment, overplaying the capacity of certain actors and process; and of external support, to deliver transformative change and impact. In Lebanon, noting the high volatility of that context, the SCO noted that an updating process of the ToC narrative including assumptions and risks as frequent as would be required, was not feasible.

Although, there is a causal logic running across multiple projects/programmes indicating how they connect, a well-articulated narrative of how the 'sum of parts' leads to the overall portfolio-level ambitions or vision that the SCOs have on governance is often lacking. While the Evaluation sees governance projects and programmes as relevant vehicles for addressing governance challenges, there is a broader palette of tools that are relevant for SDC to apply on its own and with WOGA partners. Tying these into a strong theory of change and operational mode with a broader range of stakeholders and instruments would strengthen the narrative and coherence of SDC's governance approach. In practice, such processes are advancing in SDC, as is seen with the SCO in Rwanda (see Section 4.4). ToCs' therefore remain a relevant tool to assess the plausibility of the relevance and impact of a programme and staying focused on good governance as a long-term objective in a challenging context.

5.4 SDC and coordination

SDC plays a constructive role in coordination with other donors and in coordination mechanism where governments are involved. Active coordination is a deliberate and positive agenda for SDC and the term that is often used is that SDC "punches above its weight" in this way. Coordination is seen as strategic and raises the profile of Switzerland in governance domains and in sectors. The coordination between donors and between donors and government takes different forms and SDC's role is generally active and, in several cases, SDC takes a leading role.

- In Rwanda, both donors and the government praise the approach by SDC, "as a *listening facilitator, that avoids a 'knowing better' attitude*". The SCO itself sees the role as highly strategic, enhancing governance reform results, impact, and sustainability. The SCO notes coordination with the government is a time-consuming task, and such exchanges are carefully curated to (i) manage controversial issues; (ii) maintain and gradually enlarge the "invited spaces", and (iii) keep donors on the same page.

- In Lebanon, multiple frameworks for aid coordination (Syria Refugee Crisis, Lebanon humanitarian crisis, Reform agenda) result in a lack of coherence and efficiency in the international response, in addition to a “lack of outlook” for the international community. SDC takes a constructive engagement to improve the governance of the aid architecture, although it was noted that this was an uphill battle.
- In Mongolia, the Annual Report 2021 highlights SDC’s strategic approach to coordination. *“Donor and partner coordination [in country] is still not convincing and efficient enough”* Therefore *“[s]everal sectorial working groups have been (re)launched in view of including the missing aspects, however without many results nor better efficiency so far. Due to its phase-out, SDC is not chairing any of them as it requires mid-term commitment and follow-up that SDC does not have any longer but participates in the ones relevant to its portfolio”*.

BOX 10.

Swiss complementarity and niche vis-à-vis other donors

The experience from several countries points to SDC being recognised for its expertise, and engagement on local governance. This speaks to the general finding that SDC’s governance programmes have synergies to other donor programmes, but also that SDC has a niche, which also relates to its long-term presence and relationship with partner, and in several cases being the only donor or one of few donors present. One outlier is seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina. An initial decision to support prosecutorial capacities through the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) was based on analysis that no one else was engaging there; however, after a 12-year-long involvement, reporting indicates that there are 8 different donor-driven projects engaging with the HJPC on similar topics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3. Work closely with WOGA partners to strengthen synergies and complementarity of mandates, to capitalise on Switzerland’s different instruments. In particular, PHRD and SDC should increase cooperation, particularly on political economy analysis, policy dialogue and advocacy agendas, to promote peacebuilding, good governance, and human rights.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SDC Senior Leadership with WOGA partners

Recommendation 4. Strengthen the level of ambition and use of Theories of Change to clearly show how SDC, by drawing on different instruments, can bring about higher-level changes. This may entail reducing the number of projects in the country portfolios, to enhance efficiency and coherence, and free time for leadership roles in coordination, policy dialogue and learning.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SCOs

6. Achievement of results

The following chapter covers the effectiveness of SDC's governance portfolio, drawing on the eight case studies to evidence the degree to which results have been achieved, not least in challenging contexts. Looking to SDC's core governance interventions, the first section covers overall results achievement (6.1), highlighting some of the factors that have enabled SDC to be effective. Subsequent sections assess the achievement of results through engagements at local and national level, first looking at decentralisation and local governance (6.2), and thereafter strengthening democratic institutions and processes at national level (6.3). Thereafter, the Evaluation considers the results from SDC engagements that have sought to expand democratic and civic space through media and civil society support (6.4).

The final section moves away from core governance interventions to zoom in on the results achieved through a focus on transversal governance; here, the Evaluation consider how effective governance components have been in strengthening sector programme outcomes (6.5).

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- SDC's governance portfolio is largely effective, results frameworks are set at an achievable level, and are adapted to the realities in a given context.
- While results are easier to come by in stable contexts, SDC also has results to show from contexts that are authoritarian and fragile, or that have experienced democratic reversals.
- SDC's strategies for staying engaged have proven effective, pivoting away from national level engagements, and prioritising 'technical' engagements that are perceived to be less politicised.
- SDC is a strong and consistent donor delivering governance results over the longer term at local level. SDC has made significant contributions to increased transparency and accountability of local governments, higher levels of citizen engagement into local decision-making and improved satisfaction with priority services.
- SDC has been effective in strengthening democratic institutions and processes at the national level. The national-level engagements have proven successful, particularly in more stable contexts. In more challenging contexts, the evidence highlights that political will plays a critical role in enabling or hindering success.
- On human rights, civic space, and free media, SDC's engagements are fewer in the sample, but they were carefully curated around a balance of negotiating acceptance by the government and quietly exerting pressure. The cautious approach in authoritarian contexts has led to incremental gains.
- Transversal governance is both relevant and an effective way to achieve governance results. It can still play a bigger role in the portfolio. Three points emerged: First, linking governance to a sector can make governance issues more concrete, and enable more tangible results for citizens, and stronger buy-in from public actors. Second, it is an important way to stay engaged and deliver results in challenging contexts. Third, there is a need to be exact about transversal governance objectives, outcomes, and indicators in order to keep focus, secure budget lines, staff resources and show results.

6.1 SDC delivers results from the “stable” to more the “fragile” contexts

Across countries and the project sample, the Evaluation’s overall conclusion is that the governance portfolio largely is effective, results frameworks are set at a realistic and achievable level, and are adapted to the realities in a given context. Across the countries covered in the Evaluation, SDC’s governance programmes are particularly effective at strengthening the social contract between duty bearers and rights holders, especially at the local level. In particular, SDC has positive results in improving the accountability, transparency, and oversight of *local* government, while at the same time strengthening mechanisms for citizen engagement and participation at this level (discussed further below in Section 6.2).

While results are easier to come by in stable contexts SDC also has results to show from contexts that are authoritarian, fragile, or that have experienced democratic reversals. A recent meta-evaluation has raised concerns among development practitioners with regard to the effectiveness of aid in fragile contexts (see Box 11), particularly when it comes to democratisation and good governance. However, the positive trajectory of SDC’s governance programmes, not least in fragile contexts, runs counter to the narrative that aid in fragile situations is futile. As discussed below, SDC has been able to find relevant entry-points, and strategies to stay engaged in a meaningful way.

The Evaluation found evidence of the value of staying engaged in these contexts, even when political incentives work against democratic governance reforms. In these contexts, effectiveness has largely been tied to SDC’s ability to find entry points, processes, and pockets where there is political will to engage on governance reforms, whether at national, sub-national or local level. For example, in Laos, where political will to engage on governance reforms generally is low, SDC found an opening to work with government on dam safety following a destructive dam collapse in 2018. While appearing technical on the surface, SDC has managed to leverage this opening to address the governance side as well.

BOX 11.

Is aid effective in highly fragile contexts?

In 2022, IOB published a meta-evaluation of aid to three highly fragile contexts – Afghanistan, Mali, and South Sudan – reviewing the effectiveness of the international community’s engagement from 2008-2021. The meta-evaluation found that governance interventions had limited results in the three countries, hampered by lack of buy-in and political will by the governments; and a prevalence of donor-driven, top-down project design.³⁶ In general, across different sectors, the effectiveness was similarly found to be limited.

While this paints a rather grim picture, the meta-evaluation concludes that there are *pockets of success*, specific sectors where results have been achieved, (health, education, and rural development), and when projects were linked to tangible improvements, for example through service provision, small-scale infrastructure, or skills-development.³⁷ These findings are reiterated by the current evaluation, which concludes that SDC has found *pockets of success* to work on governance in highly fragile contexts.

³⁶ Zürcher, C., et al. (2022). *Impact of Aid in Highly Fragile States. A synthesis of three systematic reviews of aid to Afghanistan, Mali, and South Sudan, 2008 - 2021*. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. November 2022. p. 34.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 46 - 47.

SDC's strategies for staying engaged – pivoting away from national level engagements toward local government and working on 'technical' engagements that are perceived to be less politicised – have proved effective. In Burkina Faso, SDC prior to 2022 worked with parliament and parliamentarians to engage in civic dialogue to increase accountability of elected officials between elections. When the political situation evolved, the Swiss approach was adapted to limit political dialogue at national level to engagement on technical sectoral issues. Sticking to 'technical' dialogue enabled SDC to influence the design of national policies with direct results on local level public works programmes and investments by the World Bank. This adaptive workaround has enabled SDC to maintain the dialogue with the national government, build on access created by long term national staff, and retain credibility as a donor.

Staying engaged has the potential to lead to negative, unintended results – hereunder limiting partners' space for engagement and putting them at risk – in contexts of democratic backslide or reversal. While outside of the evaluation period, the experience of SDC in Laos (from 2012 – 2014) illustrates that civil society and SDC's partners face substantial risks when pushing back against an authoritarian state. Therefore, the key message here is, it is necessary to assess the implicit trade-offs of staying engaged, to ensure that Swiss support does not directly or indirectly further legitimise or strengthen authoritarian rule; and equally, to identify red lines or a clear position for Switzerland of when it is no longer possible to follow the core governance principles, and when engagement has the potential to do more harm than good (also discussed from the angle of Coherence in Section 5.1. and Box 7).

6.2 Decentralisation & local governance

SDC is a strong and consistent donor delivering governance results over the longer term at local level; this has strengthened the social contract between duty bearers and rights holders. The contributions to increased transparency and accountability of local governments, higher levels of citizen engagement into local decision-making and improved satisfaction with priority services, are significant. SDC has been particularly effective in delivering results in strengthening the relationship between duty bearers and rights holders.

- In Kyrgyzstan, the governance portfolio has contributed to increased accountability in municipal budgeting and public participation in decision-making processes, as well as improved municipal service provision, and responsiveness to the demands of the local population. A more trustful and cooperative environment appears to have been built between residents, municipal civil servants, and local councils, with clearer reciprocal understanding about their respective roles, needs, and responsibilities.
- In Rwanda, the Public Policy Information Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project (supported since 2009) has over time been effective in mobilising citizens to engage in participatory planning activities and dialogue with local leaders. Initially, changing behaviour has been difficult due to a culture of silence and non-engagement by communities after the genocide. Through systematic and long-term engagement, citizens in the districts covered by the project have started to engage in bottom-up community development planning, which previously was seen as mostly a top-down processes, owned and led by district authorities.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, SDC's governance programme has been highly effective in strengthening municipal governance, oversight, and transparency, to the extent that the Municipal Environmental Governance (MEG) programme is seen a flagship project, recognised by other donors as a results-oriented model. While the project has been able to build mechanisms for citizens' engagement, results on

citizen participation have been slower to manifest, because of political environment, where trust in decision makers is low.

- In Burkina Faso, the decentralisation and citizen's participation engagement (DEPAC) demonstrated effectiveness with notable results at local government level –working in 30 different municipalities and enabling the development of effective civic participation in the elaboration of local development plans, which contributed to increased local government revenue, and creation of jobs in rural public works.

As expected, there are fewer results when it comes to devolution of power from central to local levels through fiscal decentralisation in the sample³⁸. SDC often works with the World Bank, the EU, or the UN, who are major players when it comes to supporting these reforms; nevertheless, results of such engagement are generally mixed, not least because of lack of political will³⁹.

6.3 Strengthening national democratic institutions & processes

While the Evaluation sees the strongest results at the local level, SDC has also been effective in strengthening democratic institutions and processes at the national level. National-level engagements have proven successful, particularly in more stable contexts. For example, in Mongolia, the governance portfolio has contributed to evidence-based policymaking on gender-based violence (GBV), with a dual focus on improving the evidence and knowledge base, and policy-influencing. This has translated into concrete actions by the government, i.e., the creation of supportive policy frameworks (most notably, a Law to Combat Domestic Violence) and increased public financial and human resources to combat GBV. There are several other strong examples from Mongolia, where SDC projects have fostered ownership and secured co-financing at a high level, e.g., by the Parliamentary Secretariat and Ministries, which has contributed to improved (digital) service delivery and capacity building of civil servants at national level and in all provinces of the country.

In more challenging contexts, SDC has also been able to achieve results in strengthening democratic institutions at national level; nevertheless, the evidence highlights that political will plays a critical role in enabling or hindering success.

- SDC's long-standing engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) has proven effective in improving efficiency in the justice sector, evidenced in a significant reduction in the backlog of cases. However, efforts to tie this engagement to wider justice sector reform have been hampered by lack of political will: SDC's partner reports that while 30 amendments to the Criminal Code were submitted to Ministries of Justice (at Central and Entity level) aimed at

³⁸ The Evaluation was made aware that the sample may not fully reflect SDC's experience in this regard, which have been documented for eastern Europe:
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/SDC-PBS_Local-Governance.pdf, and
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/Governance/Pages/Priorities/Pillar-2/Fiscal-decentralisation-and-public-finance-management-PFM.aspx>

³⁹ The challenges of decentralisation reforms are highlighted in an IEG Evaluation of World Bank support (2008), which looked back at reforms supported over almost two decades. "Bank support contributed to more effective decentralization substantially in more than one-third of the 20 cases and modestly in the others. The most successful aspects of Bank support pertained to the legal frameworks for intergovernmental relations, the frameworks for intergovernmental fiscal transfers, and subnational financial management Bank support was less effective in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government and in improving own-source revenue mobilization by subnational governments. This was often a result of lack of political will. Other things being equal, Bank support brought better results where there was consensus around the reform within the country prior to Bank engagement and when the support was combined with incentives for institutional reform at the subnational level". Independent Evaluation Group. (2008). *Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/6543> License: [CC BY 3.0 IGO.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)"

improving efficiency of investigations, trial proceedings and appellate proceedings, these were never taken up.

