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Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Vocational Skills Development from 2017-2023

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Annexes and Case Studies

Volume 2 – Annexes and Case Studies
to
I Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Vocational Skills Development from 2017-2023

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Author	PEM Consult, Ny Carlsberg Vej 80, 1799 Copenhagen, Denmark Simon White (Team Leader), Jørgen Billetoft (VSD and Labour Markets Specialist), Michael Axmann (VSD Specialist), Hans Henrik Madsen (VSD Specialist), Vera Devine (Governance, Gender and Institutional Specialist), Susan Ulbaek (Quality Assurance)

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Annex 1. Terms of reference

The senior management of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has instructed the Evaluation and Controlling unit (E+C) to mandate an independent evaluation of SDC's important portfolio in the field Vocational Skills Development (VSD). SDC evaluations serve the triple purpose of informing strategic steering, fostering institutional learning and contributing to accountability towards the Swiss Parliament and public.

For the period of 10.10.2023 to 30.12.2024 E+C will contract an evaluation team which is independent of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and SDC1 and has not been involved in activities covered by this evaluation, including backstopping mandates to support and accompany SDC in the field vocational skills development and related activities.

Background

Education and training are widely recognised as catalysts for sustainable development, poverty reduction, economic growth and the creation of just and peaceful societies. Vocational skills development (VSD), in particular, can make a crucial, multi-faceted contribution to the reduction of poverty. It bridges the world of education with the world of work: individuals are better skilled and increase their chances of accessing decent employment and earning a better income. A skilled workforce can raise companies' productivity and competitiveness, which in turn can lead to improved economic growth and the creation of new employment opportunities. Through contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals SDG 4 (Inclusive Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), VSD also has an impact on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

For more than six decades, SDC has used VSD as a means of contributing to the development of partner countries and reducing poverty and inequality. As one of the few donors which has always remained active in VSD2, SDC has acquired valuable field experience and knowledge on systemic issues and possible good practices. SDC has been working hand in hand with competent specialized Swiss implementing partners and in collaboration with the Swiss academia, various Swiss federal agencies and other donors.

Drawing inspiration from the dual vocational education and training system of Switzerland, SDC works closely with public authorities and the private sector to help develop VSD systems and to design training programmes tailored to the needs of the market and to each specific context.

While VSD has been a cornerstone of Swiss development cooperation for over six decades, it has gained more importance as a foreign policy instrument since the 2010s. Against the backdrop of economic crises and rising unemployment rates, especially among young people, at the global level, interest in the Swiss vocational and professional education and training (VPET) system has grown exponentially and Switzerland has made it one of its flagships in international relations. SDC's bilateral engagement in VSD has experienced a growth since 2015. This growth was further reinforced with Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2017–2020, n which the Federal Council defined basic education and VSD as priorities and substantially increased the resources allocated to these areas (by 50% compared to the period 2013- 2016). While the IC Strategy 2021-24 is less explicit about VSD, it confirms its importance at different levels. VSD is at the core of the first goal and it contributes to all three others:

a) Contributing to sustainable economic growth, market development and the creation of decent jobs (economic development).

b) Addressing climate change and its effects and managing natural resources sustainably (environment).

c) Saving lives, ensuring quality basic services, especially in relation to education and healthcare, and reducing the causes of forced displacement and irregular migration (human development).

d) Promoting peace, the rule of law and gender equality (peacebuilding and governance).

Between 2017 and 2022, SDC had a portfolio of 101 VSD projects, or projects with VSD components, in 45 countries3. The average of annual expenditures for VSD activities amounted to more than 32 million CHF, meaning that VSD activities accounted for 2.8% of SDC's bilateral activities4. From 2017-2022, in average 48% of SDC VSD activities (excluding core contributions) were realized through Swiss NGOs; 14% through foreign state institutions, 12% through United Nations organizations, 9% through the private sector and 9% through foreign or international NGOs.

For a more comprehensive description of SDC's understanding, approaches, priorities and the current portfolio in the field of VSD kindly refer to the sections 3.1 to 3.3 of the Approach Paper for the present evaluation (Annex 3).

Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The last independent thematic evaluation on SDC's VSD activities was carried out in 2011 and there is hence a clear need to review SDC's current orientation on VSD and to assess SDC's performance.

The overall purpose of this thematic independent evaluation is to inform the process of strategic steering, foster institutional learning and contribute to accountability towards the Swiss Parliament and public. The framework for this evaluation is set by the two latest Dispatches on Switzerland's international cooperation (2017-20 and 2021-24). The evaluation shall thus cover the activities implemented during a period of seven years (2017-2023) and assess the contribution of SDC's VSD portfolio to the achievement of the goals of the IC Strategies (with a focus on goal 1 of the current Dispatch, see section 3.1) as well as to the goals of SDC main guiding documents for VSD5. It shall combine a forward- and backward-looking approach to produce findings relevant for strategic planning and steering under SDC's new management structure and for accountability purposes.

In line with the above-mentioned purpose, the evaluation shall assess, along the OECD-DAC criteria, the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of SDC programmes and projects in Vocational Skills Development. The evaluation shall look at interventions within the three framework credits in the competency of SDC (bilateral development cooperation, development cooperation with Eastern Europe, humanitarian aid).

While the evaluation shall focus on SDC's bilateral portfolio, it should also look at opportunities for international policy dialogue in VSD, in particular in the multilateral arena. The evaluation should include:

- The identification of results (and rate of achievement), successes, difficulties/challenges (including failures) as well as good practices of how VSD is being implemented within SDC (backward-looking).
- An assessment of how and to which extent 'good practices' can be systematically applied within SDC as well as recommendations on how to further strengthen SDC positioning in the field of VSD at the programmatic, policy- and political level at national, regional and internal level (forward-looking).

The evaluation should give a particular focus to the following two VSD aspects:

a) Involvement of the private sector: The evaluation shall assess to which extent SDC's projects manage to involve the private sector in the planning, organising and co-financing of VSD (to the extent possible in each given context). It should identify good practices and opportunities to improve the involvement of the private sector in VSD. It should also assess the complementarities of VSD and Private Sector Development (PSD) in SDC projects. In addition, the evaluation should assess if there is more potential for Private Sector Engagement (PSE).

b) VSD systems' development: The evaluation should assess to which extent SDC's work ensures VSD systems' development, meaning here the development of the architecture, the set-up, the governance, and the operational structures and processes of national systems (including the private sector), their institutions and their services. It should identify good practices and opportunities and it should define which approaches allow to get the best results and to reach the highest scaling-up effects in the different contexts.

The evaluation shall duly take into consideration that the different SDC divisions9 have differing mandates, priorities and modes of interventions. Strengthening the nexus was one of the priorities of the reorganisation that took place at SDC in 2022 and therefore the evaluation shall assess how well the nexus works for VSD interventions and processes, and whether there has been change (or whether change is expected to take place) as compared to SDC's previous organizational structure.

The evaluation should also look at SDC's institutional and organisational set-up, which is largely decentralised for VSD (the head office provides primarily advisory services and assures knowledge management and learning in VSD). The evaluation should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current set-up, and it should provide recommendations on how to strengthen the current organisational structure in order to enhance the quality of VSD programming (including division of labour between SDC divisions and between headquarters and the field, budget allocation, knowledge management, coordination, etc.).

The evaluation will provide findings, conclusions and recommendations on whether and how SDC's approaches can be strengthened from a strategic and operational point of view.

Content of the mandate

a) Indicative evaluation questions

The question catalogue below is a first draft and has been developed by EC and reviewed by the Core Learning Partnership (CLP). During the inception phase, the appointed evaluation team will further refine and prioritize the questions in consultation with EC and the CLP.

Relevance – Is the intervention doing the right things?

The extent to which a program is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor and continue to do so if circumstances change.

1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programs systematically and sufficiently take into account context specificities, including the political economy of the partner countries? Are chosen VSD approaches (in particular according to SDC's typology tool described in the Approach Paper in Annex 3, section 3.3. p. 8) and projects matching the target group's and partner countries' needs, policies and priorities?
2. To what extent do VSD projects and programmes consider an inclusive, gender and LNOB sensitive approach in order to reach the poor, disadvantaged, and women? How do SDC's VSD projects contribute to extending or influencing gender traditions and thinking in terms of education, training and employment?
3. Do SDC's targeting and project design in VSD interventions (both geographic and beneficiary) allow to reach scale (in the cases where this is a stated goal of the project)?
4. What opportunities and good practices exist to diversify SDC's VSD portfolio beyond the outreach to jobseekers from vulnerable groups to potential job creators and multipliers?

Coherence – How well does the intervention fit?

The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.

Internal:

5. To which extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with SDC's PSD activities?
6. What opportunities exist to work with other SDC global programs and divisions (such as migration and climate change)?
7. To which extent is VSD integrated within SDC humanitarian responses and what are the existing opportunities to develop VSD in emergency contexts?
8. To which extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other IC-VPET members' VSD work in development cooperation?

External:

9. To which extent are VSD interventions compatible with and complementary to interventions of other VSD actors and donors in the countries of intervention? Are synergies with other donors used strategically (co-financing to other projects particularly to other DC dVET members, basket funding, policy dialogue, etc.)? To which extent are existing (national) systems and structures used for implementing VSD activities?
10. To which extent does SDC contribute and position itself in VSD coordination at national, regional and global level?
11. How are SDC projects perceived (in the case study contexts assessed through this evaluation), compared to the interventions of other donors? What are SDC's strengths, added values and weaknesses?

Effectiveness - Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups.

12. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve (or are expected to achieve) their intended objectives (outputs, outcomes and impacts) in particular with regards to improving the access to and quality of the training system and the employability of the beneficiaries? Which factors contributed to or hindered the effective achievement of the intended objectives?
13. In which contexts are VSD interventions most effective and in which least? Which approaches (according to SDC current terminology described in the Approach Paper in Annex 3, section 3.3. p. 8) allow to get the best results and to reach high scaling-up effects in the different contexts?
14. To which extent were the results effective for different demographic groups? To which extent were they inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and to which extent were key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind taken into account during the implementation?
15. **Private sector:** How is the private sector involved in the planning, organising and co-financing of SDC's VSD interventions? Is SDC working effectively with the private sector and ensuring that the full potential of the private sector (including the informal private sector) is used in its VSD interventions? Which kind of collaboration has been more effective depending on the contexts? What are the results, good practices and opportunities? To what extent does the private sector benefit from SDC's VSD interventions? Is there more potential for PSE?

16. **System's development:** To which extent do SDC's interventions strengthen multi-stakeholder systems, what are the results? Is SDC working with the right approaches in order to promote VSD systems' development? What are SDC's good practices and opportunities? How effective is SDC at national policy dialogue?
17. To which extent does SDC manage to reinforce permeability/flexibility and inclusion between the formal and non-formal VSD system (such as recognition of prior learning, national qualification framework, NQF, legal reforms)?
18. Is Switzerland having an active role in VSD international policy dialogue (and being listened to)? What opportunities exist to engage more in policy dialogue at the regional and global levels?
19. To which extent is SDC's current VSD organizational and institutional set-up conducive for the achievement of VSD-related objectives under the IC Strategy 2025-28?

Efficiency - How well are resources being used?

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

20. Are SDC and its implementing partners using financial and human resources efficiently for the implementation of VSD programs? How efficient are SDC's specific instruments and processes to plan, implement, manage and steer VSD activities, both at SDC's headquarter and in the cooperation offices?
21. SDC's VSD institutional set-up: How is VSD steered and organized at the institutional level within SDC? What works well and what could be improved, and why? How efficient is the collaboration between the different entities responsible for VSD within SDC? How is VSD thematic knowledge used? Is it available? Are there differences between Head quarter and cooperation offices?
22. How efficiently are VSD activities planned, divided and coordinated between SDC and its project partners (including implementing partners, private sector partners and governmental partners)? Is there a clear and efficient division of roles between SDC and its project partners?

Impact - What difference does the intervention make?

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

23. What observable higher-level effects (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of VSD programs on beneficiaries, on partners (e.g., collaborators of the private sector), on formal education systems (including infrastructure) and informal VSD systems (e.g., traditional apprenticeship models), as well as on the labour market productivity can be evidenced? How significant were those changes? What contextual factors are favouring or hindering the impact of VSD interventions?
24. Do projects scale-up and have SDC projects been leveraged by other interventions (e.g., taken over by national governments)? What were the facilitating factors in those cases?