- In Laos, SDC has found strong entry points in relation to providing cross-sectoral information to support evidence-based policy making. The Knowledge for Development (K4D) project in Laos established an integrated information base on existing land concessions (the Land Concession Inventory System - LCIS), helping to resolve fragmentation on land concessions within different departments. By securing buy-in from key ministries, the LCIS has supported the development of new policies related to land concessions.
- In Rwanda, SDC has taken a bold approach to work with the government and carefully assess and engage with reform opportunities as an effective way to achieve results in institutionalisation of citizens' engagement on their rights to services, by institutionalising the Citizens Score Card. The Score Card is a means to measure/score and improve local governments delivery of services to citizens and has become a key priority of the central government's performance orientation, at a time when poverty reduction goals have fallen short of the Government's vision, and new approaches were seen as necessary.

6.4 Expanding democratic & civic space

On human rights, civic space, and free media, SDC's engagements are carefully curated around a balance of negotiating acceptance by the government and quietly exerting pressure. SDC's approach is one of careful consideration, to walk a fine line between promoting democratic and civic space without overstepping, where partners are put in danger. It is a dilemma for SDC and other donors working in challenging situations to stay within what regimes/governments find acceptable, and at the same time make meaningful and real contributions to improve human rights.

Nevertheless, the Evaluation sees the cautious approach in authoritarian contexts leading to incremental gains.

- In Rwanda, SDC is the main external actor working with the Government on the drafting of a new media law. The invitation and access to the process, can be seen as a "process result". Likewise, SDC and Sweden's support to professionalisation of the media and support to ethical journalism is now being supported by Government, after a long resistance against the backdrop of the media's controversial role in the genocide. The collaboration is cautious and consultative, but results are seen in a greater openness to the positive roles that media play in the society.
- In Laos, SDC, the EU and Germany have together launched a governance programme, with a component focused on expanding civic space. The three donors were able to negotiate space to work with civil society. Political dialogue and political instruments, have been instrumental in allowing the programme to move forward, and to create a more trustful and conducive environment for civil society to operate in.

Sensitive and difficult issues, such as political rights or free media, may be crowded out of programmes because of sensitivities; nevertheless, it is important to maintain focus on these topics, even in challenging contexts. The portfolio illustrates a mix of direct, indirect, assertive, and more cautious approaches, depending on analysis of what the context allows. The sample of projects in the Evaluation illustrate the value of joined up approaches among donors, to reduce the risk and exposure of SDC and partners (such as the example from Laos). There are also more creative or innovative approaches, such as the role of culture programmes, as discussed in Box 1, Section 4.1.

6.5 Strengthening sector outcomes through transversal governance.

Transversal governance is both relevant and an effective way for SDC to achieve governance results. TG can play an even bigger role in the portfolio. Three key points emerged:

- **First, linking governance to a sector can make governance issues more concrete**, thereby enabling more tangible results for citizens, and stronger buy-in from public actors.
- **Second, transversal governance is an important way to stay engaged and deliver results in challenging contexts**, because it involves finding ‘alternative’ sectoral entry points to engage on governance, where SDC has more traction.
- **Third, because SDC works through partners (and for internal reasons) there is a need to be exact about TG and develop specific objectives, outcomes, indicators, and timelines to show results.**

Linking decentralisation support up to a concrete issue – such as energy efficiency or access to water –made the case for decentralisation, and its results, more tangible. In Mongolia, for example, the energy sector has been a particularly effective and relevant entry point to engage on transversal governance⁴⁰. Public Investment in Energy Efficiency (PIEE) project was started in 2015 with the aim for local authorities to understand how to reduce energy losses in public buildings, linking this to the use of local development funds, and the municipal budget. In Mongolia, where up to 60% of the local budget was directed toward heating, improving energy efficiency was linked to tangible gains in public funds for local development. Another strong example relates to the water sector: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, improved performance in municipal governance was linked to the provision of water, which provided tangible benefits for citizens from improved municipal governance.

Transversal governance is also linked to improved anti-corruption outcomes of sectoral engagement. In Kyrgyzstan the evaluation looked at a transversal governance project related to non-communicable diseases (NCD). A key result from the project has been significant gains in terms of improving budget transparency and reducing corruption in the health sector. Clinics are now following more transparent and accountable procedures for procuring supplies. Significant progress has also been made on enhancing the patient referral system. However, actual patient outcomes in the aggregate rest on a wide range of factors, far beyond the reach of SDC programming, and therefore the precise contribution of transversal governance to sector results remains unclear. Likewise, the SCO in Mongolia reported transversal governance applied to a waste management project (WCTM) had an unintended result in reducing petty corruption in the sector.

In complex contexts, sectoral entry points can be an enabler of governance outcomes; this was the case in the health sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to the immense complexity of the political set-up and governance systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a focus on transversal governance is seen by SDC as inherently necessary when looking to work in any sector. In healthcare, the SCO and partners found transversal governance strengthened outcomes, to the extent that the *Strengthening Nursing* project contributed to reducing the fragmentation, and enabled collaboration across entity-lines, resulting in legally binding changes to legislation on nursing that covers the whole country. In Lebanon the Union of Tyre Municipalities supported 64 municipalities, and SDC has for more than 15 years trained staff and volunteers and built their capacity in Disaster Risk Reduction and set up a Response Unit. Although the Response Unit continues to be an informal organisation within the Union of Tyre, the Unit is effective and, as an example, it supported Beirut Union to handle the aftermath of the port blast. In this way, the union has become a champion for others. To

⁴⁰ The project was included in the core governance portfolio in Mongolia but is discussed here because of its transversal governance features.

date the Response Unit continues to be operational, although it has never been formally institutionalized.

Working in the current political crisis in Lebanon SDC, sees erosion of TG achievements in the water sector, because of institutional collapse. In the Bekaa Water Management Project (BWMP) the aim was to improve the services of the water establishment. SDC also supported capacity development, transparency, and accountability besides the more technical inputs. However, the deep crisis pulled the BWE into an unsustainable institutional situation when long term staff could no longer be retained. Low staff morale, absenteeism and political appointments also decreased efficiency. The BWE is now muddling through and by some observers is considered to be on the edge of collapse. The BWE project has now become a test of the degree to which a nexus approach is robust enough to keep the BWE afloat.

In Lebanon the SCO raised the issue of partnerships and joint understanding of TG, and thereby setting clear objectives, indicators, and expectations on results and work with project timelines that are conducive to results. First: partners often have different views than SDC of what TG is and should be, complicating setting objectives and monitoring in the contributions. Second: the different views on the value and resources of conducting a thorough political economy analysis. In this context, there is a trend away from a humanitarian mindset with limited analysis, finding resources and agreeing with partners on such analysis has proven difficult and resource demanding, although SDC together with some likeminded partners have now conducted two important pieces of PEA. The SDC team also noted that they, in the past and to a considerable degree, have relied on partners for the analysis, which in the worst case have been “impressions”, and in better instances been “good dialogues”. Third: short term projects of collaborating donors must be replaced by longer term engagement for TG to be effective, a point also made in the Bosnia and Herzegovina sample (See section 4.5.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 5. Stay engaged at local level in countries experiencing democratic reversals, increasing authoritarianism and fragility. Pursue entry points for engagement at national level, and when national level engagement is restricted, step-up engagement at regional and global levels.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SDC Senior Leadership, PGE and SCOs

Recommendation 6. Prioritise governance as a transversal theme and continue to develop staff capacities and resources in particular through face-to-face interactions and Learning Journeys. Consider how to strengthen incentives to work on transversal governance in humanitarian settings hereunder tailoring the transversal governance checklist to be more suited to humanitarian aid.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	PGE and SCOs

7. Efficiency and learning

This chapter covers to efficiency and learning from the perspective of SDC's governance engagements. The first section (7.1) provides analysis on the preferred modalities within the governance portfolio, and the trade-offs associated with each. The second section (7.2) takes a broad view on learning, considering knowledge development and management, and whether programmes learn from each other.

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- Contributions have specific advantages especially in challenging contexts, it is a way to share risks and capitalise on the positive aspects of partnerships, and to boost SDC's leverage as a relatively small donor.
- With regard to partnerships SDC works closely with likeminded donors. Working together with multilaterals, not least World Bank IDA projects, leaves SDC with limited influence on efficiency.
- Overall, it is difficult for the evaluation to gauge efficiency in the strict sense of the evaluation criteria. However, it was found that SDC staff are very observant with regard to project level value for money, staff follow projects closely to ensure efficiency and avoid wastage of resources, and projects are being adapted accordingly.
- The collection of learning materials and tools is an important and valuable resource when working in challenging contexts.
- Specifically on transversal governance, staff interviewed asked for more in person exchanges and training to share their experiences and learn from each other.
- Internal learning processes in country teams are important and not least for the joint recognition of "failures" and for adaptation.

7.1 Modalities of cooperation

SDC teams use a mix of modalities strategically, and over time there are shifts especially from mandates towards more contributions, which have specific advantages in challenging contexts. Mandates and direct action are, according to interviews, considered important, especially when a topic is quite technical and/or, when and where Switzerland has a particular niche and visibility.

The use of contributions⁴¹ is a way to share risks and capitalise on the positive aspects of partnerships, and to boost SDC's leverage as a relatively small donor in governance and rule of law. Besides risk sharing it is important for SDC to have discussion partners, and a basis for joint actions including policy dialogue, knowledge and expertise sharing and saving staff time. The Evaluation found the Laos team to have taken a strategic approach to contributions, for several reasons: (i) it reduces the exposure and risks for SDC as a donor when working with other donors (i.e., the EU, BMZ and/or LuxDev), in a context where certain governance issues meet resistance from government (such as civic space, political pluralism, inclusion/participation); and (ii) it increases the leverage that SDC has, e.g., to engage on policy dialogue, when working with a broader coalition of like-minded donors. In relation to the latter point, this is particularly important in view of the fact that there is no Swiss Embassy in Laos, only a Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO). The SCO therefore does not have access

⁴¹ In contributions SDC can cover up to 80% in the first phase and up to 50% of a project/programme budget in a second phase. SDC cooperates mainly with other donors (bilaterals and multilaterals) and civil society organisations, but also co-funds activities with direct contributions to State institutions (Ministries, Parliamentary Secretariat etc).

to the full palette of Swiss political instruments that an Embassy would have, therefore finds it useful to draw on other partners.

Mandates give SDC more control over programming and allow Switzerland to profile itself more than when in a group of development partners; on the other hand, mandates require considerable staff resources to manage. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the governance portfolio largely works directly with government institutions and actors, but SDC does not provide direct budget support. Instead, the preferred modality in SDC's governance portfolio in BiH is to use (on-budget) contributions, often joined up with other like-minded donors. One of the core governance projects in the sample (AMCs) involves delegated cooperation with Sweden, which by all accounts has worked well. By working through contributions on this project, SDC and Sida ensure complementarity, and increase their leverage and reach as compared to working alone. Similarly, joint contributions allow for risk-sharing. The MEG project also takes the form of a contribution, although unlike the AMC project, each of the donors (Switzerland, Sweden, Czech Republic, and the EU) has a separate agreement with the implementing partner, UNDP.

TABLE 1. Overview of Swiss governance (core + transversal) modalities

Modality	With whom	Advantages/disadvantages
Contributions	Multilaterals Bilaterals Government entities Civil society	<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buy-in, experience, and capacities of bilateral and multilateral partners ▪ Access to Government via multi- or large bilaterals. ▪ Stay engaged - UN system has feet on the ground ▪ Access to WB/UN technical expertise e.g., in PFM. ▪ Budget scale-up with all partners. ▪ Risk sharing with all partners. ▪ Localisation and ownership with government partners and local CSO <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential for delays. ▪ Lack of Swiss visibility & influence. ▪ Dependency on others, leading for example to discontinuation, when other partners pull out of an engagement. ▪ Missed opportunities when a partner cannot meet SDC's financial threshold for co-financing.
Mandates	Technical partners (Consulting company or NGO)	<p>Advantage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When the objective is quite specific, technical and timebound; or ▪ If there are specific indicators that are very specific to the Swiss programme and not to other donor programmes. <p>Disadvantage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resource demanding, ▪ Switzerland takes on sole risk.
Direct action (government) without budget support	Technical support to Government & municipalities	<p>Advantage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partners appreciate the direct access to Swiss experts rather than going through an intermediary. Close "personal relations are developed. <p>Disadvantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mainly suitable for small scale interventions because it is resource demanding and does not promote localisation.

With regard to partnerships SDC works closely with likeminded donors. Across the portfolio Sweden is seen as the most likeminded partner and there are more contributions with Sweden than any other country in the governance portfolios.

Working together with multilaterals, for example through World Bank IDA and trust fund projects, SDC gets direct and indirect access to decisionmakers and leverage on policy dialogue, but at times staff found it to be inefficient to work through these mechanisms. In the sample there are examples where SDC joins a multilateral programme which sets out an effective and efficient workplan, but in the planning and approval phase technical aspects and efficient timelines are overruled often by political concerns, leading to considerable delays. In Mongolia the World Bank's third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3), supported with a grant from SDC aimed at effective implementation of the fiscal reforms of decentralisation. However, Parliamentary approval of the IDA project got delayed for more than 3 years. There are other examples in the sample of SDC contributions with multilaterals running into delays. However, delays may also be signs of increased potential for a project to meet outcomes and contribute to impact and sustainability. This is because initial delays can result in more ownership and buy-in by the government. SDC's long term engagement including potential for 12-year engagements are important with regard to looking at efficiency in a longer-term perspective and as closely linked to impact and sustainability, rather than short term inefficiencies, noting that governance reforms are about ownership and changes of attitudes (see Chapter 8).

In fragile contexts UN organisations are often seen as the go-to partner because they have boots on the ground and can still open doors to decision makers. For example, in Lebanon, the UN is a 'necessary' and useful partner, because of the severely weakened State and institutions. The Evaluation found that the Lebanon team had a balanced view on the positives and negatives of their contribution aiming to promote child rights in UNICEF's "Bringing Aid Closer to Children", a project to which SDC is one in a bouquet of contributing donors. However, UNICEF sees SDC more as a funding agency rather than a strategic partner which can strengthen the dialogue and project outcomes on child rights. In other contexts in the sample, specific UN agencies were seen as undermining the aim to work through- and strengthen national institutions *fully*; critical voices noted that the UN at times may be perceived to be more interested in maintaining their own presence and engagement.

Generally, it is difficult for the evaluation to gauge efficiency of the governance portfolio in the strict sense of the evaluation criterion. It was found that SDC staff are very observant with regard to project level value for money, staff follow projects closely to ensure efficiency and avoid wastage of resources and projects are being adapted, or discontinued, if inefficient. There are many often small projects in the governance portfolios. Concerning the governance portfolio in Tunisia, staff expressed views that having 18 projects in the portfolio made the overall engagement quite fragmented, and the programme would benefit from a sharper focus and prioritisation. From an internal efficiency point of view, reducing the large number of governance projects could free resources for staff to engage more in policy dialogue, co-ordination, and analysis, which are important supplements to projects. In Rwanda, the change to work directly with government as a partner, requires skilful and time-consuming dialogue and diplomacy; for that reason, the number of projects are being reduced.

7.2 Learning and replication

One of the main recommendations of the 2015 Governance evaluation was that SDC should be *clarifying, updating, renewing, and systematizing the knowledge base underlying this work.* SDC has, since that evaluation, put considerable resources into the development of tools and guidance documents. The Evaluation finds the collection of learning materials and tools impressive and concurs with field based international staff and local staff that the materials and activities are important and very helpful for their daily work, and a valuable resource when working in challenging contexts. The body of documentation is the

foundation for training modules, courses, workshops, and references and help for staff individually. While staff appreciate the resources, they also asked for more knowledge management, in order to use the learning products more efficiently. The *Learning Journey on working in Authoritarian contexts (2020-2022)* which took a deep dive into five country cases aimed at staff to enhance their understanding of the implications for SDC's work in these contexts. The value of the Learning Journey was reiterated to the evaluation team by staff across the case study sample. Eighty percent (80%) of staff responded in the E-survey conducted that they use the materials in their work and for a range of purposes. The usefulness for analysis and planning purposes is a strong indicator of staff using the materials for key operational purposes and thereby for improving SDC's governance programmes. Likewise, staff referred to the usefulness in the interviews conducted by the Evaluation.

There is evidence that projects learn from each other and replicate through several mechanisms. This includes formalised initiatives when projects are being phased out; capitalisation of results processes when a cooperation programme is in its exit phase (Mongolia); exchange visits to other SDC projects in other locations; the inclusion of peer evaluators on project evaluations; institutional learning journeys on governance; and participation in regional learning initiatives. It was also found that SDC programmes working on complementary governance objectives (e.g., projects working in parallel on supply-side and demand-side accountability, such as VAP/PSI in Kyrgyzstan) are encouraged to interact and learn from one another. In Laos staff highlighted that SDC has tried to replicate and scale up some of the effective models of support that have been used in Vietnam and implement these in both Laos and Cambodia. It was specifically emphasized that the team had reflections and learning as a result of the internal Learning Journey on Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts (mentioned above), which covered Myanmar as one of the country contexts. In Mongolia, when the governance and decentralization project was still active and considered effective, a body of learning materials were produced including videos, brochures, and an evaluation on the results. The Cambodia, Laos and Tajikistan teams were receptive to the Mongolia experience. However, staff noted to the Evaluation that exchanges and learning from one country to another appear to be a result of individual interests among country offices, and therefore not a systematic approach across the portfolio on particular topics, in regions or in groups of countries, although the learning journeys are great examples of the value of these exchanges. In the Evaluation staff pointed to the need for managers to be more aware of the value and therefore taking time and allocating resources, not only for SDC staff but also where possible involving government staff.

Specifically on transversal governance, staff interviewed asked for more in-person exchanges and training to share their experiences and learn from each other. The point being that every situation and sector is quite unique, and exchanges on the space and contents of what the TG element in a given sector should include and exclude and the tools and resources necessary to promote and achieve objectives in this regard.

Internal learning processes in country teams are important and not least for the joint recognition of “failures” and for adaptation. Rwanda was an example in the sample, where an internal review and learning process took place, because of a realization that the programme was effective to some degree but had less to show on impact and sustainability when the main partners were civil society organisations. The internal reflections resulted in the shift discussed in several places in this Evaluation.

There is evidence of other donors learning from SDC - suggesting the organisation often has valuable lessons to share on local governance. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, tools and mechanisms on accountable service provision, developed by SDC and introduced in pilot municipalities, have been adopted by other donors (MoF, USAID/CAMI, ARIS, GIZ, and the Soros Foundation) and in other municipalities. There were also examples of SDC learning from other donors; in Rwanda, SDC initially cooperated with Sweden as the lead agency to capitalise on their experience working on sensitivities in the media sector. In general, SDC's

active positioning and participation in coordination and external coherence and extensive use of contributions are enabling for experience sharing and learning with partners.

However, perhaps the more interesting question is not *whether* learning happens, or how frequently it takes place, but whether the most useful lessons and examples, including case studies that showcase successes and failures, are appropriately identified, shared, and learnt from (i.e., the focus should be on the quality of learning rather than the quantity). Whilst we have limited evidence from the country case studies of how well SDC is performing in this respect, we note that our e-survey results point to a relatively high degree of satisfaction amongst respondents about the usefulness and relevance of SDC's knowledge products and initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 7. Contributions should be considered as the preferred modality in governance programming, with careful consideration of advantages and disadvantages in specific contexts.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
Medium (1-3 year)	SCOs
High (1 year)	PGE

Recommendation 8. Emphasize knowledge management to capitalize on existing knowledge products, systematising cross-country operational learning on core and transversal governance, with greater emphasis on face-to-face exchanges among peers.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	PGE

8. Impact

This chapter seeks to answer questions on the impact of SDC's governance programmes. It considers the effects of programmes on regarding people's lives and communities' functioning (8.1); and the degree to which programmes have contributed to transformative changes and (local) institution building (8.2).

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- SDC's governance work at the local level delivers impact in terms of positive behavioural and attitudinal changes in how citizens and local authorities interact. The clearest examples of impact follow from the promotion of transparency and accountability in local governance, and more responsive approaches to municipal service delivery.
- These results are associated, in some cases, with broader impact on the lives of individuals and communities, often through tangible improvements in service provision, and overall levels of trust and cohesion.
- Efforts have been made to extend impact to potentially vulnerable or marginalised individuals or groups, i.e., to leave no one behind. However, the results are mixed.
- Connecting outcomes on accountability to a specific sector, such as water, health, or electricity, makes the beneficial impact of decentralisation more immediate and obvious for citizens and communities, strengthening the value addition of transversal governance in SDC's programmes.
- Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is clearer evidence of impact in more stable contexts in the country sample, and on less challenging or politicised issues.
- There is some evidence that SDC is contributing to transformative changes and institution building. Although there are exceptions, this impact is most clearly found at the local level, and with a focus on informal institutions – i.e., norms, understandings, and patterns of interaction between citizens and local authorities – rather than formal institutions (rules, laws, or regulations).
- In more challenging contexts of fragility or democratic reversal, it may be more realistic to consider impact as strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions to withstand external pressures or shocks, rather than aiming for transformative change.

8.1 Impact on people's lives and communities functioning

SDC's governance work at the local level delivers impact in terms of positive behavioural and attitudinal changes in how citizens and local authorities interact. The clearest examples of impact follow from the promotion of transparency and accountability in local governance, and more responsive approaches to municipal service delivery. This impact in the evaluation sample reflects broader changes in the awareness of their respective rights and responsibilities, and greater appreciation of the need for and value of citizen participation and local government transparency. In Kyrgyzstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Rwanda, SDC's programming has contributed to a clearer understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and entitlements associated with local authorities as duty bearers, and citizens as rights-holders. Citizens across these contexts are playing a stronger role in articulating their needs and preferences on service provision, often from low initial baselines. In the countries mentioned above, local authorities, meanwhile, have a better understanding of how to identify citizens' preferences, and the importance of responsive and accountable budgeting and service delivery.

In a number of instances, these changes are associated with tangible improvements in service outcomes in areas including health, waste disposal, and education. Connecting outcomes on accountability to a specific sector, such as water, health, or electricity, makes the beneficial impact of decentralisation more immediate and obvious for citizens and communities. The Evaluation notes that some of the clearest impact on people's lives and communities' functioning results from SDC supporting sector-specific governance improvements through small grants. In Kyrgyzstan, beneficiaries of a local-level service improvement project (PSI) expressed satisfaction with the support they received in solving issues of bad road conditions and street lighting. The resolution of these issues has had a wider impact, seen in the reduced theft of livestock, decreased incidence of hooliganism, and increased safety for children attending evening sport classes. Similarly, linking local governance efforts to energy efficiency (Mongolia) and water (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was seen to lead to tangible improvements for citizens from decentralisation (as discussed in Section 6.5).

Efforts have been made to extend impact to vulnerable or marginalised individuals or groups, i.e., to leave no one behind. However, such impacts are mixed. In Kyrgyzstan, the Evaluation observed significant impact in the lives of pupils and parents resulting from SDC support to a school for children with disabilities. Improvements in the transparency of budgeting and procurement, and greater responsiveness to the needs of local parents and pupils on the part of local government bodies, has led to more useful and relevant investments in physical assets for the school. These investments, that are being purposefully used and maintained, have resulted in pupils experiencing a better quality of education and more opportunities to socialise. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the performance-based approach to municipal governance, which has been accredited a large part of the project's positive impact, fails to reach the worst-off, least resourceful municipalities, because political will (and co-financing) is a precondition for inclusion. The risk, then, is exacerbating the already growing inequalities between municipalities in the country.

In the most challenging / rapidly deteriorating contexts in the sample, where state structures have largely broken down and the overall balance of power is in flux, SDC support is able to demonstrate short-term results, but long-term impact remains uncertain. In Lebanon in particular the NRC project is providing impactful support to refugees and working to enhance refugee rights, however the institutional structures to secure these rights are not in place. In Burkina Faso, SDC's reach has been limited to regional 'pockets' of stability where access is guaranteed. It was observed that transversal governance programming has had an impact on improving access to social services, infrastructure, and employment. The impact on those that are most vulnerable, living in the most insecure areas, and for the growing number of IDPs, is unclear.

Instances of negative, unintended impact from SDC projects were not observed in the case countries. In situations where there is a need to mitigate such risks SDC appears to react decisively. In Laos, for example, the citizen engagement component of SDC's governance programme has had to balance its ambition level against contextual risks. In 2014, this resulted in the closure of the engagement, and on other occasions SDC and partners have disengaged from specific districts, due to a backlash from local authorities against citizens who were seen as "becoming too empowered".

8.2 Contribution to transformative changes and institution building

Across the country sample, there is some evidence that SDC is contributing to transformative changes and institution building. Although there are exceptions, this impact is seen most clearly at the local level, and with a focus on *informal* institutions – i.e., norms, understandings, and patterns of interaction between citizens and local authorities – rather than formal institutions (rules, laws, or regulations). At the local level, beliefs, norms, and unspoken rules about the value and processes of inclusive democratic participation and accountability have been positively impacted through SDC's governance programming, as evidenced through recurring patterns of interaction between local government authorities and citizens across a number of countries in our sample.

Some of these changes to informal institutions can be described as transformative, particularly as they start from a low initial baseline. SDC's experiences in Laos are case in point; when the baseline is no civic space, and an almost complete disappearance of civil society, then the incremental progress of SDC and partners to negotiate the expansion of civic space with the government takes on a more transformative character. To arrive at the establishment of a civil society support mechanism with the Government of Laos on board was a major achievement after long negotiations and dialogue. In Kyrgyzstan, SDC's promotion of participatory budgeting in pilot municipalities has reportedly created a positive enabling environment for participation amongst local citizens, leading to wider impact in the form of a perception of mutual trust between local authorities and residents, and a change in attitude and behaviour on both sides.

There is also evidence that SDC and partners have contributed to strengthening formal institutions at national or subnational level. For example, the GDP and SRBM projects in Mongolia have helped establish a national training institute for municipal civil servants which is funded by State authorities, with international ISO certification. In addition, all central Ministries review their functional budget allocations under the lead of the Cabinet Secretariat, based on the methodology developed by the project.

However, on balance, SDC has made less clear impact in terms of transformative changes to national-level, formal institutions (i.e., policies, laws, and formal regulations) in the countries in the sample. While SDC has contributed to positive institutional changes and has strengthened the organisational capacity of key actors at different administrative levels, these changes are not always fully consolidated through corresponding changes to underlying power structures or formalised in legal frameworks or explicit government policies. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, SDC's work to formalise changes to the operation of local government through supporting fiscal decentralisation and reforms to the local self-government legislative framework have been undermined because of dramatic changes in the priorities of the central government that occurred in 2020 and the independence of municipalities is under threat, and consequentially SDC's achieved results might be reversed.

While SDC's governance projects tend to have an ambition to address both formal and informal institutions, this is difficult in practice. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, to take another example, one of the most significant results of the justice sector engagement with the HJPC has been the ability to foster ownership; the project's implementation unit has become formally anchored within the HJPC, and in technical terms, they are now very well-equipped. However, while this signals a success in building the *formal institution*, the transformative power of the HJPC in justice sector reform and addressing big-scale corruption remains limited by *informal institutions / practices*. This suggests the importance, when trying to achieve transformative impact, of addressing both the formal and informal institutions underpinning a particular governance dynamic.

In more challenging contexts of fragility or democratic reversal, it may be more realistic to focus on strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions to withstand external pressures or shocks, rather than aiming for transformative change. The link between good governance and resilience and lack of the same is well-documented. In the case sample, Lebanon constitutes a prime example of how governance challenges (sectarianism and elite capture) have had a crippling effect on the State’s resilience against the compounding crises – from the port explosion, Syria crisis, to the deepening economic crisis and inflation. SDC’s engagement with municipalities is thus a way to bolster the last vestiges of government that continue to function, with a direct contribution to resilience-strengthening.

As an impact, resilience is difficult to measure, because it relates to the capacities of different levels of government, institutions, or communities to manage, absorb, or mitigate risks⁴². Resilience (or lack thereof) is most clearly seen during and in the aftermath of crises situations or shocks. A key example from the Evaluation in this respect is Ukraine. While not included as a case country in the Evaluation, Ukraine was the subject of recurrent discussions with staff across SDC. Prior to the war in Ukraine, SDC has had longstanding governance engagements in the country, working on decentralised, municipal governance with focus on digitalisation. Several staff pointed out that SDC’s engagement had strengthened the resilience of Ukrainian communities after the Russian invasion, particularly because of the focus on *digital* governance, that has been able to persist where physical infrastructure has been destroyed.

BOX 7.