Sustainability - Will the benefits last?

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

25. How sustainable are SDC's VSD interventions? Does SDC manage to create local expertise and does it have well-thoughts exit strategies? What evidence is available with regard to sustained change? Which factors enhance the sustainability of SDC interventions in the different contexts? How are SDC's modalities of interventions contributing to or hindering sustainability? Which are the most effective incentives to convince partners to engage in the log-run?

26. To what extent do VSD interventions address challenges in a systemic way, taking into account the interactions with environmental, social, economic and governance elements?

Methodology

The independent evaluation team will assess the evaluation objectives and questions in a neutral and objective way. The overall evaluation approach should represent an adequate mix of formative and summative elements. Selected steps from within developmental evaluation are to be considered, where appropriate.11 Developmental evaluation is tailored to complex environments and sees the evaluator as combining the rigour of evaluation (evidence-based and objective) with the role of enhancing a programme's capacity, by means of using evidence in reflective thinking on its work. SDC's staff should learn during the entire evaluation process - not just at the end.

The evaluation team shall review and assess existing facts, processes, tools and instruments.

The evaluation team shall use or develop adequate rubrics and instruments for assessing all information, interviews etc. within the evaluation. Their findings, conclusions and recommendations shall be evidence based and formulated in an open, constructive, and non-judging manner. The findings and recommendations are expected to inform SDC's strategic and operational decision making, to enhance institutional learning, and to inform SDC's constituency, the Swiss parliament and the public. The evaluation is expected to make use of a series of different methodological instruments, such as the following:

- Portfolio Analysis of SDC's engagement in VSD.
- Review of relevant documents from SDC (e.g., evaluation reports; credit proposals; end of phase reports; guiding documents), from SDC's partners (program and evaluation reports, case studies, etc.), and from other donors (for comparison), as well as research.
- Eight to ten case studies with three to five field missions if appropriate, including interviews with SDC's field staff, projects and programmes, and policy stakeholders.
- Interviews and/or focus group discussions with SDC staff in Berne from all divisions and with selected cooperation offices (virtual communication).
- Interviews with other relevant persons, especially from implementing partners, knowledge partners and other donors; It is suggested to interview the VSD backstoppers of the E+E section, selected members of FOBBIZ, DC dVET members, SECO, relevant academic partners).
- Online surveys – as assessed relevant.

The evaluation team will develop a rigorous and appropriate methodology during the inception phase, together with a Theory of Change, which will set the framework for the evaluation. It is important that the methodology is appropriate for assessing both the operational and institutional aspects of the evaluation. The indicative key questions are only suggestions and shall be reviewed by the evaluation team during the inception phase.

The Core Learning Partnership (CLP) shall provide inputs when the evaluation team is drafting the recommendations, – while the responsibility remains within the evaluation team. Therefore, elements of participatory/developmental evaluation can be integrated. Including such an approach will not only increase the utility of the evaluation but will also support SDC's ongoing commitment to develop stronger analyses, program designs, as well as capacities in monitoring and evaluation.

The roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in this evaluation are described in detail in section 3.10 of the Approach Paper (Annex 3).

Deliverables

The evaluation will produce the following deliverables:

Inception Report. An Inception Report is prepared by the evaluation team after an initial review of relevant documentation and some initial interviews. It shall present:

- A summary of the results of the portfolio analysis.
- The results of a first round of interviews and the desk review.
- Conceptual framework(s) to be used in the evaluation (including a draft Theory of Change which presents SDC's logic regarding the thematic priority areas).
- The key evaluation questions and methodology.
- An analytical framework for answering the evaluation questions with rubrics or assessment scales that will be used for assessing the information, data sources and collection, sampling and key indicators.
- The rationale for the selection of case studies, respectively countries that will be visited, considering a balanced choice between geographical regions, types of interventions and contexts, ongoing / completed interventions, etc. In doing so, the evaluation team shall consider differences related to context (developing countries, countries in transition, etc.).
- A first draft list of interviewees. During the mandate the interview list will be developed together with the tenderer.

The Inception Report also includes a timeline for the evaluation process. It shall explain the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the proposed process and methodology and list the means used to address these limitations. The evaluation team should suggest a tentative structure of the final report.

The Inception Report will be written in English and should not exceed 20 pages, excluding annexes. It will be addressed to E+C and discussed with the CLP in Bern.

Evaluation Report

- A fit-to-print evaluation report in English containing findings, conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions must be clearly derived from the findings and the recommendations must be clearly based on the conclusions.
- The evaluation report should not exceed 30 pages (including an executive summary; excluding annexes), and must be coherent with the formatting guidelines of EC. The report should contain clear references to the important information/data available in the annexes. The executive summary should correspond to the DAC-Standards and should not exceed 2 to 3 pages.
- Additionally, a short and concise presentation (PowerPoint) shall be prepared by the evaluation team for SDC's use.
- The quality of the evaluation report (and process) will be assessed based on quality criteria as detailed in the 'Evaluation Quality Assessment' (cf. Approach Paper Annex 3, page 25/26).

Communication products

Communication is key – both for institutional learning within SDC and accountability towards the Parliament and the public. The following deliverables with regard to communication are required:

- Meetings with the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) at key moments of the evaluation.
- Regular exchange with E+C.

- Presentation of the Final Report to the Directorate of SDC (and potentially prior to that: presentation of intermediate results to the Directorate).
- Key messages for external communication should be clear, concise and easy to understand. These key messages will be used to produce fact sheets for external communication.

Annex 2. Methodology and limitations

The evaluation was an evidence-based and independent analysis of SDC support for VSD at country and international policy levels. It applied a mixed methods approach to address the complex questions outlined in the terms of reference (see Annex 1), which presented 26 evaluation questions within the six OECD-DAC criteria. During the Inception Phase, these were distilled into ten questions, each with its own judgement criteria used to answer each question. This was presented in an Evaluation Matrix, which was contained in the Inception Report. The results of the evaluation questions are presented in Annex 3.

The evaluation collected and analysed qualitative and quantitative data drawn from an analysis of the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), literature review, desk studies, and field missions to prepare initial answers to the evaluation questions. A theory of change analysis was also conducted to assess the project logic. These preliminary answers were triangulated with information from all sources and through follow-up interviews with key informants to check validity and synthesise the emerging findings. The reconstructed change theory was prepared to assess the significant linkages and assumptions that underpin SDC's approach to achieving the desired results. The evidence base, precision and credibility of oral sources were compared with those of written sources, and national sources were compared with regional and international sources. The views of different stakeholders were also compared. The team drew on its multidisciplinary experience and perspectives to interrogate the emerging findings, cross-fertilising this with international best practices to enrich the conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation applied the following tools for data collection and analysis:

Document review and analysis

A systematic collection and analysis of key documents at three levels.[1] The review and analysis included grey literature, including previous evaluations. Critical studies, other best practice-oriented documentation, and evaluations from donors or multilateral institutions were reviewed to identify the current state of the art for VSD in developing and emerging economies. The list of documents reviewed is presented in Annex 4, and at the end of each country case study in Annex 6.

Portfolio analysis

The portfolio analysis is based on a sample of 131 ongoing and recently closed projects. The portfolio data was provided by SDC as an SAP database. The project portfolio contained 679 VSD-relevant interventions spread across 181 VSD-relevant activities (i.e., projects) across 61 countries. Of these, 131 were commitments either in progress or closed after completion. The rest were projects in the planning or concept phase. The portfolio analysis was conducted across domains, sectors, contract partner groups, countries and regions, modalities and project types.

Theory of change analysis

A draft reconstructed change theory was prepared during inception and presented in the Inception Report. This was based on the Evaluation's Terms of Reference (July 2023), Approach Paper (July 2023), and the VSD Typology Paper (March 2019). The draft reconstructed change theory was tested during the evaluation to understand better and assess the significant linkages and assumptions that underpin SDC's approach to achieving the desired results. The reconstructed theory of change was analysed in two steps. First, the data from the country cases and the relevant projects assessed within these cases were mapped against the theory of change to determine their alignment. This helped to determine the extent

1 The three levels are: policy and strategy level (i.e., how IC Strategies have informed project design; country programme level (based on a selection of countries); and project level (based on a selection of projects).

to which projects have been designed and managed within the overall logic or whether there are points of divergence. Second, the evaluation questions were applied to specific points in the theory of change to determine the influence this logic has on the evaluation criteria. Thus, these two steps helped the Evaluation Team test the logic presented and determine how SDC's approach to VSD is applied and how the anticipated VSD results are aligned within a highly decentralised delivery mechanism.

Key respondent interviews

Semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, including management and staff of SDC, were conducted. The interview findings were essential for understanding the underlying factors for strategic choices, providing deeper insights into issues not fully captured in the documentation and reporting. Direct, personal interviews were complemented by focus group discussions to discuss specific complex issues where differences in views can be fruitful to highlight and discuss. Online interviews were conducted when face-to-face interviews were not possible. Particular attention was given to ensuring a socially inclusive approach to identifying and interviewing relevant stakeholders (e.g., women, young people, and other marginalised social groups). In addition to the interviews conducted for the country case studies, the Evaluation Team interviewed various SDC staff and representatives from other agencies about SDC's support for VSD.

Country case studies: purpose and selection

Country case studies provided an essential source of information to answer the evaluation questions.

Based on the initial portfolio analysis undertaken in the inception phase, the Evaluation Team identified a sample of projects for deeper analysis. This selection was primarily focused on regions and countries that warrant more detailed analysis because they are most likely to produce findings that are particularly important to the evaluation objectives and questions. First, the Evaluation Team identified a long list of sample cases that warranted a deeper analysis. From this, a short list of cases was prepared using an initial set of criteria to establish a long list (i.e., location, levels of development, VSD aligned with IC Objectives, VSD Typologies, and implementing partners). The full details of the long and short-listed projects are contained in the Inception Report.

The countries selected for study are listed below:

1. **Egypt.** Selected for field mission. Region: Middle East and North Africa (MENA).[2] MENA was considered a region deserving of attention because of its different profile compared to other regions. MENA integrates combining humanitarian aid and development cooperation. Egypt and Tunisia were considered. Egypt was the highest recipient of VSD support in the MENA region in the evaluation period (i.e., 15 interventions, 8 active and 7 closed 2017-2023). This compared better than Tunisia (i.e., 5 interventions, 5 active and 2 closed 2017-2023). See Annex 4.
2. **Nepal.** Selected for field mission. Region: Asia. Nepal has the second highest number of VSD projects in the evaluation period (i.e., 39 interventions, 21 active and 18 closed 2017-2023), and the largest VSD by volume. This includes humanitarian cooperation, VSD projects targeting youth, PSD, migration, system change. A mix of implementing

2 The SDC Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Section runs programmes applies an integrated approach combining humanitarian aid and development cooperation. Geographically, the section is divided into four regions where Switzerland is engaged through programmes or humanitarian policy work: Middle East (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey), Near East (Israel and occupied Palestinian territory), North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) and Arabian Peninsula and Iran (Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen).

partners, incl. Swiss Academia. Strong collaboration with State institutions. While there was a possible risk of evaluation fatigue (i.e., already well-researched and documented), the Evaluation Team assessed that Nepal presented a rich array of SDC experience in VSD for evaluation.