Governance for resilience – a way to think about impact in fragile and complex contexts

The effectiveness and costs of delivering aid in fragile contexts has over the last few years been taken up increasingly by development actors. Amid recognition that state-building, democratisation, and other governance support has fallen short of expectations – e.g., in Afghanistan, South Sudan and Mali (as discussed in Box 10) – donors question the value of such engagement. On the other hand, the world’s poorest are increasingly concentrated in fragile and conflict affected contexts – in fact, in 2022, close to three quarters of people living in extreme poverty worldwide were in fragile contexts⁴³. The cost of delivering aid in these contexts, must therefore be weighed against the price of inaction.

Experience shows that it is unrealistic to expect to ‘fix a failed state’, and to bring about democracy in such extremely fragile and complex contexts. But as Frances Brown of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, states in her 2022 working paper, *Governance for Resilience*, reframing the intention of governance interventions in fragile contexts to focus on resilience sets the bar at a more attainable level:

- *“First, it offers a more specific strategic objective than conversations around “state fragility” Writ Large, which have often been too broad to generate concrete policy responses.*
- *Second, recent, failed international state building projects have underscored that state fragility is not to be “fixed”—instead, it is to be managed and mitigated. The emphasis on resilience thus marks a helpful shift away from maximalist policy framing and toward a more attainable one where attention to the links between governance efforts and strengthening resilience may offer a more realistic ambition-level.”⁴⁴*

⁴² MacClinchy, W. and R. Scott. (2016). *Overview: Violence, Fragility, and Finance*. In *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence*. OECD Publishing: Paris, 2016. p. 22.

⁴³ OECD. (2022). *States of Fragility 2022*. OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/c7fedf5e-en>.

⁴⁴ Brown, F. (2022). *Governance for Resilience: How Can States Prepare for the Next Crisis?* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC. p. 2. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brown_Governance_for_Resilience_final.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 9. Draw on political economy analysis (PEA) and consider how to address *both* the *formal* (i.e., rules laws and regulations) and *informal* institutions (i.e., norms, understanding and patterns of interaction between citizens and authorities) to have a sustainable impact.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
Medium (1-3 year)	SCOs

Recommendation 10. Communicate clearly about the trade-offs that may be associated with trying to achieve impact on governance in complex contexts. Rethink impact in challenging contexts, in keeping with the people-centred approach and governance principles, by focusing on strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions to withstand external pressures or shocks.

Priority:	Responsible Entity:
High (1 year)	SDC Senior Leadership, PGE, and SCOs

9. Sustainability

The final chapter pertains to the sustainability of SDC's governance programmes. The Evaluation assesses the extent to which governance interventions have secured ownership by partner governments, and the degree to which such results persist, both in stable and in challenging or deteriorating contexts.

KEY TAKE AWAYS:

- The Evaluation sees mixed results in terms of the sustainability of SDC's results. There is stronger ownership and thus greater potential for sustainable changes at the local level than at national level.
- SDC has achieved potentially sustainable results in deteriorating environments when it has found entry points and reform champions that are less affected by political and/or economic turbulence.
- On the other hand, many changes are contingent upon individual leadership, and thereby vulnerable because they have not taken root at institutional and systemic levels.
- Global democratic backslide, and non-democratic 'spoilers', challenges the sustainability of programmes.
- Sustained impact is contingent upon political will to make national level budget and resources available. There is a high degree of donor dependence across the governance portfolio, making changes somewhat donor driven, unless ownership is carefully fostered, and changes institutionalised.
- Conflict and insecurity undermine sustainability of democratic institutions.

In several cases, the long-term sustainability of SDC's results is doubtful, because they rely on consistent individual commitment over time. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, while there has been a high degree of success in strengthening municipalities' transparency, accountability and oversight, SCO and partners are aware that the results are highly dependent on individual leadership. Consequently, results are vulnerable to reversals in the event of personnel changing (e.g., a change of Mayor). This illustrates that change must be anchored at a systemic or institutional level, rather than at the individual level, to be truly sustainable.

In other cases, the sustainability of results is jeopardised because of their dependency on the economic trajectory of the country in question. This is to some degree the case in most development cooperation contexts, where financial sustainability is difficult to achieve. In Laos, for example, where there is a high reliance on external funding due to a government budget deficit, financial sustainability is a central issue for development cooperation, including in the governance sector. Given the economic downturn the country has faced due to COVID-19 and the challenges in revenue collection, the likelihood of the government having the fiscal space to provide discretionary grants for service delivery infrastructure to local government is low. As such, the sustainability of some of the instruments developed by SDC under the Governance for Inclusive Development Programme (GIDP) is unlikely without external funding. On the other hand, in Laos, non-democratic players also compete for influence over the country's development (e.g., China); thus, having a sustainable impact requires persistent engagement and dialogue from Switzerland and others.

Changes that rest on the continued provision of donor-funded, performance-based rewards are also less likely to be sustained beyond the lifespan of SDC programming.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, SDC has created a highly replicable and effective model for measuring and improving municipal governance. However, while participation is currently incentivised through donor-funded grants, it remains to be seen how much independent appetite there is for replication. On the other hand, high performance in the project has supported municipalities in leveraging external funding from outside sources, and these examples may continue to serve as a 'carrot'.

Finally, results are less likely to be sustained in rapidly deteriorating contexts if the geographic space for programming is under threat. In highly insecure and deteriorating environments like Burkina Faso, relying on pockets of territorial security may be the only option for SDC, but this obviously renders the sustainability of SDC's results vulnerable when those spaces are shrinking.

Naturally, there are better prospects for sustainability when SDC supports reforms that have strong central government ownership; when stakeholders are self-motivated for a reform agenda or practices that have been introduced; or when SDC has anchored its governance work in platforms or actors that are less affected by political and economic turbulence. Strong central government ownership is the exception rather than the norm in the case sample; Rwanda and Mongolia are in many ways the outliers, where SDC was able to design institutional interventions in response to entry points that were explicitly sanctioned by the government. Such ownership may allow for the scale-up and replication of governance reforms introduced by SDC, such as a new and freer media policy and scorecards for services; nevertheless, this cannot be verified at this point.

On balance, the Evaluation sees stronger ownership and thus greater potential for sustainable changes at the local level. Results at this level have momentum, when they have made tangible differences to people's lives and generated stronger cohesion between local authorities and constituents. As a result, citizens and local authorities are self-motivated to sustain and build on the progress to date.

SDC has achieved potentially sustainable results in deteriorating environments when it has found entry points and reform champions that are less affected by political and/or economic turbulence, at the national level or below. In Lebanon, for example, SDC supported the local planning department in the town of Tripoli, and although the municipal government virtually ceased to function, the knowledge has been maintained because the project targeted local civil servants, rather than politicians. In Kyrgyzstan, SDC has supported horizontal platforms that bring local-level actors together, such as the Union of LSGs (ULSG is a collective, voluntary organisation representing the interests of LSGs nationwide), and platforms for inter-municipal cooperation on service areas. These fora help sustain governance reforms by amplifying the power and collective bargaining position of LSGs in a national context that is trending towards greater centralisation of power. ULSG also provides a forum for sharing lessons from SDC's projects to new municipalities, thus generating replication and scale-up.

In spite of all intentions and comprehensive efforts in the Bekaa Water Establishment in Lebanon, the deterioration of the context and the crisis and collapse of state functions, has eventually resulted in a situation, where it has become difficult to maintain a perspective on institutional sustainability. Although some activities with a development perspective continue, the main option currently is essentially emergency support to a disintegrated institution. Nonetheless, SDC's ability to program in 12-year cycles is an important asset for TWP in contexts where sustainability is questionable in the short to medium term, because it allows for a longer-term view on governance reform and institution building.

BOX 12.

Planning for sustainability

Sustainability has been set as a strategic priority in the phasing out of the Mongolia programme. SDC has at this level had a proactive approach to sustainability issues. While planning to maximize sustainability of the results, there are also considerable risks of the “planned” sustainability being jeopardized by external factors. Such general risks were highlighted in an evaluation of the Governance and Decentralisation Programme in Mongolia and included:

- Setbacks because government staff who rotate into core positions would not be trained leading to new **capacity gaps**.
- **Legal change was likely not to be completed** within the timeframe of the project.
- **Timeframes of governance projects are too short** for fiscal decentralization to increase its performance, become institutionalized and gain buy-in.
- **Government budget constraints**.
- Impediments rooted in **political culture** are strong, such as corruption and temptation of tempering with processes. Political culture evolves slowly and incrementally; thus, good governance reform would always come against contextual obstacles. ⁴⁵

⁴⁵ INNOVABRIDGE Foundation. (2022). *Final Evaluation of the Governance and Decentralisation Programme (GDP) in Mongolia*.

Annex 1: Bibliography

- Andrews, M. et al. (2017) *Looking like a state: The seduction of isomorphic mimicry. Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action*. Oxford Academic: 2017. Online edition: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198747482.003.0003>.
- Brown, F. (2022). *Governance for Resilience: How Can States Prepare for the Next Crisis?* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Brown_Governance_for_Resilience_final.pdf
- Cheeseman, N., and M. Desrosiers. (2023). *How (not) to engage with authoritarian states*. Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited (WFD). <https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/how-not-engage-authoritarian-states>
- Cornell, A. (2021). *Mapping of democratization support*. Sida Evaluation 2021:05. p. 38 -39.
- E.T. Jackson and Associates (2015). *Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Governance Programming and Mainstreaming*; Evaluation and Corporate Controlling Division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Bern, 2015.
- FDFA. (2017). *Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017-2020*.
- FDFA. (2020). *Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24*. <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/publikationen.html/content/publikationen/en/deza/diverse-publikationen/broschuere-iza-2021-24>
- Hernandez, K. and Roberts, T. (2022) *Mapping of SDC's Projects in Digitalisation and Governance*, Bern: SDC Governance Network.
- Independent Evaluation Group. (2008). *Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1990-2007*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/6543> License: [CC BY 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).
- MacClinchy, W. and R. Scott. (2016). *Overview: Violence, Fragility, and Finance*. In *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence*. OECD Publishing: Paris, 2016.
- Matasick, C., C. Alfonsi and A. Bellantoni (2020), *Governance responses to disinformation: How open government principles can inform policy options*, OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 39, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d6237c85-en>.
- OECD. (2022). *States of Fragility 2022*. OECD Publishing, Paris <https://doi.org/10.1787/c7fedf5e-en>.
- OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation. (2019). *Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria*.
- PEMconsult. (2022). *Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in National Policy Dialogue 2013-2020*. Evaluation and Corporate Controlling Division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Bern, 2022.
- SDC. (2015). *Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Strategy for SDC's Work in Fragile and Conflict Contexts*. https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/publikationen/Diverses/peacebuilding-statebuilding-strategy-sdc_EN.pdf
- SDC. (2016). *SDC Culture and Development Policy*.
- SDC. (2017). *Governance as a transversal theme. A practical guide to integrating governance in SDC sectors and priority themes*. https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/anwaltschaft-regierungsfuehrung/156840-governance-transversal-theme_EN.pdf
- SDC. (2017). *SDC's Policy on Decentralisation, Democratisation and Local Governance*. <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Policy%20Paper%20DDLGN%20en%20ligne.pdf>
- SDC. (2018). *SDC Evaluation Policy*. https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/resultate-wirkung/20180906-evaluationspolitik-maerz-2018_EN.pdf
- SDC. (2019). *Policy Note: Governance in Authoritarian Contexts*. <https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Policy%20Note%20AuthoritarianRegimes%20EN.pdf>
- SDC. (2020). *Learning Journey on African Authoritarian Regimes – Synthesis Report*.

- SDC. (2020). *Responding to the Contested Space for Civil Society: Paper based on a Learning Journey in 2018-19.*
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/SDC%20Guidance%20sheet%20Civil%20Society%20Space.pdf>
- SDC. (2020). *SDC's Governance Support in Fragile, Conflict and Violence-Affected Settings.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/Governance%20in%20fragile%20contexts_SDC%20Working%20Paper.pdf
- SDC. (2020). *The SDC's Guidance on Governance.*
https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/die-deza/strategie/SDC-governance-guidance-web_EN.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Do Autocracy and Fragility Connect?*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/DoAutocracyandFragilityConnect_Short.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Examining Authoritarian Developmental States.*
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/SDC%20Examining%20Authoritarian%20Developmental%20States.pdf>
- SDC. (2021). *Policy Note: SDC's Political Economy Approach.*
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/SDC%20PEA%20FINAL%2002VI21.pdf>
- SDC. (2021). *The SDC Anti-corruption Guidance.*
https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/die-deza/strategie/SDC-governance-guidance-web_EN.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Topic Note: Adaptive Management.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/08_Adaptive_Management.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Topic Note: Governance Analysis.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/05_Governance_Analysis.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Topic Note: Monitoring and Reporting on Governance.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/09_Monitoring_Strategy_Country_Prg.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Topic Note: Policy Dialogue.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/07_Policy_Dialogue.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Topic Note: Political Economy Analysis.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/06_Political_Economy_Analysis.pdf
- SDC. (2021). *Topic Note: Thinking and Working Politically (TWP).*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/PGE/DocumentsGovernance/04_Thinking_and_Working_Politically.pdf
- SDC. (2022). *Gender and Rising Authoritarianism: SDC Synthesis Note.*
https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/SDC_GenderAuthoritarianism.pdf
- SDC. (2022). *Overview of the SDC's support to artistic and cultural expression in the South and the East in 2022.*
- SDC. (2023). *Staying Engaged in Authoritarian Contexts. Learnings from SDC Experiences*
- Wike, R. and J. Fetterolf. (2021). *Global Public Opinion in an Era of Democratic Anxiety.* Pew Research Centre's Global Attitudes Project. Retrieved from:
<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/12/07/global-public-opinion-in-an-era-of-democratic-anxiety/> on Jan 11 2024.
- Zürcher, C., et al. (2022). *Impact of Aid in Highly Fragile States. A synthesis of three systematic reviews of aid to Afghanistan, Mali, and South Sudan, 2008 - 2021.* Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. November 2022.