3. **Serbia.** Selected for field mission. Region: Balkans. Serbia has the seventh highest number of VSD projects globally in the evaluation period (i.e., 23 interventions, 14 active and 9 closed 2017-2023) and the second largest by volume in the East cooperation (See Annex 4.) Serbia is an emerging economy. VSD is aligned with IC Objectives: Spans IC Objective 1 (i.e., economic development) and IC Objectives 2-4 (i.e., climate, human development and peace/governance). VSD in Serbia appears to apply multiple VSD Typologies, and there is variation in the types of implementing partners. Serbia contains project elements that include private sector-led projects and policy dialogue. It includes support for dual systems.
4. **Tanzania.** Selected for field mission. Region: East Africa. Tanzania is among the top ten VSD countries by number (i.e., 18 interventions, 10 active and 8 closed 2017-2023) and the largest by volume in East Africa (Table 4). Tanzania is a developing economy and VSD appears mostly oriented by IC Objectives 2-4 (i.e., climate, human development and peace/governance). A number of VSD Typologies appear to be applied, and there are various types of implementing partners (e.g., NGO + private sector. Projects focus on youth employment and private-sector engagement.
5. **Albania.** Selected for desk study. Region: Balkans. Albania has the largest VSD volume in the East cooperation but only 22nd in the number of VSD projects globally (i.e., 11 interventions, 6 active and 5 closed 2017-2023). Albania is an emerging economy, and SDC's VSD support is aligned with IC Objective 1 (i.e., economic development) and IC Objectives 2-4 (i.e., climate, human development and peace/governance). Several VSD Typologies have been applied, with various types of implementing partners. Albania contains project elements that include private sector-led projects and policy dialogue.
6. **Bangladesh.** Selected for desk study. Region: Asia. Highest number of VSD projects in the evaluation period (i.e., 42 interventions, 20 active and 22 closed 2017-2023). Bangladesh is a developing economy, and SDC's VSD support is aligned with IC Objective 1 (i.e., economic development) and IC Objectives 2-4 (i.e., climate, human development and peace/governance). Several projects have a strong social dimension addressing the issue of refugees in Bangladesh, and they were implemented by BRAC, the biggest Bangladeshi NGO. There is a mix of implementing partners: State institutions, IFIs, Local and Swiss NGOs, and UN.
7. **Niger.** Selected for desk study. Region: West Africa. Niger is the fifth highest number of VSD projects globally in the evaluation period (i.e., 24 interventions, 13 active and 11 closed 2017-2023). West Africa is an important region for SDC country programming. Niger is a developing economy, which is also a fragile and conflict-affected country. VSD support is aligned with IC Objective 1 (i.e., economic development) and IC Objectives 2-4 (i.e., climate, human development and peace/governance), and several VSD Typologies are in use. Niger contains project elements that include private sector-led projects and a fragile and conflict-affected country.

8. **Syria.** Selected for desk study. Region: MENA. While Syria does not represent a high value of SDC investment into VSD (i.e., 8 interventions, all of which were active in 2017-2023), it does provide an interesting and relevant context for evaluation due to its fragile and conflict-affected status and its targeting of migrants. SDC has several approaches to achieving its humanitarian objectives: direct implementation, support to multilateral and bilateral partners (UN agencies, International Committee of the Red Cross, I/NGOs), expert deployments from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit to partner organisations and humanitarian diplomacy.
9. **Burkina Faso.** Selected for a hybrid study (i.e., desk study augmented by online interviews and engagement of a local consultant). Region: West Africa. While this is only the 17th highest number of VSD projects globally in the evaluation period (i.e., 13 interventions, 9 active and 4 closed 2017-2023), it is a part of West Africa and representative of VSD projects in the region. West Africa is an important region for SDC country programming. Burkina Faso is a developing economy that is also a fragile and conflict-affected country. VSD support is aligned with IC Objective 1 (i.e., economic development) and IC Objectives 2-4 (i.e., climate, human development and peace/governance), and several VSD Typologies are in use. Burkina Faso contains project elements that include private sector-led projects and a fragile and conflict-affected country.

When preparing country cases, the Evaluation Team applied a contribution analysis to pinpoint essential types of change achieved and the SDC contribution and added value. This focused on describing the challenge the Swiss support sought to address and the significant changes achieved while analysing the role and value addition of Swiss support in achieving the change. Lessons learned in influencing the change were then identified.

Limitations

The primary limitations relate to the large number of diverse projects and interventions made over eight years, making it challenging to ensure a representative study. To mitigate this, a detailed portfolio analysis was conducted to ensure that the breadth of the engagement is understood and used to inform the selection of projects for a deeper analysis.

The issues underlying VSD's performance are often complex and vary over time and between countries and types of projects. Findings are not always consistent and can point in different directions. To mitigate this, the Evaluation Team assessed the quality of evidence so that identified variations could be fully explored to obtain deeper insights into the circumstances where an approach appears successful or does not seem to work.

The countries selected for desk studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria) were limited by their reliance on written documentation provided by the SCO.

Another limitation was the availability of data and people for interviews. While the Evaluation Team was successful in securing the vast majority of interviews required, there were some external factors that inhibited this. Where physical interviews could not be conducted, online interviews were arranged.

Annex 3. Evaluation Questions and Answers

The following table provides an overview of findings from country studies that inform the findings presented in Volume 1.

RELEVANCE	
EQ1. Is the economic, social and political context of the partner country considered?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**Strong evidence to suggest that SDC's support for VSD is based on careful analysis of the partner country's economic, social and political context. SDC often has a history of VSD support and has established strong networks with government, civil society and private sector representative organisations. Many projects have multiple phases, allowing for lessons to be learned and deeper contextual analysis. While the VSD Typologies have provided some guidance, the range of VSD project support reaches beyond these typologies. In some cases, an in-depth analysis of the needs for the skills training provided may have improved project design.**
Albania	The evaluation has found strong evidence that SDC's VSD support in Albania is tailored to demographic, economic, social and political contexts. SDC has a long history of supporting VSD in Albania and has undertaken a series of analyses, evaluations and project reflections (i.e., capitalisation processes) to better understand the priority needs of the VET sector. There is strong evidence that all SDC VSD projects in Albania are designed to respond to private sector needs and opportunities.
Bangladesh	All the reviewed projects were based on an initial assessment of the economic, social and political context in which they were implemented; however, it seems as if three of the projects (i.e., Ashshash, SEP/Sudokkho, and B-SkillFull) would have benefitted from a more thorough assessment of the demand for the services provided.
Burkina Faso	The economic, social and political context is understood (even if the portfolio then doesn't translate these into a more suitable design). Key aspects are demographic pressure and its nexus with radicalisation: 400.000 youth entering the job market on an annual basis, left without meaningful perspectives, including through gainful employment, this leaves fertile ground for radicalisation by Islamist groups. Politically, BF is no longer a democracy (leading to a thinning out of the development cooperation partner landscape), but investment in youth remains justifiable, plausible and urgent.
Egypt	SDC's VSD interventions in Egypt are designed in response to the economic, social and political context and aligned with the relevant government frameworks.
Niger	The VSD portfolio has been designed based on a clear assessment and understanding or the economic, social, and political context in Niger.
Nepal	SDC has gone to great lengths to ensure it VSD projects are designed and manage in response to Nepal's economic, social and political context. Over its many years of engagement, SDC has developed good relationships with many local partners. SDC's support for VSD has evolved over time. The phasing of projects allows for adjustment to project interventions to ensure they are relevant to current contexts that change over time. With its federated system of government, Switzerland considers its experiences and advice on VSD in the newly federated Nepalese system as relevant. VSD is important for Nepal's stability. Thus, VSD is a source of hope for the future.
Serbia	SDC's engagement in VSD is based on thorough and in-depth analysis of the specifics of the Serbian and regional context. Similar to BF, democracy indicators have significantly back-slid in the past few years, but investment in youth (through dual VSD project) as well as vulnerable groups (jobseekers) remains justifiable and justified. Serbia is an exceptional case within the portfolio, in that dual VSD and specific Swiss expertise has been sought specifically by the PM/now president of Serbia, i.e., is explicitly demand-driven.
Syria	The VSD portfolio has been designed based on a clear assessment and understanding or the economic, social and political context.

Tanzania	SDC's support for VSD in Tanzania has been based on a careful and regular assessment of the economic, social and political context and is aligned with Swiss and Tanzanian national development strategies.
EQ2. To what extent is the project designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**There is strong evidence that SDC has designed and managed VSD to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions. This is often a hallmark of SDC's work in the field. However, there are concerns with how social inclusion is defined and measured. The objective of VSD varies, typically reflecting the context in which the project is implemented. Often, VSD projects that focus on social inclusion do not endeavour to include or integrate marginalised, high-risk, or poor target groups into the national VSD system. Instead, VSD is used to promote resilience and provide pathways outside of or parallel to the formal system.**
Albania	There is good evidence that SDC project interventions are tailored to the needs of defined target groups and based on an assessment of marginalised groups - predominantly young people and women. Evidence shows that SDC projects are explicitly designed for social inclusion through mainstreaming rather than through specialised interventions. There was no evidence found that projects have attempted to influence gender traditions.
Bangladesh	In different ways, for all six projects social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged women were a focus area. Several of the projects had prepared Gender Action Plans.
Burkina Faso	VSD projects consider social inclusion and include a focus on women. More recently, new and highly vulnerable groups have emerged as a result of the deteriorating security situation, and interventions have sought to include these groups.
Egypt	SDC's VSD interventions in Egypt have sought to promote social inclusion of young people and particularly young women. However, engaging women in non-traditional occupations has been challenging. The challenges facing migrants and refugees (who are typically treated as guests and excluded from full employment) are growing.
Niger	There is evidence that the projects in the portfolio focus on the right target, but this approach is more concerned with increasing the opportunities on the supply side of VSD (more teachers, more schools, more programmes, more participants) with a strong focus on young girls and women and promoting easier access to VSD than with the demand side of VSD and integrating VSD graduates into local and regional labour markets (for future and forward looking jobs) and also with integrating these concepts into national systems.
Nepal	SDC VSD projects are typically strongly focused on promoting social inclusion, including groups from poor, disadvantaged areas and the inclusion of women. The major VSD projects seek to include marginalised and disadvantaged groups into the national TEVT system. Other projects support resilience and, in some cases, livelihoods among people who are not being integrated into the national TVET system but are leaving the national labour market (e.g., migrants to Jordan). There is some evidence that gender norms are being influenced.
Serbia	Non-formal VSD through work-based learning (from Education to Employment) had a specific focus on unemployed youth, including difficult-to-place youth; women; PWD and Roma, with a high employment rate (67%) as a result of the project. Results were also achieved on gender-specific policy changes as part of the Serbian Youth Strategy.
Syria	There is evidence that the projects in the portfolio focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups, but this approach is more concerned with increasing resilience and promoting livelihoods than with integrating marginalised groups into national systems.

Tanzania	Particular attention has been given to the inclusion of poor and marginalised groups, such as young people and young mothers who are outside of the school system. However, not all projects seek to mainstream or integrate beneficiaries into education and training systems. Instead, they have supported beneficiaries in starting a new small business (i.e., self-employment). There is some evidence of influence on gender traditions as young women are broadly recognised as a group who should be included in the labour market.
COHERENCE	
Internal coherence: EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**SDC's VSD interventions are consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies. While SCOs ensure coordination and synergies with PSD projects, more could be done to better integrate VSD as strategy for business development and growth. There is scope to improve knowledge management of VSD across a highly decentralised and diverse portfolio while strengthening the strategic narrative regarding the role of VSD in global labour markets and climate change.**
Albania	Strong evidence shows that SDC in Albania has worked across divisions when designing, implementing, and monitoring projects. This includes intentionally designed VSD projects to support or complement private sector development. SECO and SDC appear to collaborate closely on projects related to VSD and private sector development.
Bangladesh	In general, the projects are well aligned to SDC policies and priorities. Although SECO has a number of engagements in the Bangladesh through is regional portfolio, the reviewed documentation does not have a reference to these.
Burkina Faso	Portfolio coherent with consecutive Swiss cooperation strategies.
Egypt	Projects are in line with the Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2017-2020, under the domain "inclusive sustainable economic growth and employment" and there is close and effective coordination with SECO.
Niger	The SDC support for VSD projects in Niger is consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and other Swiss agencies.
Nepal	There is evidence that SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal are consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and the work of other Swiss agencies. This includes two domain objectives of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal (2018-2023, i.e., Domain 1 Federal State Building and Domain 2 Employment and Income) and the Swiss Cooperation Programme for Nepal (2023-2026). Interventions also align with the Regional Guidance for Asia 2021-24. SDC describes its operations at three levels: politics, policy and programs. Support for VSD is framed within these three levels: politics (state building in a federated system), policies (TVET Act, NQF, etc.) and programs (introduction of dual system, etc.). There is strong coherence of VSD programming within the SDC country office.
Serbia	Portfolio is coherent with consecutive Swiss cooperation strategies.
Syria	The SDC support for VSD projects in Syria is broadly consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and other Swiss agencies.
Tanzania	For all the six projects, coordination with other development partners is taking place. Two of the projects are even based on co-funding arrangements. SDC's VSD interventions in Tanzania have shown to be consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans. The Country Office has worked across divisions in project design, implementation and monitoring and relied on advice from the regional thematic coordinator. However, there are concerns that the regional coordination post has been abolished and more broader concerns there is little understanding in headquarters of the realities on the ground.

External Coherence: EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**SDC's VSD interventions are consistent and complementary with those of other donor and development partners operating in partner countries. While the mechanisms for donor coordination vary - ranging from ad hoc and informal to highly structured with opportunities for government interaction - SDC is typically a strong if not a leading partner. There were some incidences where SDC was criticised for promoting its approach to VSD too strongly, but typically, SDC was recognised as an authoritative, credible and reliable partner that adjusted its approach to local circumstances and collaborated with other development partners.**
Albania	There is good evidence to show that SDC VSD interventions in Albania interact with or complement other donor-supported projects and programmes. SDC plays a leading role in the thematic donor working group on VET, the DACH+ forum and supports government-donor coordination.
Bangladesh	In general, the projects are well aligned to SDC policies and priorities. Although SECO has several engagements in the Bangladesh through its regional portfolio, the reviewed documentation does not have a reference to these. For all the six projects, coordination with other development partners is taking place. Two of the projects are even based on co-funding arrangements.
Burkina Faso	There is a heavy development partner coordination structure, and where Switzerland has been in the rotating lead for many years and is reportedly doing a good job. One of the ongoing interventions is a joint basket fund by several donors (though not successful in terms of implementation). There have been numerous evidences on knowledge sharing and consultations between donors in the programming stages of interventions. However, donor dialogue has been described as stuck in a rut and requiring a fresh start.
Egypt	Cooperation with other development partners working in VSD is good and improving. SDC plays a lead role, along with GIZ.
Niger	The portfolio of VSD projects in Niger is largely consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in the country. Conditions for donor coordination are generally poor, but SDC is reaching out to other donors on multi- and bilateral levels.
Nepal	SDC works closely with other donors, leading a VSD donor group. SDC is seen by many other donors as an authority on VSD in Nepal. There are mixed views among donor agencies supporting VSD on the most relevant approaches and models for VSD, but a genuine effort to coordinate, share information and find complementarities. The TVET Sector Strategic Plan provides a mechanism for donor alignment. Donors are working towards a sector-wide approach (SWAP) in VSD.
Serbia	Donor coordination a very mixed picture. There are no donor-to-donor coordination groups (there is a need, but also a tacit understanding that no new groups should be established that do not also involve the government as it formally moves close to EU accession and is expected to have increased ownership over the reform agenda). Donors have different views on dual VET which makes the coordination challenging. A joint SDC/ADA project on dual VET shows difficulties to coordinate development cooperation project on dual VET when countries are applying different models in their home countries and are representing different interest in the host country (i.e., combining development and company interest verses pure development interest in favour of national system building). Significant efforts were made to arrive at genuine consensus, without full success. This was mainly due to the short amount of time for providing feedback on proposed legal and policy changes to be meaningfully included.

Syria	The portfolio of VSD projects in Syria are largely consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in the country. However, the conditions for donor coordination are generally poor.
Tanzania	There is substantial evidence that SDC VSD interventions interact with or complement other donor-supported projects and programmes. SDC is a founding and active member of the TVET Sub-Group (which falls under the Education Sector Donor Group). Other donors describe SDC as an engaged partner in VSD in Tanzania.
EFFECTIVENESS	
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**SDC VSD projects are well designed, with a clear logic and sound management arrangements. There is a heavy reliance on a small group of implementing partners (i.e., Helvetas and Swisscontact) and some concern that reliance on these agencies makes SDC dependent on their advice and guidance when designing projects. Attention has been given to identifying lessons from past project experiences and incorporating these into new projects or project phases. In some instances, tracer studies have been commissioned to measure outcomes and impacts. Projects often met or exceeded their targets when working with direct beneficiaries, such as in supporting new or pilot training courses (i.e., targets for the number of young women and men trained), but fewer results were reported when it came to embedding institutional or macro-level changes (e.g., policy, legal and regulatory reforms or institutional realignment with private sector demands). While there were good results at these levels, the longer-term impacts are heavily dependent on factors beyond the influence of the projects.**
Albania	The evidence reviewed supports the view that completed SDC VSD projects achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. In some cases, project targets were exceeded. This was particularly the case for results focused on training (i.e., numbers of people trained). However, concerns were raised regarding institutional and policy, legal and regulatory outcomes. While there were good results at these levels, the longer-term impacts are heavily dependent on factors beyond the influence of the projects.
Bangladesh	While most projects have trained the planned number of persons, several of the projects have experienced serious challenges in terms of employability of the trainees. Partially, this is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, but insufficient targeting of the training activities combined with overly optimistic employment opportunities have contributed to the low employment rate
Burkina Faso	Within the logic of the individual projects, the results are achieved in most projects. Exception is the basket fund, APOSE, which does not work well.
Egypt	Within the scope of each project, there is evidence that projects are on track to achieve their intended objectives.
Niger	All three VSD projects in Niger have been frequently reviewed and evaluated, both internally and independently externally. The outputs of all projects and relevant project phases are well documented and there are lessons identified from project experiences.
Nepal	The lack of approval of the TVET Act (which SDC provided drafting support to) has limited the extent to which SDC's VSD interventions can contribute to its objectives associated with national systems development. These projects are hampered in their efforts to created higher level impacts. More effort is required to improve training outcomes and to learn from the experiences of on-the-job and dual apprenticeship schemes. Small, more tightly focused projects, such as those dealing with migrants, appear to achieve their objectives, but these appear to have limited systemic effects (i.e., limited scale).
Serbia	Education to Employment: results are achieved at the level of the individual jobseekers; some results achieved in bringing about systemic changes, for example the establishment of broker services (offering job orientation and counselling, linking potential employees and employers, accompanying them during work placements and beyond) outside of the governmental system; this will become part of new Labour

	Market legislation (to be reviewed in the next few months). Very slow progress with regards to accreditation of qualifications.
Syria	Very few VSD projects have been independently evaluated. This is largely because the dynamic, fragile and conflict-affected nature of the country make evaluation difficult. The outputs of most projects are well documented and there are lessons identified from project experiences.
Tanzania	There is strong evidence that completed SDC VSD projects achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. VSD projects are well managed, with reports highlighting outputs and outcomes, which have largely met targets. This is also true of intended outputs and outcomes. Considerable attention has been given to lesson learning, particularly in transitioning from one project phase to another.
EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**SDC has sought to engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development. In many instances, partner country governments would not have taken the effort to interact with private employers if SDC had not been advocating for this. However, there are major challenges in how to involve the private sector in skills development and with ensuring VSD is sufficiently demand-driven. There are few working models that demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and processes for achieving this. It is often an overly complicated, time-consuming, and bureaucratic process that lack flexibility and responsiveness. Moreover, the challenges with working with informal employers and supporting self-employment and microenterprise development outcomes deserve greater attention.**
Albania	There is solid evidence that SDC VSD projects sought successful private sector collaboration, including working with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow and play their role in VSD processes. SDC projects have identified lessons learned and built on past experiences when engaging the private sector.
Bangladesh	Formally private sector involvement is high on the agenda of four of the projects. However, the fact that the private sector is poorly organised and most private enterprises employ low-skilled labour made it difficult to engage the private sector in the projects' VSD activities.
Burkina Faso	Need for engagement with private sector is acknowledged, and various formats have been tried out—with modest success. Stakeholders suggest that interventions (by SDC and others) are insufficiently tailored to the capacity of the private sector. A problem in future engagement with the private sector results from a history of financing of stakeholders for their involvement—effectively introducing perverse incentives into the process.
Egypt	Clear attempts have been made to engage the private sector in all projects. However, there are major challenges in defining and responding to private sector demands for skills.
Niger	More collaboration with the private sector might also be prevented by the fact that informal VSD in the existing traditional occupations potentially produces competition among small existing small businesses in the informal economy and new apprentices. The difficult social, economic, and political situation in Niger makes it difficult to attempt to measure changes in business productivity and profitability stemming from VSD support. According to this evaluation, productivity, and profitability of VSD activities in Niger have not been monitored.

Nepal	SDC takes great effort to engage with the private sector and to support VSD interventions that respond to the employment demands of private employers. Indeed, SDC has been instrumental in ensuring that government ministries and public training providers interact with the private sector. However, there remain significant challenges with ensuring VSD is demand-driven, particularly through mechanisms for on-the-job training. No efforts have been taken to consider how VSD improve the performance, productivity or competitiveness of private enterprises.
Serbia	The relatively new dual VET project is specifically working with strengthening the capacity of the private sector to engage in multi-stakeholder formats around skills demands (platforms including chamber of commerce and Ministry of Education institutions in charge of dual VET and curriculum development). Policy advice project has introduced a legislative provision for dual VET to be 40% school-based and 60% work-based, something that the private sector, especially small enterprises, see as challenging to accommodate at present.
Syria	The political situation prevents collaboration with the private sector as many large employers are intertwined with the government.
Tanzania	There is limited evidence of successful private sector collaboration – as shown by results achieved and private sector perspectives. There have been entrepreneurship and skills development interventions in sectors with lead firms (e.g., poultry). SDC projects have sought to engage with SMEs and business development as a major feature in project interventions. However, these are mostly in the informal and agricultural sectors. There is no evidence to suggest that SDC's support for VSD has increased the productivity and profitability of the private enterprises that benefit from it.
EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**Most, if not all, SDC VSD projects are designed to contribute – either in part or in full – to the transformation of national systems. However, the overall results are limited, and persistent challenges remain. Only a few of the reviewed VSD projects were designed to address overarching system-level constraints (e.g., Albania, Nepal and Serbia). Many others focused on very specific parts of the system.** **SDC applied a bottom-up approach to much of its work, as particularly shown in Burkina Faso and Egypt. In Albania, the approach was based more in a broad systems analysis.** **National VSD systems are typically complex and bureaucratic. Reform takes time and often there are few incentives or drivers for change. Many project documents present a case for sustainability that are unrealistic and beyond the scope of the project. SDC's ambitions for national systems change are high and not always matched with the time and resources required. While all projects should be aligned with the national system, a more judicious approach should be taken balancing scope with budget and timeframes.** **National VSD system reform typically requires policy dialogue. Not all implementing agencies have the required authority or political gravitas to engage in dialogue at this level. In Nepal, the SCO describes its operations at three levels: politics, policy and programs. Support for VSD is framed within these three levels: politics (state building in a federated system), policies (TVET Act, NQF, etc.) and programs (introduction of dual system, etc.).**
Albania	There is good evidence to suggest that SDC VSD projects have supported the transformation of the national systems for VET. The SDC VSD projects in Albania have worked with a wide range of public and private national stakeholders, and the strengthening of the national VSD institutional framework or system was a consistent part of the support provided.
Bangladesh	The reviewed projects contributed little to transformation of the national TVET system.