Case Study Documents

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Bischoff, A., et al. (2022). *External Review – Project: Strengthening Nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – Phase 2*.
- DRC. (2020). *Semi-annual Report: “BiH Response to humanitarian and health needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees”*.
- DRC. (2021). *Final Report: Response to humanitarian and health needs of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in BiH, Phase 2*.
- Fami Foundation. (2022). *Phase 2 Final Report: Strengthening Nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina Project*.
- FCG. (2021). *Evaluation of the Project “Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*
- High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2022). *Annual Report: Support to Judiciary in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Strengthening Prosecutors in the Criminal System. 1 January – 31 December 2022*.
- Horn, S., and A. Sarajlic. (2022). *Project Evaluation: Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Phase II – on behalf of GIZ and SDC*. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH :Bonn.
- Jackson, E., and H. Mesinovic. (2015). *Evaluation of SDC’s Performance in Governance Programming and Mainstreaming: Annex D: Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Ottawa, September 2014.
- Meier, B.S.S., and D. Radončić. (2019). *External evaluation of the Support to Judiciary project, Phase 2*.
- SDC. (2016). *Swiss Cooperation Programme – Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017-2020*.
- SDC. (2017). *Bosnia and Herzegovina Annual Report 2017*.
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal - 7F-08142.02. Strengthening Nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Phase II*.
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal - 7F-08907.01: Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in BiH.Phase 1*.
- SDC. (2018). *Bosnia and Herzegovina Annual Report 2018*.
- SDC. (2019). *Bosnia and Herzegovina Annual Report 2019*.
- SDC. (2019). *Credit Proposal - 7F-06866.03. Support to the Judiciary in BiH – Strengthening the Prosecutorial System*.
- SDC. (2019). *Credit Proposal – 7F-10223.01: BiH: Response to humanitarian and health needs of migrants and asylum seekers*.
- SDC. (2020). *Bosnia and Herzegovina Annual Report 2020*.
- SDC. (2020). *Credit Proposal – 7F-10165.01: Strengthening Vocational Education and Training (SVET) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)*
- SDC. (2021). *Bosnia and Herzegovina Annual Report 2021*.
- SDC. (2021). *Credit Proposal: 7F-08325.02: Municipal Environmental Governance (MEG) Phase 2*.
- SDC. (2021). *Swiss Cooperation Programme – Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021-24*.
- SDC. (2022). *Credit Proposal - 7F-08142.03. Strengthening Nursing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Phase III*.
- SDC. (2022). *Credit Proposal - 7F-08907.02: Strengthening Associations of Municipalities and Cities in BiH.Phase 2*.
- SDC. (2023). *Credit Proposal – 7F-10165.02: Strengthening Vocational Education and Training (SVET) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Phase 2*.
- USAID. (2020). *Monitoring and Evaluation Support Activity II: Judicial Effectiveness Index of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 2020 Report*. <https://measurebih.com/uimages/JEI-BiH-2020-Report-Final-508.pdf>

- WINS Global Consult. (2019). *Review Report. Municipal Environmental Governance (MEG) Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

Burkina Faso

- CGD. (2019). <<L'Afrique n'a pas besoin d'hommes forts mais des institutions fortes>>.
- CGD. (2021). <<Consolidation des Institutions Republicaine pour Conjurer l'Insabillite Politique Prejudiciable au Developpement du Burkina Faso.
- CODEL. (2021). *Rapport Synthetique des Activites du Projet <<Dialogue Social et Education Electorale Pour des Elections Municipales Pacifiques et Inclusives>>.*
- CODEL. (2021). *Soumission de proposition de projet au Bureau de la Cooperation Suisse au Burkina Faso.*
- Consortium GAC GEDES-ACADE-CAGECT. (2015). *Programme d'Appui a la Decentralisation et a la Participation Citoyenne, Phase 1.*
- Consortium GAC GEDES-ACADE-CAGECT. (2017). *Programme d'Appui a la Decentralisation et a la Participation Citoyenne (DEPAC), Phase 2.*
- Consortium Helvetas Swiss Intercoopération – GAC (GEDES-ACADE-CAGECT). (2022). *Programme d'Appui a la Decentralisation et a la Participation Citoyenne (DEPAC), Phase 3.*
- Diakonia. (2019). *Programme Proposal – Programme d'Appui au Processus Electoral, Phase II.*
- Diakonia. (2019). *Programme Proposal – Programme de Renforcement de la Redevabilite Politique et Economique: Monitoring Citoyen des Politique Publiques et Tic Dénommé le Présimètre.*
- ETA Burkinabe, Banque Mondiale & Cooperation Suisse Burkina. (2016). *Projet de Developpement des Transports et des Infrastructures Urbaines (PTDIU).*
- Fondation Hirondelle. (2018). *L'Information et le Dialogue pour Renforcer la Cohésion Sociale et la Participation Inclusive et Pacifique au Burkina Faso.*
- Groupe de Travail Gouvernance – SAO. (2023). *Rôle des médias & reseaux sociaux dans les sociétés ouest-africaines: Repérer les mécanismes indispensables à un Meilleur positionnement des medias face aux enjeux de gouvernance dans le contexte de fragilités politiques, institutionnelles et sécuritaires de la region.*
- Interpeace & Fondation Hirondelle. (2019). *Bibiss Laafi Batû: Dialogue et débats entre jeunes au Burkina Faso.*
- Le Centre parlementaire. (2018). *Stratégie de Mise en œuvre – Programme commun d'appui à l'Assemblée nationale du Burkina Faso (PROCAB).*
- Ministère des Infrastructures et du Desenclavement. (2022). *Rapport d'Analyse Final – Elaboration d'une Enquete de Satisfactions des Beneficiaries des Activites Financees par la Cooperation Suisse dans le Cadre du Projet de Transports et de Developpement des Infrastructures Urbaines (PTDIU).*
- REN-LAC. (2021). *Document de plan d'actions 2021.*
- REN-LAC. (2021). *Rapport d' Activites et Financier – Programme: Appui pour l'exécution des activités du REN-LAC dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre du PS2021-2025.*
- SDC & EU. (2022). *Faciliter la redevabilité et la VEILLE citoyenne avec la Société civile (FASOVEIL).*
- SDC & Ministère des Infrastructures et du Desenclavement. (2022). *Rapport d'Achievement des Activites Financees par la Cooperation Suisse – Projet de Transport et de Developpement des Infrastructures Urbaines (PTDIU).*
- SDC, PCTL & UEMOA. (2019). *Evaluation de la Phase 1 du Programme de Cooperation Transfrontaliere Locale (PCTL).*
- SDC, PCTL & UEMOA. (2022). *Rapport annuel d'activités – Programme de Cooperation Transfrontaliere Locale (PCTL2).*
- SDC. (2018). *Burkina Faso Rapport annuel 2017.*
- SDC. (2018). *Programme d'Appui a la Citoyennete et a la Culture Democratique, Phase 1.*
- SDC. (2018). *Programme d'appui à la décentralisation et à la participation citoyenne, phase 1 – Rapport de fin de phase opérationnel (RFO).*
- SDC. (2019). *Burkina Faso Rapport annuel 2018.*

- SDC. (2020). *Burkina Faso Rapport annuel 2019*.
- SDC. (2020). *Programme <<Appui à la Décentralisation et à la Participation Citoyenne (DEPAC) Phase 2>> Rapport de la revue à mi-parcours*.
- SDC. (2020). *Programme de Coopération suisse au Burkina Faso 2021-2025*.
- SDC. (2021). *Burkina Faso Rapport annuel 2020*.
- SDC. (2021). *Remerciements à l'ensemble des participant-e-s, particulièrement aux collègues du Bureau de la Coopération suisse au Niger*.
- SDC. (2021). *Revue bilan du programme de renforcement de la citoyenneté et de la culture démocratique, Phase 1 (CIDEM)*.
- SDC. (2022). *Burkina Faso Rapport annuel 2021*.
- SDC. (2022). *Programme d'appui à la décentralisation et à la participation citoyenne, phase 2 – Rapport de fin de phase opérationnel (RFO)*.
- SDC. (2023). *Burkina Faso Rapport annuel 2022*.
- Serec & SDC. (2022). *Backstopping de la phase 1 du <<Programme Régional d'Appui à la Décentralisation Financière en Afrique de l'Ouest (PRADeF – Phase 1, 7F-09504.01.65*.
- Sida, SDC UNICEF, UNFPA & Danida. (2018). *Plan Stratégique 2019-2023 – Fonds Commun Genre*.
- UNDP. (2019). *Projet d'Appui aux Processus Électoraux du Burkina Faso (2019-2021)*.

Kyrgyzstan

- DPI. (2021). *Mid-term Review Public Service Improvement Project (PSI) Phase 2, 2019-2023*
- DPI. (2022). *Public Service Improvement Project - II Phase Annual Report, 2022 (January 1 – December 31)*
- DPI. (2022). *Strengthening Voice and Accountability - Final Report Exit Phase September 15, 2020 – June 15, 2022*.
- DPI/Helvetas (2018). *Case study: Socially inclusive and gender responsive budgeting in Kyrgyzstan*.
- GFA consulting group (2022). *Effective management and prevention of non-communicable diseases in Kyrgyzstan MAIN PHASE 2 (2022 – 2026). Project document*.
- NCD. (2022). *Effective management and prevention of non-communicable diseases in Kyrgyzstan, Phase II Annual Report 01 July – 31 December 2022*
- Salmorbekova, Z. (2021). *External end of phase evaluation: Voice and Accountability project and Public Service Improvement project*.
- SDC. (2017). *Swiss Cooperation Strategy Central Asia 2017 – 2021*
- SDC. (2017). *The Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, 2017*
- SDC. (2018). *The Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, 2018*
- SDC. (2019). *Public Service Improvement in Kyrgyzstan. Project Document, Phase II, 2019 – 2023*
- SDC. (2019). *The Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, 2019*
- SDC. (2020). *The Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, 2020*
- SDC. (2021). *The Kyrgyz Republic Annual Report, 2021*
- UNDP. (2021). *Strong and inclusive parliamentary democracy (SIPD). Final Evaluation Report*

Laos

- DeFaria, C., and T. Nanthanavone. (2021). *Final Evaluation of the Governance and Public Administration Reform (GPAP) – Governance for Inclusive Development Programme (GIDP)*. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/19678>
- Engelsman, G. et al. (2021). *Independent Evaluation of the Mekong Region Cooperation Strategy 2018-2021*.
- Helvetas. (2022). *End of Phase II Report: Lao Upland Rural Advisory Service (LURAS)*.

- Janne, S., and K. Keoka. (2020). *Final External Evaluation and Capitalisation of Experiences of the Lao Decide-Info Project*.
<https://www.aramis.admin.ch/Default?DocumentID=68285&Load=true>
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal: 7F-03181.04. National Governance and Public Administration Reform (NGPAR): Governance for Inclusive Development Project (GIDP)*.
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal: 7F-05450.04: The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI)*.
- SDC. (2018). *Mekong Region Annual Report 2018 (With Planning 2019)*.
- SDC. (2018). *Credit Proposal: 7F01297.04: Lao DECIDE Info (Knowledge for Development – K4D)*.
- SDC. (2018). *End of Phase Report: Vocational Education and Training Laos (VELA)*
- SDC. (2019). *Mekong Region Annual Report 2019 (With Planning 2020)*.
- SDC. (2019). *Credit Proposal: 7F-08592.02: Vocational Training and Employment Support Services (VTESS)*.
- SDC. (2020). *Mekong Region Annual Report 2020 (With Planning 2021)*.
- SDC. (2020). *Credit Proposal: 7F-09364.02: Enhancing Nutrition of Upland Farming Families (ENUFF)*.
- SDC. (2020). *End of Phase Report: Enhancing Nutrition of Upland Farming Families (ENUFF)*.
- SDC. (2021). *Mekong Region Annual Report 2021 (With Planning 2022)*.
- SDC. (2021). *Additional Credit: 7F-10705.01.04. Enhancing Systematic Land Registration (ESLR), Component 4 on “Public Information and Awareness Services for Vulnerable Communities (PIASVC)*.
- SDC. (2021). *Credit Proposal: 7F-08846.03: Lao Upland Advisory Service (LURAS)*.
- SDC. (2021). *Credit Proposal: 7F-10705.01. Enhancing Systematic Land Registration (ESLR)*.
- SDC. (2021). *End of Phase Report: The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) Project Phase IV*.
- SDC. (2022). *Mekong Region Annual Report 2022 (With Planning 2023)*.
- SDC. (2022). *Credit Proposal: 7F-07082.03: Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability, and the Rule of Law (CEGGA)*
- SDC. (2022). *End of Phase Report: Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law (CEGGA)*.
- SDC. (2022). *End of Project Report: National Governance and Public Administration Reform (NGPAR): Governance for Inclusive Development Programme (GIDP)*.
- SDC. (2023). *End of Phase Report: 7F01297.04: Lao DECIDE Info (Knowledge for Development – K4D)*.

Lebanon

- Danida. (2018). *Regional Development and Protection Programme in the Middle East (RDPP II) – Programme Document*.
- Hamdan, Dr. Fadi H. (2015). *Evaluation of Projects Funded by SDC on Disaster Risk Reduction in Lebanon*.
- Kilchenmann, Patrick & Hala Moughanie. (2021). *External Project Review Phase II of the Bekaa Water Management Project BWMP, Lebanon – Final Report*.
- Norwegian Refugee Council. (2020). *Project Proposal – Ensuring Sustainable Legal Protection for Refugees from Syrian in Lebanon through Local Partnerships & Advocacy*.
- Norwegian Refugee Council. (2021). *Ensuring Sustainable Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon through Local Partnerships & Advocacy – First Operational Report*.
- Norwegian Refugee Council. (2022). *Ensuring Sustainable Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon through Local Partnerships & Advocacy – Second Operational Report*.
- Norwegian Refugee Council. (2022). *Ensuring Sustainable Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon through Local Partnerships & Advocacy – Third Operational Report*.
- RDPP & Altai Consulting. (2022). *RDPP Livelihood Learning Study Lebanon, Jordan & Iraq*.
- RDPP. (2020). *Annual Report Year 1, October 2018 till September 2019*.