Burkina Faso	While there is an inherent assumption that projects will be successful examples pilots that will then lead to an upscaling, this has not actually materialised and is now considered the wrong avenue (i.e., bottom-up approaches pursued in the past have proven unable to effect systems change). Some attempts could have had results, for example the establishment of a Vocational Education Fund, a mechanism that would provide sustainable financing for training and skills development. The fund is in theory well resourced, but the money is then going into the general budget and not used to support VSD.
Egypt	While all projects are aligned with the national VSD system, not all projects specifically seek to strengthen or transform the system. Overall, very little attention has been given to transforming the national system. Earlier project phases assisted in introducing the dual apprenticeship model in Egypt. However, this model is still facing challenges.
Niger	Due to the political constraints that SDC and other donors face in Niger, VSD projects do not typically seek to engage with all relevant system actors (e.g., government, schools, training centres, and employers). Successes are more visible and sustainable with schools and training centres than with employers and government.
Nepal	SDC VSD interventions have been very ambitious and while the support does contribute to improving national systems and achieving higher level results, this has proved to be a slow and protracted process in the context of a newly federated government system. Government bureaucratic systems are immature and weak. Federal and provincial governments are also no very stable (a new coalition government was formed the week before the evaluation mission). The Country Office describes its operations at three levels: politics, policy and programs. Support for VSD is framed within these three levels: politics (state building in a federated system), policies (TVET Act, NQF, etc.) and programs (introduction of dual system, etc.). SDC describes investing in the transformation or national systems for VSD in Nepal as an important and strategic “bet”. It has many challenges but is the only strategically relevant approach to take.
Serbia	Interventions focused on systems development. Education to Employment with some results on reforming/improving non-formal education, including at policy and legal level. Dual VET project has strong policy component with considerable impact on VSD part of the secondary education system. However, overall education system is in need of reform, not just formal VSD.
Syria	SDC VSD projects are not designed to support the transformation of national systems for VSD given the political and economic constraints and protracted conflict.
Tanzania	There have been some attempts to strengthen the national VSD institutional framework or system through VSD projects. There is little evidence that SDC’s VSD projects in Tanzania address the needs of national stakeholders. While national institutions have been involved, SDC’s project is small and not designed to address the broader needs of these stakeholders.
EFFICIENCY **EQ8. How efficiently are SDC’s VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?**	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**VSD projects are implemented cost-efficiently, timely and according to market conditions. SCOs are fully responsible for project management and efficiencies. SDC’s VSD projects have cooperated closely with SECO in countries where SECO operates. Often, a country programme contains more than one project with some element of VSD. In some cases, these created their own governance and management systems, which could have been better streamlined to improve efficiency and information sharing across projects.**

Albania	There are strong evidence showing that SDC's VSD projects were delivered across headquarters, regional and country offices based on a broad body of knowledge concerning SDC support for the sector. SDC and SECO have collaborated well on VSD matters and projects have been implemented in a cost-efficient manner based on a sound intervention logic.
Bangladesh	The Evaluation Team has not been able to assess the efficiency of the VSD portfolio as Bangladesh was not among the countries visited (i.e., desk study only). However, it is noteworthy that SDC only implemented one of the six projects reviewed.
Burkina Faso	While PAFPA achieved results at the level of the individuals involved, a more in-depth cost-benefit analysis is likely to reveal that the ratio between inputs and outcomes is problematic. APOSE and IWILI face(d) considerable difficulties in implementation, leading to significant delays, including in disbursement.
Egypt	SDC's support for VSD is well coordinated by the SCO, which has benefited from regional and HQ advice.
Niger	VSD programming in Niger seems to be as efficient as in most other countries. Project efficiency is monitored via narrative and financial reports and both internal and external evaluations and there is evidence that project partnerships and modalities have been designed based on lessons learned and good practice.
Nepal	The three separate projects (i.e., NVQS, ENSSURE and QualiTY) operate in parallel and whilst there are efforts made to streamline reporting and governance (e.g., project steering committee meetings held back-to-back), this does reduce efficiency. With the benefit of hindsight, one larger project may have been more efficient. It is understood that this is the direction proposed for future projects. Given the somewhat fractured state of the federated bureaucracy at present, SDC is doing a lot of "gap filling" with its projects to help government plan, manage and monitor skills development. This is a pragmatic response to current challenges in which government is the implementer of VSD. However, it can undermine effectiveness and be a challenge to sustainability.
Serbia	VSD projects are well managed, cost-efficient, timely and according to market conditions. Some projects, such as the E2E project, after initial difficulties, managed to achieve a better connection between policy-level and practical components, leveraging better results. This led to more efficient use of funding. Efficiency losses occurred in the joint programming phase for the dual VET system, co-funded between Switzerland and Austria.
Syria	Given the difficult circumstances, VSD programming in Syria is not as efficient as other countries. Project costs are particularly high. However, project efficiency is monitored via narrative and financial reports and there is evidence that project partnerships and modalities have been designed based on lessons learned and good practice.
Tanzania	While the Country Office is solely responsible for project coordination and results, there is good evidence to show that SDC's VSD projects in Tanzania have been delivered across HQ, regional and country offices. HOWEVER, there are problems with this division. There are concerns that HQ has little understanding of the realities on the ground and that all VSD projects are required to meet HQ demands. While efficiency and value for money have been driving factors in project design and execution, the limited scale of impact negatively affects cost efficiencies. There is evidence that VSD projects were implemented in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and that efforts were made to mitigate delays.

IMPACT	
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**The evidence varies regarding the extent to which VSD projects produced higher level effects at macro, meso and micro levels. Good results have been achieved at the micro level, with many projects creating positive and meaningful impacts among direct beneficiaries (e.g., women and young people). Considerable results have also been achieved at the meso level where VSD projects have worked with organisations government agencies, training centres, and business organisations to improve their capacity and system governance. Macro reforms have proved to be more difficult because they are more vulnerable to external factors and require more time. This demands for policy dialogue that combined diplomatic and political support with relevant and timely technical assistance.**
Albania	SDC's project interventions created high-level effects on policy and norms. This included the establishment of a comprehensive legislative framework that defines the guiding principles and structure of the VET system, the roles and responsibilities of the key actors and overall standards for VET provision, assessment and certification.
Bangladesh	While most projects delivered the immediate outputs expected, there is little evidence concerning the impact at macro and meso level.
Burkina Faso	VSD interventions have had impact at the level of the individuals participating in the measures. At meso-level, dual VSD has become more known in Burkina Faso, including among private sector actors who recognise the benefits of quality training of prospective employees. At macro level, dual VSD is a familiar concept at institutional and governmental level, however, contextual factors thus far have prevented greater traction and are likely to remain challenges in the future.
Egypt	SDC's support for VSD in Egypt has contributed to change at macro, meso and micro levels. However, the impact of these changes has been modest.
Niger	The context in Niger is a major constraint to measuring the impact of VSD projects on higher level effects at macro, meso and micro levels, at least in terms of how VSD is typically considered. VSD in Niger forms part of a range of interventions designed to promote better access to VSD and improves the meso level (through institutional support of centres and teachers) and has impact on the side of the beneficiaries, young boys, and girls, and in some cases, supports better employability. These are mostly micro-level, some are meso-level effects, very few or no macro-level effects can be found.
Nepal	SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal were instrumental in development of the NVQF and at the meso level, the CTEVT/NSTB capacity to manage the NVQF has been strengthened, although NSTB remains fragile. The NVQF has been valuable as a framework against which skills development can be measured and certified. While there have been efforts to introduce work-placed training, such as through the dual apprenticeship scheme, the impact of this has been modest. It will take more time working with the three levels of government and the private sector to achieve the desired impact. Although SDC has supported the rollout of the dual apprenticeship scheme since 2015, it has not yet found its final form. A recent study of the ENSSURE 24-month Dual VET-Apprenticeship project found net benefits for employers. It is too early to assess the impact of the QualiTY project, which is still in an early implementation stage.

Serbia	The Swiss interventions have shown impact, or prospects for impact, at micro-, meso, and macro levels. While the number of participants in project activities has by definition been limited, a reported 67% remain in employment in companies, resulting at impact at individual level. At meso level, impact has been achieved for local and regional authorities in terms of their greater and more meaningful involvement in bringing about employment in their localities, as well as understanding and championing innovative models including public-private dialogue platforms and broker services provided by non-profit organisations. Impact has been limited in terms of accrediting the WBL programmes created by the project with the National Qualifications Agency. At macro-level, the policy advice project had considerable impact on the introduction of the dual VET legislation and institutional basis. However, the legislation is in need of revision, and future policy advice might be contingent of the solutions adapted during the revisions. E2E has had impact, or the potential of impact, at the level of policies and legislation, including on youth and labour.
Syria	The political context is a major constraint to measuring the impact of VSD projects on higher level effects at macro, meso and micro levels, at least in terms of how VSD is typically considered. VSD in Syria form part of a range of interventions designed to promote resilience and, in some cases, support income generation. These are mostly micro-level effects.
Tanzania	The evidence is mixed regarding the extent to which SDC VSD projects in Tanzania produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels. While the macro effects have been minimal, there are measurable outcomes at meso and micro levels. The challenge is with the scale of these effects. While projects have applied demonstration and, in some cases, market-systems development approaches to increase the scale of impact, this is ultimately limited by the preparedness of government to invest in VSD and the willingness of the private sector to pay for skills development. In all cases, this is a major challenge. Thus, the scale of possible impact depends on a combination of external factors.
SUSTAINABILITY **EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?**	
FINAL CONCLUSION	**Sustainability is elusive in many of SDC's VSD projects. While there is evidence that some intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure there are many factors (e.g., economic, political, social, and institutional factors) that influence sustainability. All Credit Proposals include an Exit Strategy, but many of these are overly optimistic and ambitious in their assumption and claims regarding sustainability. While these claims could be more rigorously tested, a more strategically realistic approach would be to agree on feasible milestones that may be achieved along a pathway to increasing sustainability. In some instances, the SDC support for VSD demands a degree of political, bureaucratic and institutional maturity that is not aligned with current realities. More consideration needs to be given for how these issues are framed and contextualised.**
Albania	While the sustainability of VSD projects in Albania have been consciously considered over the long history of VSD programming, multiple project phases suggest that this goal is elusive. VSD projects have built on the experience gained through past projects and phases and contributed to policy, legal and institutional reforms. However, institutional sustainability of the VET system is not assured, which will likely continue the demand for long-term donor support.
Bangladesh	Sustainability is a serious challenge for all the six projects. It is questionable whether the activities will continue once the external fundings comes to an end.
Burkina Faso	Exit strategies have not been sufficiently defined, and sustainability of results is uncertain.

Egypt	There are continuing challenges in Egypt's VSD sector. While SDC's support has sought to build the capacity of key actors (in particular government actors), the sustainability of these efforts is not convincing.
Niger	While there is some evidence that outcomes have continued or are likely to continue (such as PEAJ 3) after project closure, many projects continue in earlier phases or describe future phases. There is little evidence that interventions are embedded in local systems and more so with the political changes in July 2023, this may not even be desired any more.
Nepal	Given the newly established federated state and fragile and conflict-affected nature of the Nepal situation, expectations related to sustainability are highly ambitious. All projects have been designed to achieve sustainability and support for national systems is a vital contribution to sustainability, but this will take time. The phasing of projects allows for adjustment to project interventions to address the contemporary barriers to sustainability, but new barriers emerge over time. There is limited scope for the private sector to invest in skills development. Thus, sustainability requires continued government funding and, to some extent, student fees. Within the current fragile and underdeveloped setting, donor funds will be required for some time.
Serbia	An upcoming revision of the labour legislation is likely to provide the basis for the operation of brokers modelled on those supported through the project. This means that brokers will have access to public funds earmarked for pilot projects or measures to encourage labour market integration at local levels - an important precondition for these organisations' financial sustainability. The formal dual VET system is likely to remain, given that it has been introduced, as a priority, by the top level of government, and has received an institutional "home" through the Office for Dual VET, which gives the topic high visibility. There is some uncertainty about the path that dual VET is going to take, and whether it is able to navigate and resolve the multiple challenges that exist.
Syria	While there is some evidence that outcomes continued, or are likely to continue, after project closure, many projects continue in earlier phases or describe future phases. However, there is little evidence that interventions are embedded in local systems as there was limited cooperation with the local systems.
Tanzania	All VSD projects in Tanzania contain an exit strategy. However, there are concerns that these strategies typically serve an SDC demand for sustainability and are not always realistic. Lessons have been learned regarding the challenges to the sustainability of VSD systems in Tanzania, but the solutions to these are hard to find. There are many political and economic challenges that undermine sustainable change, including the "donor dependence" and the lack of incentives to operate independently of external financial and technical support.

Annex 4. SDC VSD portfolio analysis (2017-2023)

The portfolio of SDC's VSD projects from 2017 to 2023 is contained in an SAP database with 181 VSD-relevant activities (i.e., projects) across 61 countries. The evaluation excluded small actions, global credits, non-released commitments, and core contributions to Swiss non-government organisations (NGOs) and institutions (i.e., institutional partnerships) because these represent general funding. As a result, the evaluation focused on 131 VSD-relevant projects across 58 countries. These commitments were either in progress during the evaluation or closed after completion. The rest are in the planning or concept phase.[3]

SDC investments into VSD 2017-2023

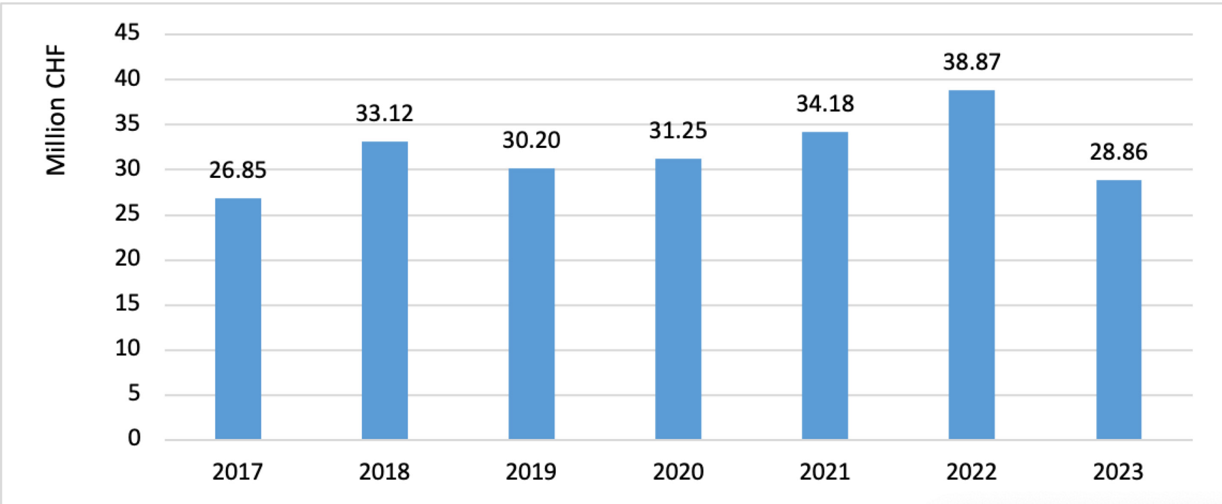
The cumulative funding across 181 projects, including the projected funding for 2024, amounts to 758.5 million Swiss Francs (CHF), with CHF 317.9 million attributed to vocational training (i.e., code 20008 in the SAP database) and advanced professional, including technical and managerial training (i.e., code 20009 in the SAP database). When small actions, global credits, non-released commitments, and core contributions to Swiss NGOs and institutions are excluded, the investment into VSD is CHF 247.8 million across 58 countries. These 131 VSD projects spanned 169 accumulated project phases that were either active or completed during 2017-2023. Of these, 65 (38%) were closed at the time of the evaluation, and 104 (62%) were active, accounting for 72 per cent of the total VSD expenditure.

Not all projects in the portfolio are entirely focused on VSD. Some projects contain only 20 per cent VSD components, while others are entirely concerned with VSD. Only 35 projects were dedicated entirely to VSD.

Annual expenditure on VSD

Between 2017 and 2022, annual spending on VSD varied from approximately CHF 27 million to approximately CHF 39 million, indicating an upward trend (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Annual spending on VSD, 2017-2024 (CHF million, calendar year)

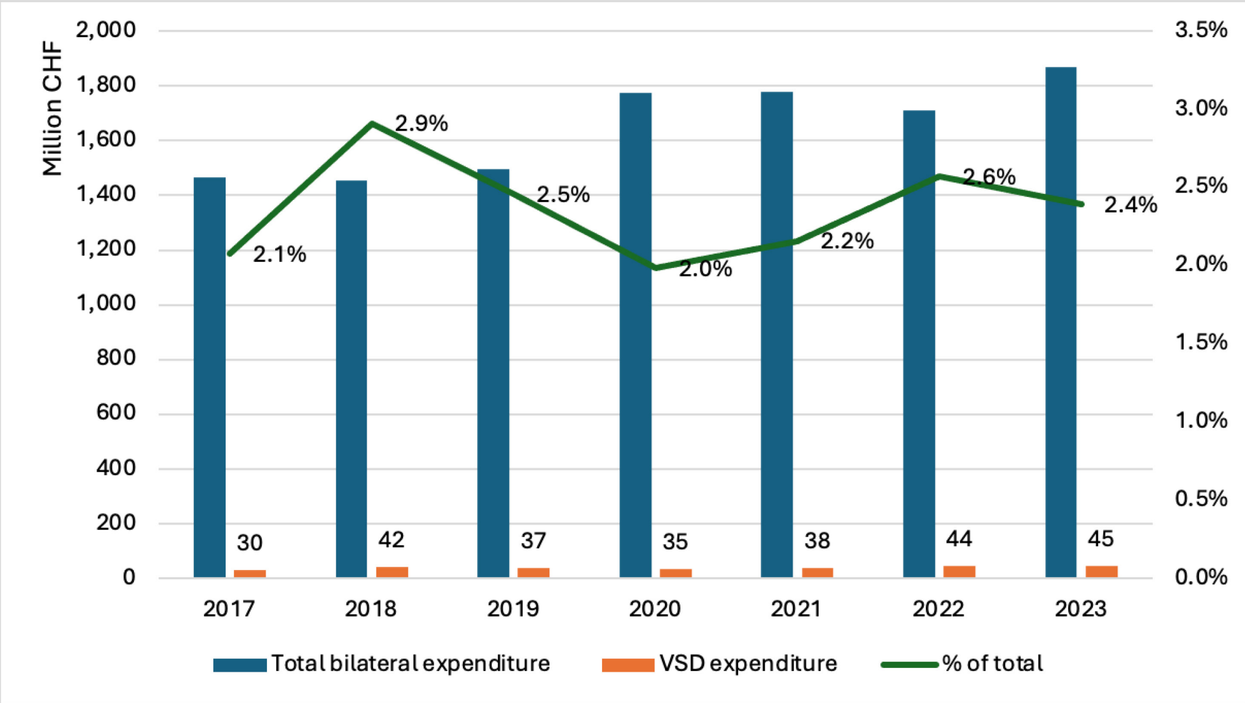


SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

3 The data extracted from the SAP database comprises SDC projects with VSD-related activities categorised by sector. Each entry in the Excel dataset represents a project activity or intervention, uniquely identified by project, phase, partner type, and country. Each project activity is allocated to (up to) three sectors, with a percentage associated with each sector, totalling 100 per cent. In this portfolio analysis, VSD is defined as projects falling under two sectors (i.e., vocational training, code 20008, and advanced professional, including technical and managerial training, code 20009).

Figure 2 shows the share of VSD funding in total SDC bilateral expenditure, indicating that the proportion varied from two per cent in 2020 to 2.9 per cent in 2018. The average from 2017 to 2023 was 2.4 per cent.

Figure 2. Share of VSD funding in total SDC bilateral expenditure, 2017-2023



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Number, size and status of projects (project phases)

Most projects (i.e., 51% by number) are larger than one million CHF, representing 92.05 per cent of total VSD portfolio expenditure. However, 36 per cent of projects (by number) fall within the CHF 1-5 million range, representing 38.48 per cent of total expenditure. There were 51 projects (39%) ranging from 100,000 to one million CHF, with a combined VSD expenditure of CHF 22.2 million (8.2% of total expenditure). Fourteen projects received less than CHF 100,000. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Number of projects by size of VSD expenditure for 2017-2024

Project expenditure size (CHF)	Projects		Total expenditure	
	n	%	CHF	%
<100.000	14	11%	501,045	0.17%
100,001-500,000	34	26%	10,080,685	3.52%
500,001-1,000,000	17	13%	12,197,987	4.25%
1,000,001-5,000,000	47	36%	110,361,192	38.48%
>5,000,000	19	15%	153,632,040	53.57%
Total VSD expenditure	131	100%	286,772,948	100%

SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Most (62%) VSD interventions were active at the time of the evaluation, accounting for 72 per cent of the total VSD expenditure (see *Figure 4*).

Figure 4. Status of VSD project (phases)

Project phase status	Number of project phases	VSD expenditure (m CHF)
Closed	65 (38%)	69.7 (28%)
Active	104 (62%)	178.1 (72%)
Total	**169**	**247.8 (100%)**

Project implementation

The three most important implementing partners are Swiss NGOs (e.g., Helvetas and Swisscontact), foreign NGOs (i.e., non-Swiss NGOs) and the private sector. These agencies each implement 50.8, 39.7, and 39.2 per cent of the number of VSD projects, respectively. See Figure 5. However, Swiss NGOs implement the lion's share (45.4%) of projects in terms of volume. See Figure 6.

Swiss NGOs implemented three of the four largest VSD projects valued above five million CHF and are the largest project implementers in terms of the VSD intervention size for projects ranging from CHF 1-5 million and CHF 100,000 to one million.

While the private sector implements just under ten per cent of the VSD portfolio by value, it contributes to implementing just under 40 per cent of all project phases. However, most of these (i.e., 57 out of 78 phases) fall below CHF 100,000 and are considered "small actions." The private sector implemented only five project phases worth one million CHF or more. In comparison, Swiss NGOs implemented 32 project phases of this size. Partner country organisations, referred to in the figures below as Foreign State Institutions, implemented ten projects in this size category.

Foreign NGOs (i.e., non-Swiss NGOs) implemented some 40 per cent of all VSD projects in the evaluation period. Of these, Foreign international NGOs (e.g., CARE International, Oxfam) implemented 71 per cent of all projects, while Local NGOs (e.g., BRAC in Bangladesh) implemented 29 per cent. Foreign NGOs are the most common project implementers in projects ranging from CHF 100,000 to CHF 500,000 (see Figure 5).

Foreign State Institutions (i.e., state institutions of partner countries) account for many interventions (62), with the majority falling within the CHF 100,000 to one million range.

Figure 5. VSD project phase size and partner groups (number or project phases by value, CHF)

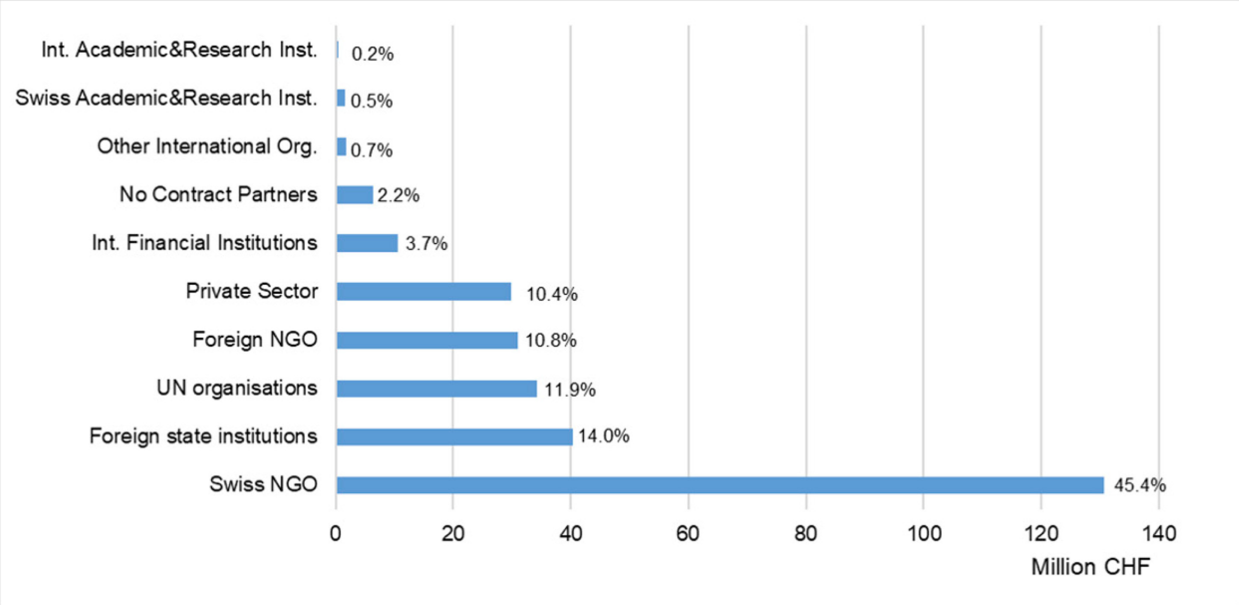
Partner group	0-100,000	100,001-500,000	500,001-1m	1-5m	>5m	Total	% of total number of phases (n=169)
Swiss NGO	26	25	18	29	3	101	50.8%
Foreign NGO	37	31	6	5	0	79	39.7%
Private Sector	57	13	3	5	0	78	39.2%
Foreign State Institutions	27	13	12	10	0	62	31.2%
No Contract Partners	44	6	0	1	0	51	25.6%
United Nations Organisations	21	11	6	9	0	47	23.6%
Swiss Academic and Research Inst.	6	6	0	0	0	12	6.0%
International Financial Institutions	3	3	0	0	1	7	3.5%
International Academic Research Organisations	4	1	0	0	0	5	2.5%
Other International Organisations	1	2	0	1	0	4	2.0%

SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Swiss NGOs also lead a substantial share of VSD projects when volume is considered (i.e., 45.4% by volume). See Figure 6.