- RDPP. (2023). *RDPP II Final Report*.
- SDC & Norwegian Refugee Council. (2017). *Project Proposal – Ensuring Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon*.
- SDC & Norwegian Refugee Council. (2018). *Ensuring Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon – First Operational Report*.
- SDC & Norwegian Refugee Council. (2019). *Ensuring Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon – Second Operational Report*.
- SDC & Norwegian Refugee Council. (2019). *Ensuring Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria in Lebanon – Final Operational Report*.
- SDC. (2014). *Credit Proposal No. 7F-08708.01, Union of Tyre Municipalities – Emergency Responsiveness Initiative [DRR]*.
- SDC. (2015). *Entry Proposal No. 7F-09459, LEB Direct Action – Contribution to Improved Access to Water and Sanitation Services in Bekaa Valley – Water*.
- SDC. (2016). *Additional Credit Nr. 7F-09459.01.01, LEB Direct Action – Contribution to Improved Access to Water and Sanitation Services in Bekaa Valley – Water*.
- SDC. (2016). *Union of Tyre Region Municipalities Emergency Responsiveness Initiative in Tyre Caza – Final Report Phase 2*.
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal Nr. 7F-08708.02, LEB – Union of Tyre Municipalities – Emergency Responsiveness Initiative [BNS]*.
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal Nr. 7F-09927.01, LEB – UNICEF – Breaking Barriers to Child Development: Enhancing child protection and Resilience of Syrian Refugee Families [PRO]*.
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Proposal with Third-Party Funds Nr. 7F-09946.01, LEB – NRC - Ensuring Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria [PRO]*.
- SDC. (2018). *Credit Proposal Nr. 7F-10154.01, Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP)*.
- SDC. (2019). *Credit Proposal cum PIU Global Budget planning** 7F-09459.02, LEB Direct Action – Bekaa Water Management Project (BWMP) [Water]*.
- SDC. (2019). *Credit Proposal Nr. 7F-09927.02, LEB – UNICEF Bringing Aid Closer to Children at Risk of Child Labour and Child Marriage in the Most Marginalized Areas of Lebanon [PRO]*.
- SDC. (2019). *End of Phase Report Bekaa Water Project, Phase 1*.
- SDC. (2019). *SDC Guidance for Project/Programme Documentation (ProDoc) – UNICEF Lebanon Bringing Aid closer to the most vulnerable children in Lebanon*.
- SDC. (2020). *Bekaa Water management Project, Progress Report 1 January – 31 March 2019*.
- SDC. (2020). *Change of Credit Duration No. 7F08708.02, LEB – Union of Tyre Municipalities – Emergency Responsiveness Initiative [BSN]*.
- SDC. (2020). *Credit Proposal Nr. 7F-09946.02, LEB – NRC – Ensuring Sustainable Legal Protection for Refugees in Lebanon through Local Partnerships and Advocacy [PRO&MIG]*.
- SDC. (2020). *End of Phase Report, LEB – NRC – Ensuring Legal Protection for Refugees from Syria [PRO]*.
- SDC. (2021). *Additional Credit with Prolongation of Duration Nr. 7F-08708.02, LEB – Union of Tyre Municipalities – Emergency Responsiveness Initiative*.
- SDC. (2021). *Bekaa Water management Project, Annual Report 1 January – 31 December 2020*.
- SDC. (2021). *Management Response to the Bekaa Water Management Project (BWMP) Mid-Term Review*.
- SDC. (2021). *Project Final Narrative Report – Union of Tyre Municipalities Emergency Responsive Initiative*.
- SDC. (2022). *Additional Credit with Prolongation of Duration Nr. 7F-09946.02, LEB – NRC – Ensuring Sustainable Legal Protection for Refugees in Lebanon through Local Partnerships and Advocacy [PRO&MIG]*.
- SDC. (2022). *Stakeholders Mapping and Analysis Study for Water Sector in Lebanon*.
- SDC. (2023). *Additional Credit with Prolongation of Duration Nr. 7F-09927.02, LEB – UNICEF Bringing Aid Closer to Children at Risk of Child Labour and Child Marriage in the Most Marginalized Areas of Lebanon [PRO]*.

- UNICEF Lebanon. (2018). *Addressing Child Labour in Lebanon through a system-strengthening approach and No Lost Generation (NLG) / Min Ila Child-focused Humanitarian Cash Transfer – Progress Report.*
- UNICEF Lebanon. (2020). *Addressing Child Labour in Lebanon through a system-strengthening approach and No Lost Generation (NLG) / Min Ila Child-focused Humanitarian Cash Transfer – Final Report.*
- UNICEF. (2018). “Min Ila” Cash Transfer Programme for Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (UNICEF and WFP) – *Impact Evaluation Endline Report.*
- UNICEF. (2020). *Consolidated Emergency Report – “2-pager” Narrative Report for Non-thematic Contribution.*
- UNICEF. (2022). *Consolidated Emergency Report – 2-pager narrative report for non-thematic contribution.*
- VS3. (2022). *Conflict & Education Analysis in Lebanon – National Level Analysis.*

Mongolia

- Chaujar, P. (2018). *Midterm Review: Combatting Gender Based Violence in Mongolia: A joint project of the Government of Mongolia, United Nations Population Fund, and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.*
- Hernandez, K. and Roberts, T. (2022) *Mapping of SDC’s Projects in Digitalisation and Governance*, Bern: SDC Governance Network.
- Independent Research Institute of Mongolia. (2020). *Endline Study – Mainstreaming Social Accountability in Mongolia Project. Prepared for the World Bank.*
- Innovabridge. (2022). *Final Evaluation of the Governance and Decentralisation Programme (GDP) In Mongolia.*
- IOM. (2020). *Interim Report to Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia Project. (First Annual Report covering reporting period 1 September 2019 – 31 August 2020).*
- IOM. (2021). *Interim Report to Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia Project. (Second Annual Report covering reporting period 1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021).*
- IOM. (2022). *Interim Report to Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia Project. (Third Annual Report covering reporting period 1 September 2021 – 31 August 2022).*
- Mahy, P., and A. Tumurtogoo. (2021). *Mid-Term Review of the project Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia (UMIMM).*
- Pawlak, P. et al. (2023). *Evaluation Report of the Combating Gender-based Violence in Mongolia Project Phase 2 (2020-2023). UNFPA*
- SDC: *Mandate for the FINAL EVALUATION and PARTIAL CAPITALISATION of the programme 7F-09639.02 - Strengthening Representative Bodies in Mongolia (SRBM) TERMS OF REFERENCE*
- SDC. (2013). *Change of Credit Duration. 7F-08504.01: Third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3).*
- SDC. (2013). *Main Credit Proposal to Opening Credit: 7F-08504. Third Sustainable Livelihoods Project (SLP3).*
- SDC. (2015). *Change of Credit Duration. 7F-08504.01: Third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3).*
- SDC. (2016). *Credit Proposal: 7F-09457.01: Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia (GBV).*
- SDC. (2017). *Credit Annulation: 7F-08504.01: Third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3).*
- SDC. (2018). *Change of Credit Duration. 7F-08504.01: Third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3).*
- SDC. (2019). *Change of Credit Duration. 7F-08504.01: Third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3).*

- SDC. (2019). *Credit Proposal: 7F-10282.01: Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia*.
- SDC. (2020). *Credit Proposal: 7F-09457.02: Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia (GBV) – Phase II*.
- SDC. (2020). *End of Phase Report: Combating Gender Based Violence in Mongolia. (Phase I)*.
- SDC. (2020). *Mongolia Annual Report 2020*.
- SDC. (2021). *Change of Credit Duration. 7F-08504.01: Third Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP3)*.
- SDC. (2021). *Mongolia Annual Report 2021*.
- SDC. (2022). *End of Project Report (EPROR): The Third Sustainable Livelihoods Project (SLP3)*.
- SDC. (2022). *Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in National Policy Dialogue 2013-2020*. Evaluation and Corporate Controlling Division of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Bern, 2022.
- SDC. (2022). *Mongolia Annual Report 2022*.
- Smith, R., and N. Yansanjav. (2020). *MASAM Outcome Evaluation 2015-2019. An Evaluation of the Mainstream Social Accountability in Mongolia Project*.
- UNFPA. (2020). *Combating Gender-based Violence in Mongolia Project – Phase 1: Final Project Narrative Report (June 2016-July 2020)*.
- UNFPA. (2020). *Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia Project Phase 2: Annual Narrative Progress Report. Reporting Period: 1 August – 31 December 2020*.
- UNFPA. (2021). *Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia Project Phase 2: Annual Narrative Progress Report. Reporting Period: 1 January – 31 December 2021*.
- UNFPA. (2022). *Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia Project Phase 2: Annual Narrative Progress Report. Reporting Period: 1 January – 31 December 2022*.

Rwanda

- DFID. (2020). *Project Completion Review – Rwanda Multi Donor Civil Society Support Programme (Ikiraro Cy'Iterambere)*.
- ESPACE+. (2020). *Programme d'Appui Culture Grands Lacs, PAC GL – Proposition de projet PAC Rwanda*.
- Godignon, Julie & Hélène Monnerie Delmas. (2022). *Backstopping Programme d'appui aux medias Grands Lacs Phase 2 Rapport de Mission Terrain No. 1*.
- Katonte Development Perspectives. (2022). *Mid-Term Review of the Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) Phase IV*.
- Never Again Rwanda. (2021). *Civil Society and State Engagement on Public Policies for Socioeconomic Transformation – CSSPST; Project Proposal*.
- NORAD, SDC & Sida. (2023). *Annual Report for PPIMA IV January – December 2022*.
- Norwegian People's Aid. (2022). *Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) 2020-2024 – Programme Proposal*.
- OHCHR. (2022). *Contributing to strengthening the capacities of the National Commission for Human Rights and Civil Society Organizations in Rwanda*.
- Public Policy Information, Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) Rwanda. (2023). *Revised Results Framework*.
- RCN Justice & Démocratie & SDC. (2022). *Document technique – ADDENDUM AU DOCUMENT DE PROJET ITUZE IWACU*.
- RCN Justice & Démocratie. (2021). *Certificat d'enregistrement de Rwanda Governance Board (RGB)*.
- RCN Justice & Démocratie. (2023). *Ubutabera Bwegereye Umuturage – Ituze Iwacu Project Completion Report*.
- SDC & UNDP. (2023). *Project Proposal: Strengthening Media Development and professionalism in Rwanda*.

- SDC, UNDP & Republic of Rwanda. (2023). *Report on Deepening Democracy through Citizen participation and Accountable Governance (DDAG II) – Media development and Professionalism.*
- SDC. (2017). *Stratégie suisse de coopération pour la région des Grands Lacs 2017-2020.*
- SDC. (2018). *Grands Lacs Rapport annuel 2017.*
- SDC. (2018). *Proposition de Crédit No. 7F-09223.02 – Multi-Donor civil society support program in Rwanda.*
- SDC. (2019). *Grands Lacs Rapport annuel 2018.*
- SDC. (2020). *Crédit Principal Consécutif a un Crédit d'Ouverture No. 7F-08900.01.*
- SDC. (2020). *Grands Lacs Rapport annuel 2019.*
- SDC. (2021). *Grands Lacs Rapport annuel 2020.*
- SDC. (2022). *Crédit Principal Consécutif a un Crédit d'Ouverture No 7F-10250.01 - Consolidation de la paix, prévention des conflits et promotion des droits de l'homme.*
- SDC. (2022). *End of Phase Report – Multi-Donor civil society support programme in Rwanda MDCSSP.*
- SDC. (2022). *Mid-Term Review – Observations, results, and recommendations for Rwanda.*
- SDC. (2022). *Programme régional de Coopération suisse Grands Lacs 2022-2025.*
- SDC. (2022). *Programme régional Grands Lacs Rapport annuel 2021.*
- SDC. (2022). *Proposition de Crédit No. 7F-08819.03 – Programme d'appui au secteur des médias.*
- SDC. (2022). *Proposition de Crédit No. 7F-09223.03 – Civil Society and State Engagement on Public Policies for Socioeconomic Transformation CSSPST.*
- SDC. (2023). *Grands Lacs Rapport Annuel 2022.*
- Sida & SDC. (2022). *Rwanda Media Programme 2021-2026 – Updated application to SDC for funding for 2023-2025 – Capacity Building and Professionalisation of the Media.*
- Sida & SDC. (2023). *Annual Report 1 March – 31 December 2021 – Rwanda Media Programme 2021-2026 Capacity Building and Professionalisation of the Media.*

Tunisia

- SDC. (2017). *Annual Report Tunisia 2017 With Planning Part 2018*
- SDC. (2018). *TUNISIE Rapport annuel 2018 avec planification 2019*
- SDC. (2019). *Tunisie Rapport annuel 2019 avec planification 2020*
- SDC. (2020). *Tunisie Rapport annuel 2020 Avec planification 2021*
- SDC. (2021). *Tunisie Rapport annuel 2021 Avec planification 2022.*
- SDC. (2022). *Tunisie Rapport annuel 2022 Avec planification 2023.*
- SDC. (2017). *Stratégie de coopération suisse en Tunisie 2017–2020*
- SDC. (2021). *Programme de Coopération suisse en Tunisie 2021-2024*
- SDC. (2017). *MERV (Système de monitoring des changements influant sur le développement) [Octobre 2017]*
- SDC. (2018). *MERV (Système de monitoring des changements influant sur le développement) [Octobre 2018]*
- SDC. (2019). *MERV (Système de monitoring des changements influant sur le développement) [Octobre 2019]*
- SDC. (2021). *MERV Système de monitoring des changements influant sur le développement [Mai 2021]*
- SDC. (2021). *MERV Système de monitoring des changements influant sur le développement [Octobre 2021]*
- SDC. (2022). *MERV Système de monitoring des changements influant sur le développement [Mars 2022]*
- SDC. (2023). *MERV Système de monitoring des changements Influant sur le développement [Mars 2023]*
- SDC. (2023). *Projets domaine gouvernance – DDC Tunis*

- SDC. (2019). *Stratégie de la coopération suisse en Tunisie 2017-2020 Revue à mi-parcours Note de synthèse avril 2019*
- SDC. (2023). *Réflexions sur des adaptations du portefeuille de la Coopération suisse en lien avec le domaine de Gouvernance en Tunisie*
- SDC. (2023). *Réflexions sur des adaptations du portefeuille de la Coopération suisse en lien avec le thème de la décentralisation en Tunisie*
- SDC. (2022). *Évaluation externe du projet: « Participation Actives des citoyennes et citoyen(ne)s Tunisien(ne)s PACT» Phase 1: 2020-2023*
- SDC. (2023). *Projet "Initiative Pilote pour un Développement Local Intégré" (IPDLI)*
- SDC. (2018). *Supporting Democratic Gains in Tunisia Final Narrative Report 2016-2018*
- SDC. (2020). *Supporting Democratic Gains in Tunisia – Phase II Final Narrative Report 2018-2020*
- SDC. (2023). *Supporting Democratic Gains in Tunisia Phase III Operational Report 2020-2023*

Annex 2: Portfolio Analysis

The following Annex presents a portfolio analysis, undertaken in the inception phase of the Evaluation, covering SDC's global portfolio on good governance and rule of law between 2017 and 2022.