Foreign State Institutions (i.e., partner country institutions) and United Nations (UN) organisations account for 14 and 11.9 per cent, respectively, while Foreign NGOs are responsible for 10.8 per cent of VSD project volume. Private sector companies or organisations make up 10.4 per cent of the total volume of funds but stand out as a critical implementing partner group for SDC in terms of the number of projects (i.e., 78 project phases).

Figure 6. VSD funding by partner group and share (2017-2023, million CHF)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

The VSD volume of funds delivered through Swiss NGOs steadily increased from 2017 to 2021. There was an upward trend in the VSD volume implemented by foreign state institutions until 2022. The amounts for 2023, for both Swiss NGOs and partner country institutions, show a decrease in VSD funding compared to previous years. This is likely linked to shifts in SDC's strategic orientations (i.e., comparing IC 2017-2020 to IC 2021-24, which is less focussed on VSD). While there are some fluctuations in the volume of funds provided to other implementing partner groups in annual figures, there are no noticeable trends (see Figure 7).

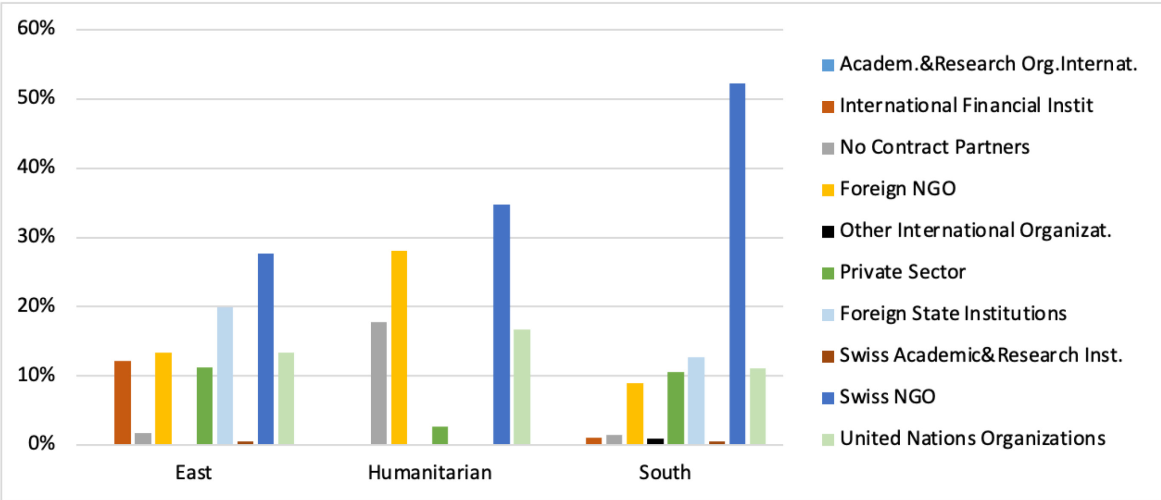
Figure 7. Annual expenditure by partner group (by value, million CHF)

Partner Group	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Swiss NGO	12.5	14.10	14.9	16.50	18.70	15.60	13.60	107.50
Foreign State Institutions	5.0	3.20	3.5	4.00	5.00	6.60	3.60	32.07
United Nations organisations	3.0	5.00	4.8	3.80	4.90	2.60	3.70	28.09
Private Sector	2.9	5.60	1.6	3.70	1.30	3.00	4.30	22.80
International NGO	1.5	4.00	3.1	2.30	3.60	4.20	3.40	24.40
No Contract Partners	1.0	1.00	0.4	0.30	0.50	0.50	0.30	5.16
International Financial Institutions	0.7	0.06	1.5	0.003	-0.10	5.70	-	9.33
International Academic and Research Institutions	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.40
Swiss Academic and Research Institutions	0.06	0.10	0.2	0.10	0.17	0.43	0.14	1.26
Other International Organizations	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.30	0.04	0.01	-0.40	1.70
Grand total	26.8	33	30.2	31.2	34.1	38.8	28.8	233.00

SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

There are notable differences in the proportion of VSD finance provided to implementers based on geographic areas. For example, Swiss NGOs were the most important implementers of Swiss VSD funding across all three domains (i.e., East, South and Humanitarian). However, their dominance is much more prominent in the South (representing 52 per cent of the total VSD spending) than in the other two domains (East 28 per cent, Humanitarian 35 per cent). The gap between the Swiss NGOs and other players is smaller in the East and Humanitarian domains. For instance, important implementers for SDC in the East have been state institutions, followed by a relatively even distribution of VSD financing among UN, local NGOs, and IFIs—all being important SDC partners in the East, likely due to the overall better state of institutions, stability and economic status as well as the presence of SECO in the East compared to the South, also leading to an increased IFI activity in the East. Non-Swiss NGOs and UN agencies are significant implementing partners in the humanitarian domain.

Figure 8. Partner group by domain (% of VSD expenditure)

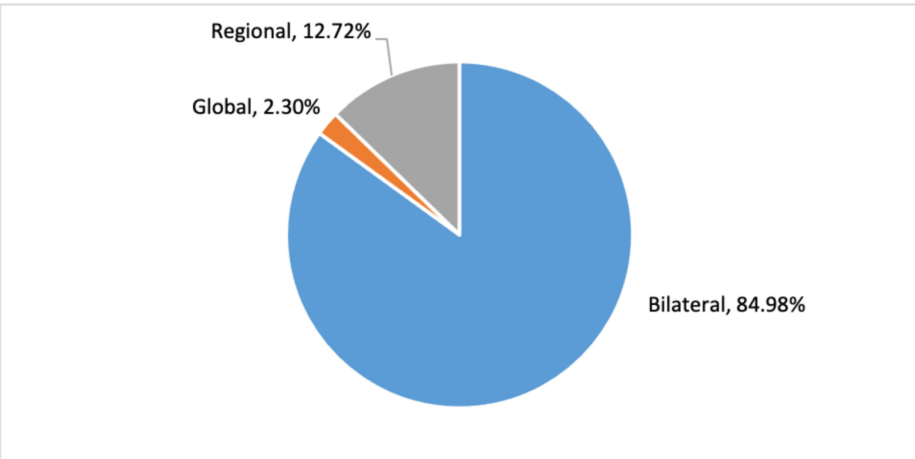


SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Distribution by type of cooperation and domains

SDC's VSD bilateral cooperation at the country level represents 84.9 per cent of the SDC VSD portfolio. Regional VSD projects and interventions account for 12.7 per cent, while global interventions (i.e., those on two or more continents) comprise only 2.3 per cent of the total VSD expenditure. See Figure 9.

Figure 9. Type of cooperation: bilateral, global and regional (% of VSD expenditure)

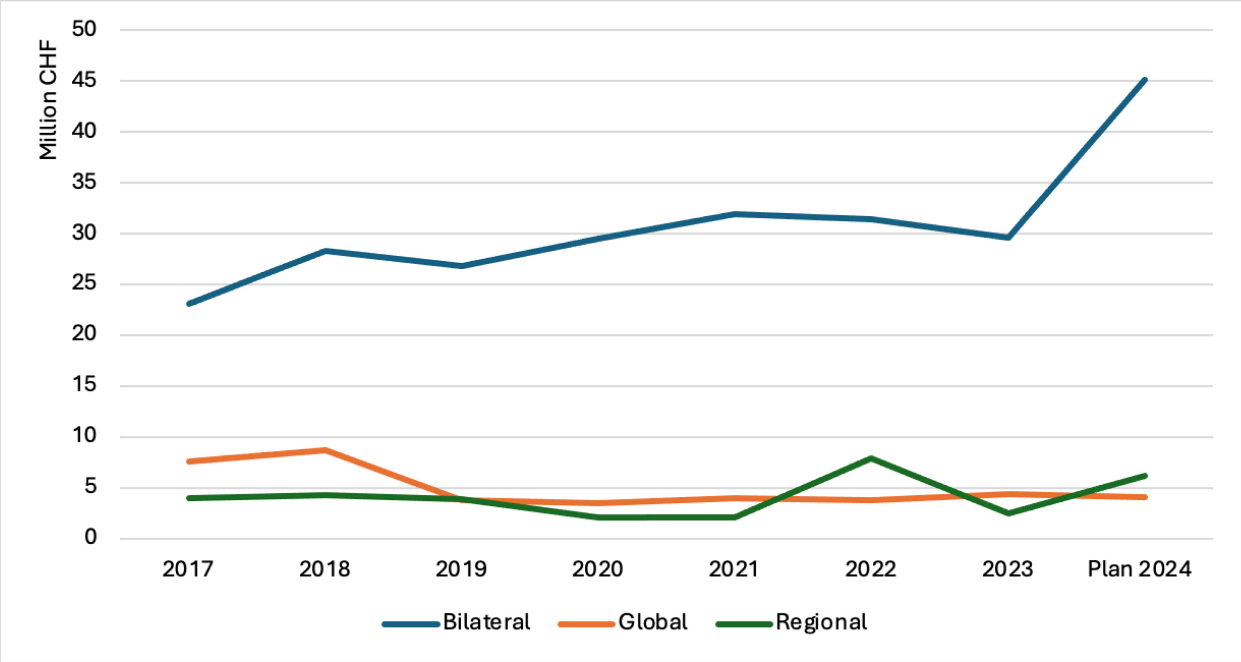


SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Figure 10 shows how bilateral cooperation has substantially increased since 2017, while support for global programmes remained steady after 2018, following a considerable decrease.

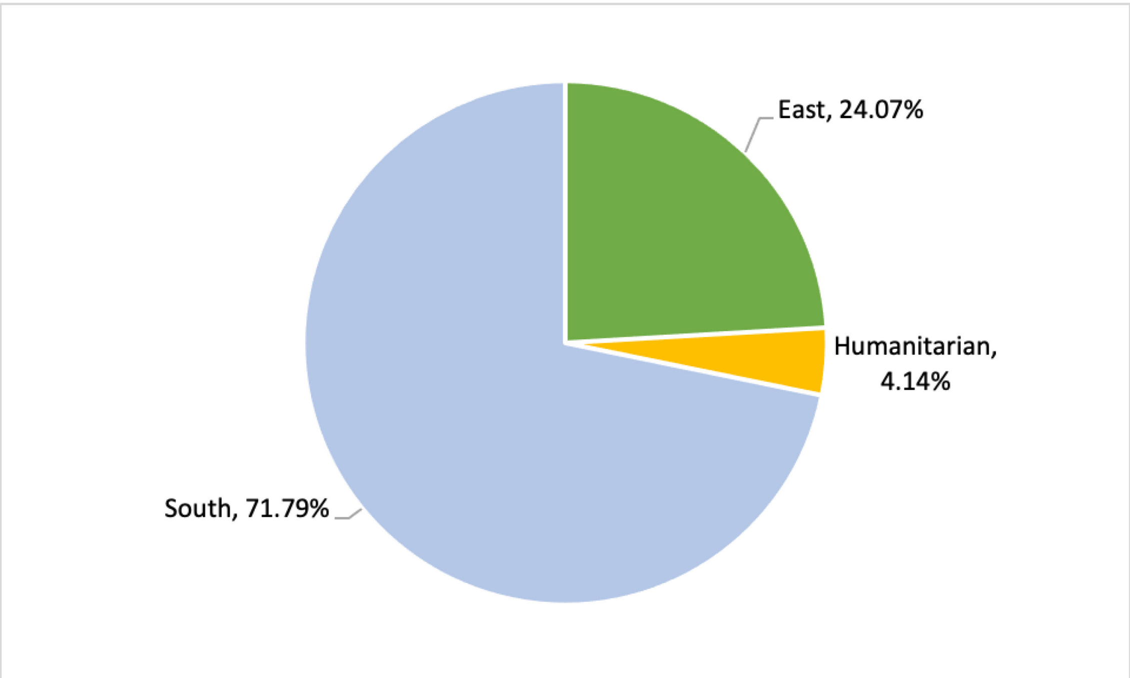
Figure 11 shows that the South domain has the largest portfolio by far in terms of VSD (i.e., 71.7%), followed by the East (24%) and Humanitarian (4%) domains. The VSD support for the East domain grew from 2017 to 2022 but declined thereafter.