1. Introduction

The portfolio analysis takes as a point of departure in SDC's internal codification system (SAP) policy marker on good governance. The policy marker is a tool that is applied to monitor and track resources allocated for dedicated governance programmes (coded as 'principal' governance), and transversal governance (coded as 'significant' governance). The governance policy marker monitors commitments (i.e., planned spending) rather than disbursements (i.e., actual expenditure) down to the partial action level, meaning that within a specific project phase, sub-components of projects can be coded to have governance as either a 'principal' or 'significant' focus or objective. This allows for analysis on a relatively disaggregated level, but the analysis can only draw on planning figures (commitments), and not reflect actual spending (disbursements) on governance.

In order to mitigate this (potential) issue, SDC provided the Evaluation with an overview of actual spending broken down by the policy marker coding by year (2017 – 2022), as well as for different budget lines of SDC (see Figure 1 and 2 below).

Apart from the first two figures, which draw on actual spending, the remainder of the portfolio analysis draws on commitment level data, which allows for an analysis of SDC's planned funding toward specific thematic areas/domains, or types of partners. It should however be noted that dataset provided by SDC is guided by project/programme cycles or phases, rather than funding commitments by year, which means that some of the projects included in the analysis started within the evaluation period (2017-2022) but continue beyond the period (to 2028/2029).

The analysis shows that SDC's portfolio on good governance has increased considerably over the last decade. At the same time, SDC has committed to raise its focus on governance in the current *IC Strategy (2021-2024)*, SDC has reinforced its focus and commitment on good governance, setting an internal target for the proportion of development cooperation and humanitarian aid that should contribute to, or focus on governance (see Box 1 below).

BOX 8.

SDC's targets to engage more on good governance under the current IC Strategy 2021-2024

Overall SDC aims for **75 percent of commitments in bilateral cooperation and humanitarian assistance to be governance related** – i.e. to be coded with the policy marker governance- "principal" (core objective) or "significant" (important component) – with a minimum of **20 percent of commitments should represent "principal" governance engagements.**

- Considering only bilateral **development** cooperation (without humanitarian aid), the target is 85% combined and 25% "principal".
- For interventions under **Humanitarian Aid**, the targets are 45% and 5%, respectively.

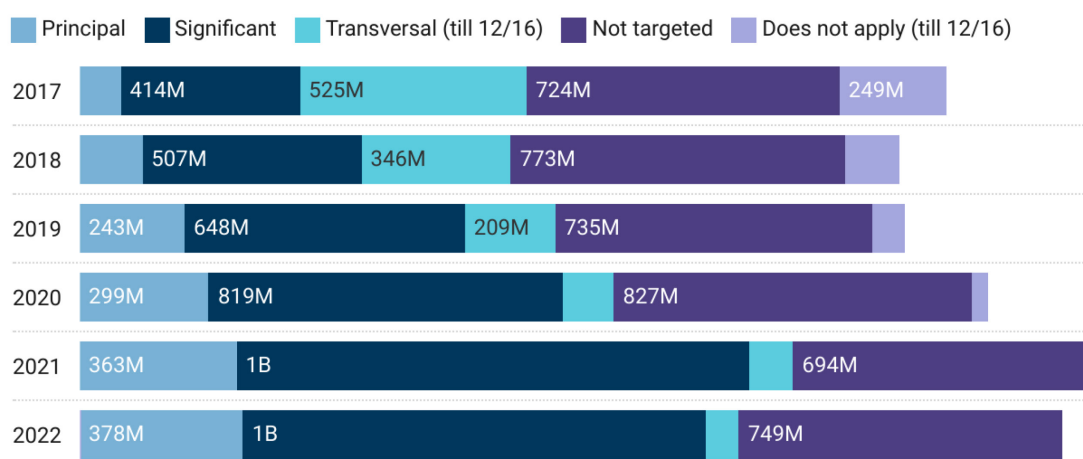
Against this backdrop, the Evaluation's portfolio analysis takes stock of the extent to which SDC has lived up to this commitment; and also gives an overview of which core governance sectors/areas SDC prioritises, as well as whether other sectoral engagements include transversal governance, and the types of actors that SDC partners with across the governance portfolio.

2. Analysis of global portfolio-level data

Overall, the portfolio analysis indicates that SDC's commitment to governance is reflected budget-wise. While the 2015 *Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Governance Programming and Mainstreaming* noted that around a third of SDC's portfolio was governance related (30 percent and 39 percent in 2012 and 2013 respectively), the current evaluation notes that actual spending on governance in recent years (2017-2022) is significantly higher (see Figure 1 below).

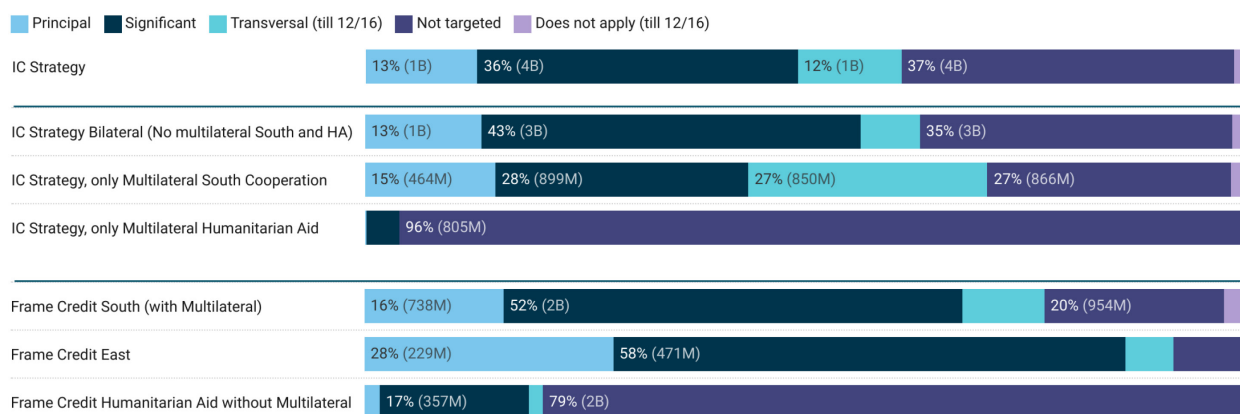
Approximately half of SDC's spending in 2017 (52 percent) was marked as governance related, either principal, significant/transversal (the code 'transversal' was used prior to introducing 'significant' at the end of 2016). In 2021, spending on governance-related engagements peaked, amounting to 70 percent of SDC's spending; however, as seen in Figure 1, 2022 witnessed a decrease of 3 percent, i.e., 67 percent of SDC's total budget marked as either principal, significant or transversal governance.

FIGURE 3. Actual governance spending by year (from 2017 to 2022), across all of SDC, based on policy marker on governance.



It is worth noting that the increase in actual spending on governance is seen across both transversal governance ('significant') and core governance ('principal') programming. However, while core governance programming has grown nearly fourfold from CHF 94.8 million in 2017 to CHF 378 million in 2022, transversal/significant governance has increased relatively little (18 percent) in the same period. The increase in funding to transversal/significant governance is more or less parallel to the overall growth of the portfolio, which has seen a 12 percent increase in spending from 2017 to 2022. While this, on the one hand, signals an increasing focus on governance, and particularly core governance programming, another causal factor that may have contributed is a more widespread awareness and usage of the policy marker across SDC (i.e., leading to more interventions being coded as 'principal' or 'significant' governance).

FIGURE 4. Proportion of governance-related funding under the IC Dispatch/Strategy (broken down by different budget lines and Framework Credits) for the period 2017-2022.



The IC Dispatch is the overall strategic framework guiding SDC's international development cooperation, hereunder governance support. As illustrated below in Figure 2, around 60 percent of the IC Strategy budget is governance-related, which particularly reflects a proportion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation funding coded as 'principal' or 'significant/transversal' (63 and 70 percent respectively). SDC's humanitarian aid fares less well, with only 4 percent of the humanitarian budget marked as governance-related, with virtually no funding marked as 'principal' governance.

While Figure 2 covers the entire evaluation period, the yearly breakdown indicates that some progress has been made on including transversal governance (or coding it with the GG Policy Marker) in humanitarian interventions during the evaluation period. More specifically, while only 1 percent of the humanitarian budget was governance-related in 2017, 10 percent was coded as 'significant' governance in 2022.

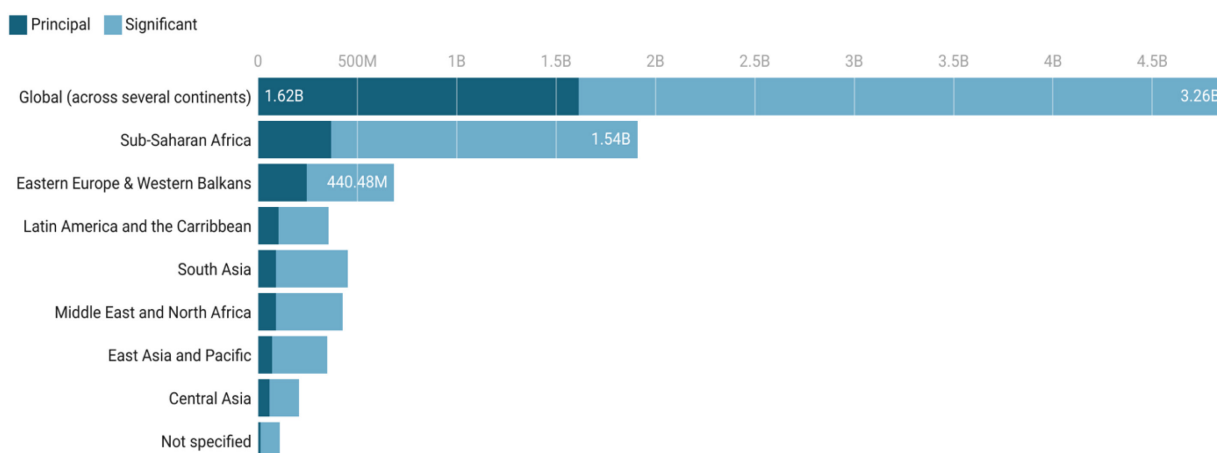
For this reason, governance as a core or transversal theme in SDC's humanitarian aid has both been raised as a central question and issue for the Evaluation to take up. In this vein, the Evaluation explores why there appears to be limited progress on integrating governance aspects into humanitarian aid across SDC, or alternatively, whether there are varying interpretations of how and when to apply the policy marker which account for underreporting on the area.

As illustrated in Figure 3 (on the following page), core governance programmes are present across all the regions⁴⁶ where Switzerland is engaged, in addition to a significant global

⁴⁶ **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Great Lakes, HoA, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, South African Dev. Comm (SADC), Sudan, Tanzania, West Africa Regional, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. **Eastern Europe & Western Balkans:** Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, South Caucasus, Ukraine, and Western Balkans. **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Andean Region, Bolivia, Central America, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Latin America Regional, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela. **South Asia:** Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, South Asia Regional, and Sri Lanka. **Middle East and North Africa:** Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Maghreb, Mashreq, MENA regional, Morocco, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Yemen. **East Asia and Pacific:** Cambodia, China, East Asia Regional, Indonesia, North Korea, Laos, Mekong, Myanmar, Philippines, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. **Central Asia:** Afghanistan, Central Asia Regional, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

portfolio on governance, amounting to CHF 4.8 billion during the evaluation period, of which CHF 1.62 billion is considered core/'principal' governance.

FIGURE 5. *Funding committed to governance (based on policy marker) by region, 2017 – present.*



As was noted in the Approach Paper for the Evaluation, the core governance portfolios are particularly significant in SDC’s bilateral cooperation with Eastern Europe (also evident in Figure 2, as these are financed by Framework Credit East), where a greater proportion of funding is committed to ‘principal’ governance relative to other regions. In absolute terms, however, the Sub-Saharan African region holds the largest governance portfolio, which also is an indication of SDC’s focus on Africa. *Currently the ET does not have commitment level data on interventions where governance is ‘not targeted’, and therefore cannot comment on the significance of governance portfolios across regions/countries relative to the entirety of SDC’s portfolio in these regions/countries.*

At country-level, the size of SDC’s governance portfolio also varies significantly (see Figure 4⁴⁷ below); in the evaluation period Mozambique is the largest recipient of core governance funding, while Nepal emerges as the country with the second largest core governance portfolio, but with the largest overall governance-related (planned) spending (‘principal’ + ‘significant’).

⁴⁷ Figure 4, for a clearer overview, only includes countries where SDC has core / ‘principal’ governance commitments (and not countries that have ‘significant’ governance related budgets without any core governance funding).

FIGURE 6. *Global overview of SDC's governance portfolio (based on policy marker on good governance) – 2017 – present.*

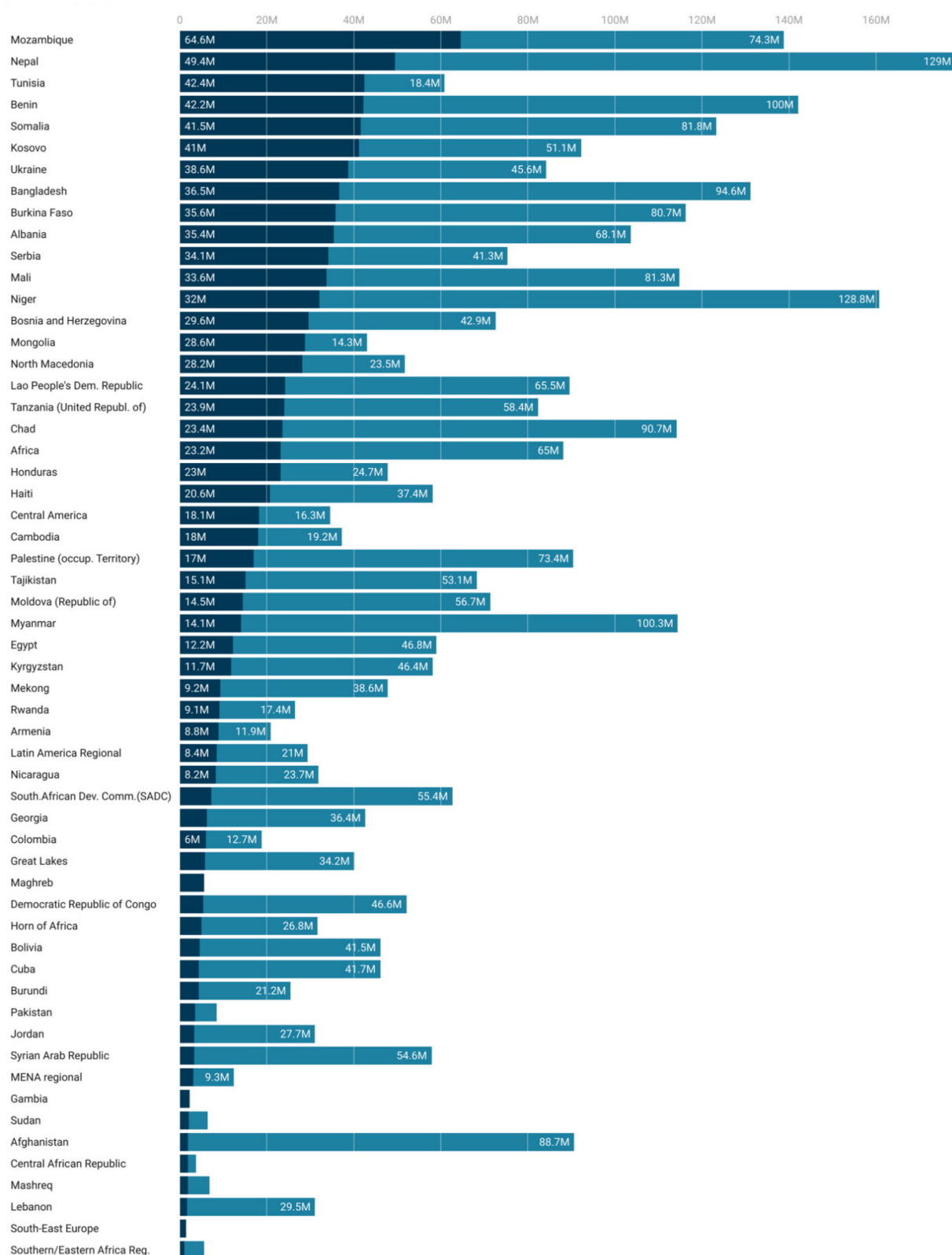


FIGURE 7. Funding toward “principal governance” interventions (left) and “significant governance” (right) by sector, 2017-present.

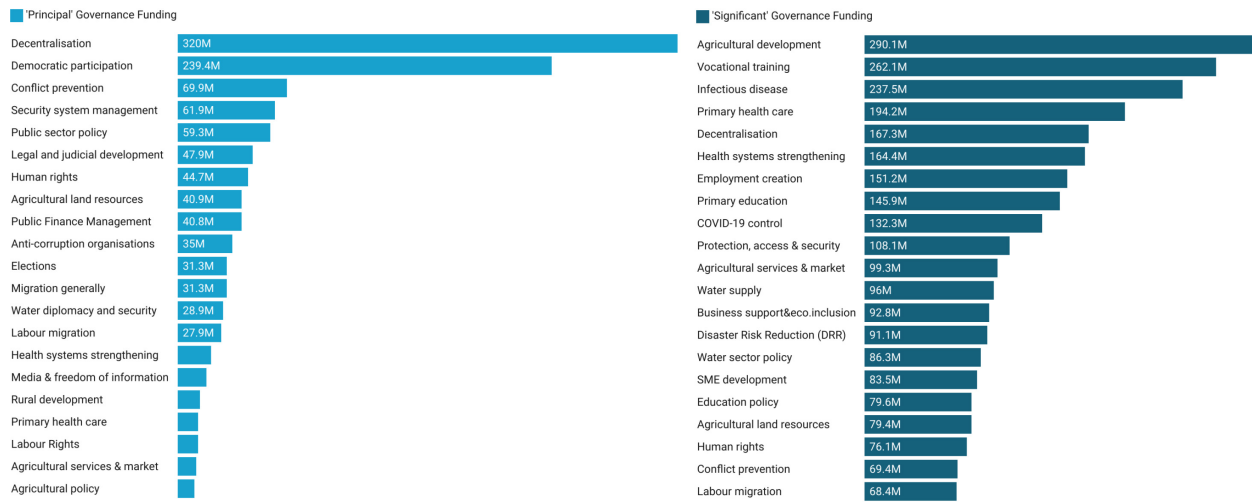


Figure 5 (above) illustrates the main sectors / areas⁴⁸ where SDC invests in core governance programming (left side) and transversal governance (right side). As was noted in the Approach Paper to the Evaluation, the ET finds that two major sectors account for 43 percent of all principal governance support, which are: 1. *Decentralization*, 2. *Democratic participation*. Conflict prevention and security are also among the biggest sectors to receive core governance funding, respectively amounting to approximately 5% of total core governance funding commitments.

In terms of transversal governance, there is a mixed picture: transversal governance appears to be significant in the agricultural development domain, livelihoods/job creation, followed by healthcare (i.e., infectious disease, primary healthcare, health systems).

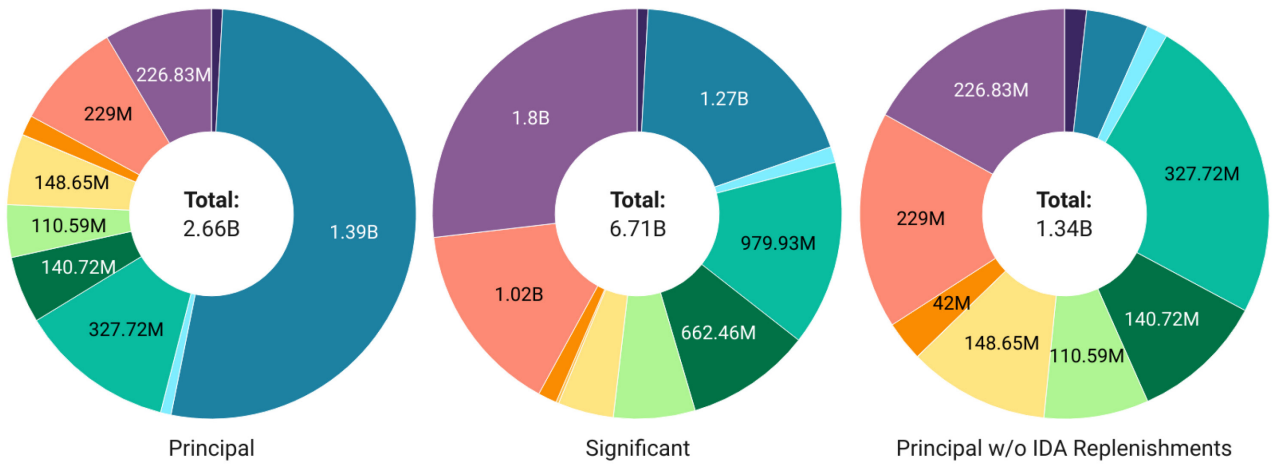
At a glance, over half (52%) of all the funding given the ‘principal’ governance policy marker in SDC’s system are interventions channelled through International Financial Institutions (IFIs). However, the majority (95%/ CHF 1.33 billion) of the ‘principal’ governance funding channelled to IFIs is a global, core contribution to the World Bank International Development Association (WB-IDA). This has drawn the Evaluation’s attention to the use of the policy marker, since IDA-19 replenishment in SDC’s system is coded as ‘principal’ governance, even though the IDA has a broad list of policy priorities, of which governance is one among several. With the exclusion of IDA-19 replenishment as a ‘principal’ governance intervention (see right hand side of Figure 6 below), international NGOs emerge as the SDC’s biggest partner on core governance interventions, with a fourth of all ‘principal’ governance funding channelled to them (25 percent), followed by UN organisations and Swiss non-profit organisations (17 percent respectively).

The SDC’s Guidance on Governance advocates for use of country systems and working through country-specific governance systems and institutions; therefore, it is interesting to note that direct budget support to national governments does not appear to be a prevalent modality of support across the Swiss governance portfolio. As illustrated in Figure 6 (below), direct support to state institutions in partner countries makes up 11 percent of the budget of ‘principal’ governance interventions, and 4.4 percent for interventions labelled ‘significant’.

⁴⁸ For practical reasons Figure 3 only includes the 20 largest sectors, according to SDC’s own reporting, but the full figures may be found in an annex to the Inception Report.

FIGURE 8. *Partner types, “Principal” and “Significant” governance interventions, 2017-present*

■ Academic & Research Organisations (International)
 ■ International Financial Institutions
 ■ No Contract Partners
■ NGOs International/Foreign
 ■ Other International Organisations
 ■ Private Sector
 ■ State Institutions (FOREIGN)
■ State Institutions (SWISS)
 ■ Swiss Academic & Research Institutions
 ■ Swiss Non-profit Organisations
 ■ United Nations Organisations



Annex 3: Approach & Methodology

This section includes three elements of the approach and methods, which did not find space in the main report.

A: Developmental Evaluation and data collection

The evaluation approach applied key elements of a Developmental Evaluation (DE), utilizing a theory-based, mixed-methods, and comparative case-study design, which is well-suited to evaluations that take place in complex and dynamic environments, where relationships may be interdependent and non-linear, requiring a larger systems perspective. The approach of the Evaluation aligned with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, and the evaluation tools ensured that the Evaluation assessed relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of SDC's programs.

A key early step in developmental and utilisation-focused evaluations was to agree on primary intended users and uses of the evaluation, considering how to involve users in the evaluation process, and ensure utility. This entailed working with intended users to design an evaluation, identify and refine questions to work with, as well as the overall analytical framework to use to interpret an evaluation, using evidence to make evaluative judgments about the extent and ways in which an intervention has influenced observed outcomes or impacts⁴⁹. By actively involving primary intended users, the evaluation was more likely to foster ownership, and facilitate future decision-making. Already in the inception active participation and influence from the primary intended users were secured through the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) members, as well as through individual interviews with CLP members. This high level of engagement by the CLP was kept throughout the evaluation.

The key methods are outlined in the main report (Chapter 2).

Both desk studies and field visits culminated with debriefing and validation sessions. It deserves mentioning that the ET presented a findings paper to the CLP, which formed the basis for the synthesising and drafting of the draft evaluation report. The findings paper included all case study results and this gave SDC an opportunity to substantively participate in the validation and nuancing of preliminary findings and to highlight any gaps. Subsequently the ET focused on integrating all data into coherent conclusions and recommendations by aggregating, triangulating, and synthesizing its findings.

B: Sampling of country cases

The Evaluation covered SDC's governance portfolio through a **case-based evaluation approach** and applies a particular focus on **8 selected partner countries for desk analysis, with further in-depth analysis and field missions in 4 of these countries**.

Within the CLP, initial steps were taking to define a long list of countries to be included in the potential sample, based on a preliminary analysis of the importance of their respective governance programmes. Initially, this long list was very focused on fragile, conflict-affected settings, and authoritarianism. However, the final approach paper arrived at a greater balance between stable contexts and fragile contexts, resulting in the addition of five more countries, also covering the MENA region which previously was excluded. This longlist included 22 countries: *Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Tanzania, Somalia, Mozambique, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Ukraine, Georgia, Albania, Bosnia & Hercegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo*.

⁴⁹ Patton M Q (2013) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) Checklist*.

A purposive, criterion-based sampling approach was applied, meaning that a defined set of sampling criteria and relevant parameters were identified with the aim to select a representative set of countries. The sampling criteria covered a mix of internal and external factors (defined in the Box below).

BOX 2.

Sampling Criteria – Defined by the ET with inputs from the CLP

Internal, programmatic sampling criteria:

- Region (Africa, Asia, MENA and Eastern Europe);
- Funding volume (large programme vs. smaller programme)
- Country-level or regional programmes.
- Presence of a core governance programme, considering representation of sub-sectors (decentralisation, democratisation, rule of law, gender equality, human rights...)
- Transversal governance (other Swiss Portfolio Outcomes / Domains in the programme)
- Humanitarian programme and funding (Yes/No)
- Double/triple nexus approach & linkages (Yes/No)
- Partnerships (State or non-state?)
- Whole of Government partners (SDC Development Cooperation, SDC Humanitarian Aid, Peace and Human Rights Department, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, State Secretariat for Migration, Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, etc.)

External parameters/ sampling criteria

- Regime types (based on the 2020 SDC Paper on Governance in Authoritarian Contexts)
- Fragility & conflict (based on OECD States of Fragility and US State Dept.)
- Lower Income / Middle Income Country status (Based on World Bank Group)
- Critical contextual events (i.e., indications of democratic collapse, steep democratic backsliding and/or creeping electoral decline) (based on Freedom House and Human Rights Watch)

The ET reviewed the programme documents, a recent annual report, and certain external, country-level indicators/reports for each of the 22 countries on the longlist, arriving at a short-list of 12 countries which represented a mix of the different internal and external sampling criteria. Based on their analysis, the ET came back to the CLP with a list of 8 countries, of which fieldwork was proposed for 4, and desk study for the remaining 4 countries.

c. Case study steps

The case studies analysis was based on multiple, primary and secondary data sources, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative evidence, triangulated to ensure the validity of findings. Consultant input for the desk studies were 5 days and for the in-country the time allocation 10 ten days. These time allocations served to manage expectations.

The steps conducted are outlined below:

Establish overview of programme documentation 2017-2022	Core governance: Credit proposals, progress reports, partner information, Country strategy document, Annual reports, MTRs, evaluations, and other relevant documentation. Transversal theme: Overview of sectors – entry point to understand the role of transversal governance to be established based on the country strategy and annual reports.
Sample programmes for analysis	Core governance: Depending on size of portfolio, a sampling will be done based on the following criteria: main focus on democratization, decentralization, size range of programmes, length of programmes, contribution/mandates. Transversal Governance: based on the overview established above, select two sectors/or programme and the selection criteria could be a) one with major emphasis and b) one with limited activities.
Prepare list of key contacts and plan and conduct key informant interviews (KII)	Interview guides have been prepared – to be tested to specific context and stakeholders.
Mission programme	Prepare mission programme
Focus group discussions	Other donors, and possibly staff groups (NPOs), programme stakeholders as relevant.
Assess degree of triangulation	If needed arrange follow up interviews, focus groups and supplementary documentation – include e-survey.
Preparation and Analysis for debrief paper.	Include major findings (all EQs) and hypothesis and presentation of coherence between different levels of theories of change
Verification workshop with staff in country	Based on the paper above
Drafting of report (12-15 pages max)	Circulate report and request for written comments

Annex 4: List of persons interviewed – available on request only

Imprint

Publisher:
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
3003 Bern
www.sdc.admin.ch

Picture cover page:
© SDC, Derek Müller

Orders:
E-mail: info.deza@eda.admin.ch

Specialist contact:
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Evaluation and Controlling
Eichenweg 5, 3003 Bern
deza.evaluation-controlling@eda.admin.ch

This publication can be downloaded from the website
<https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/results-impact/berichte/evaluationsberichte.html>

Bern, May 2024