Figure 10. Annual VSD expenditure by type of cooperation



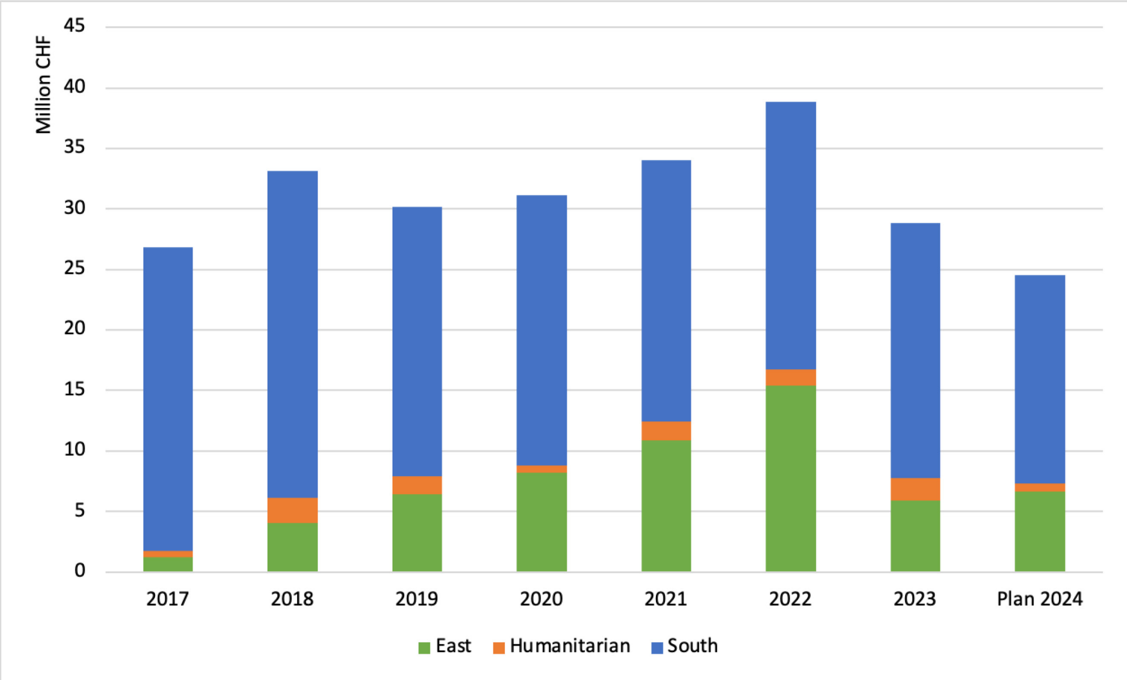
SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Figure 11. VSD funding by domain (2017-2023)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

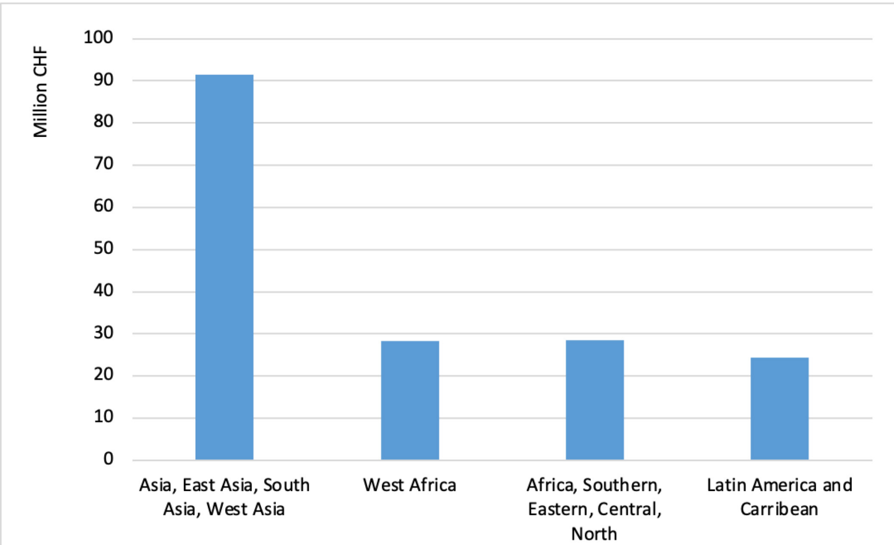
Figure 12. Annual VSD expenditure by domain (2017-2023, million CHF)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

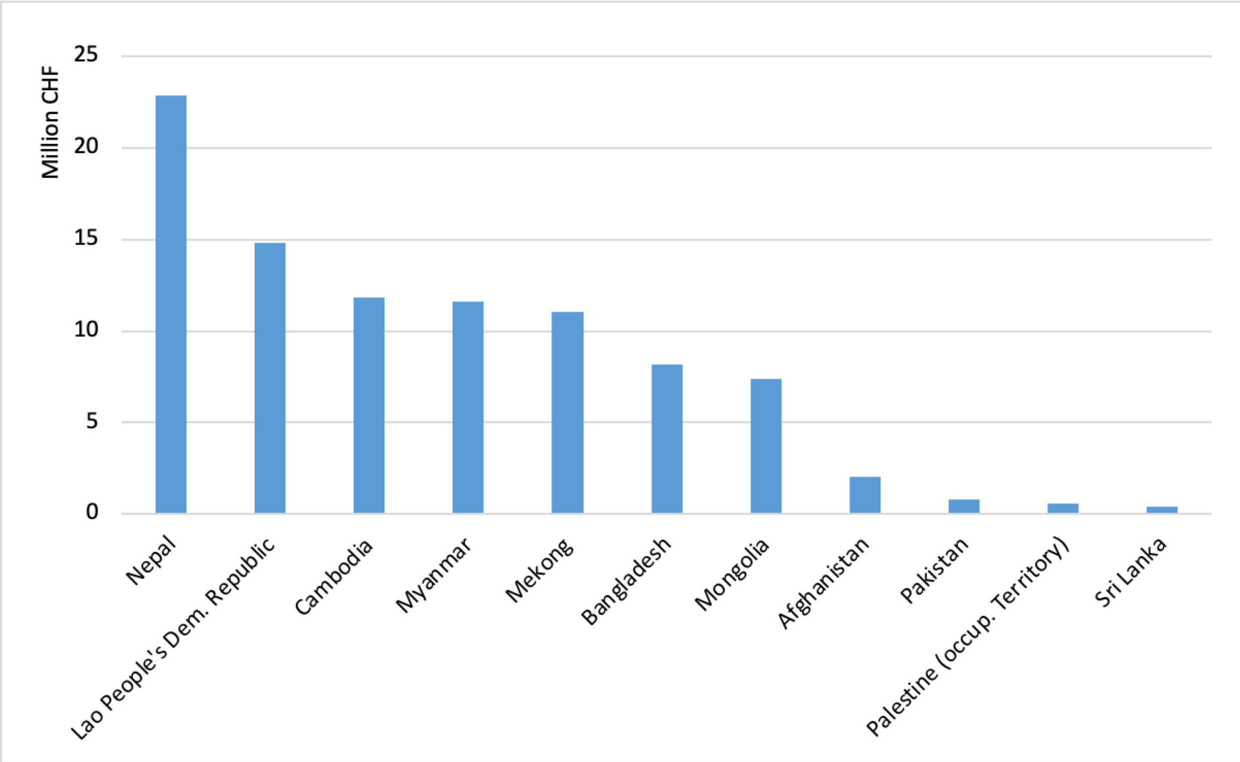
Within the South Domain, Asia, East Asia, South Asia and West Asia stand out as recipients of VSD funding. See the figure below. This is broken down further in the following figures, which provide funding allocations in the evaluation period by country.

Figure 13. VSD funding South Domain, by region (2017-2023)



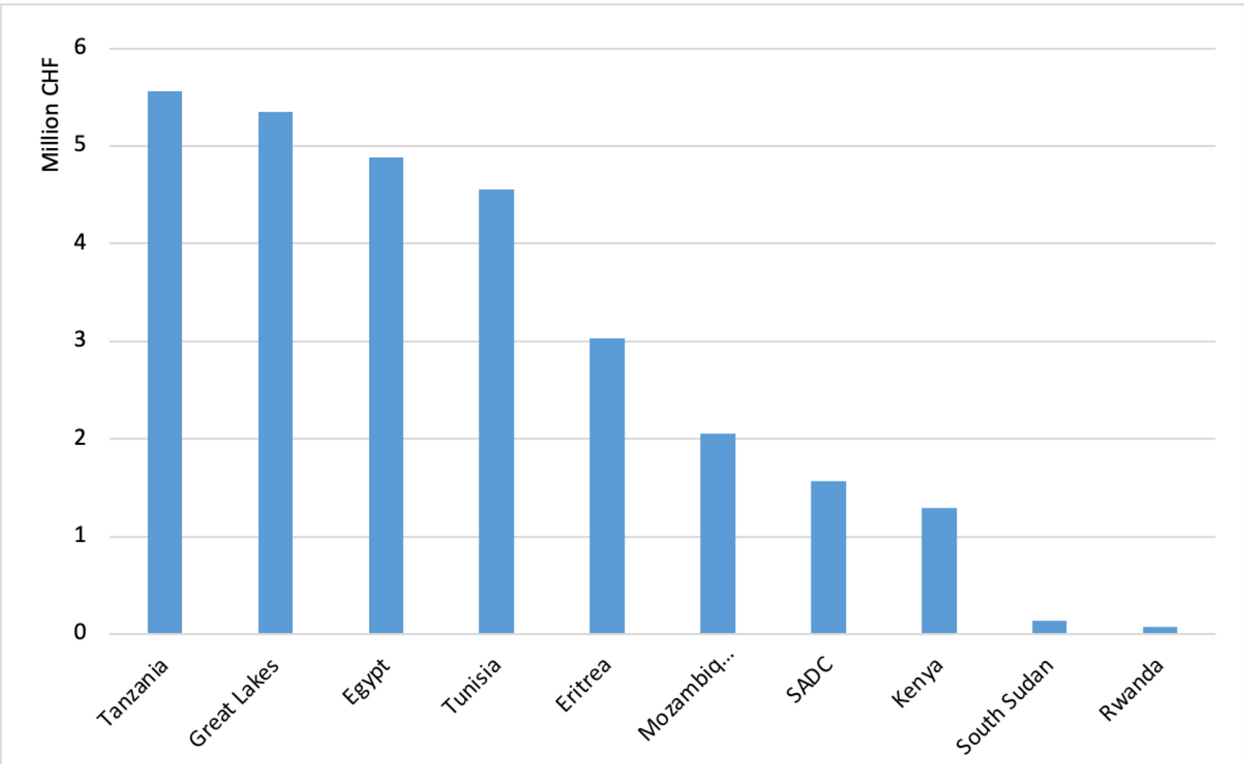
SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Figure 14. VSD funding South Domain: Asia, East Asia, South Asia, West Asia, by country (2017-2023)



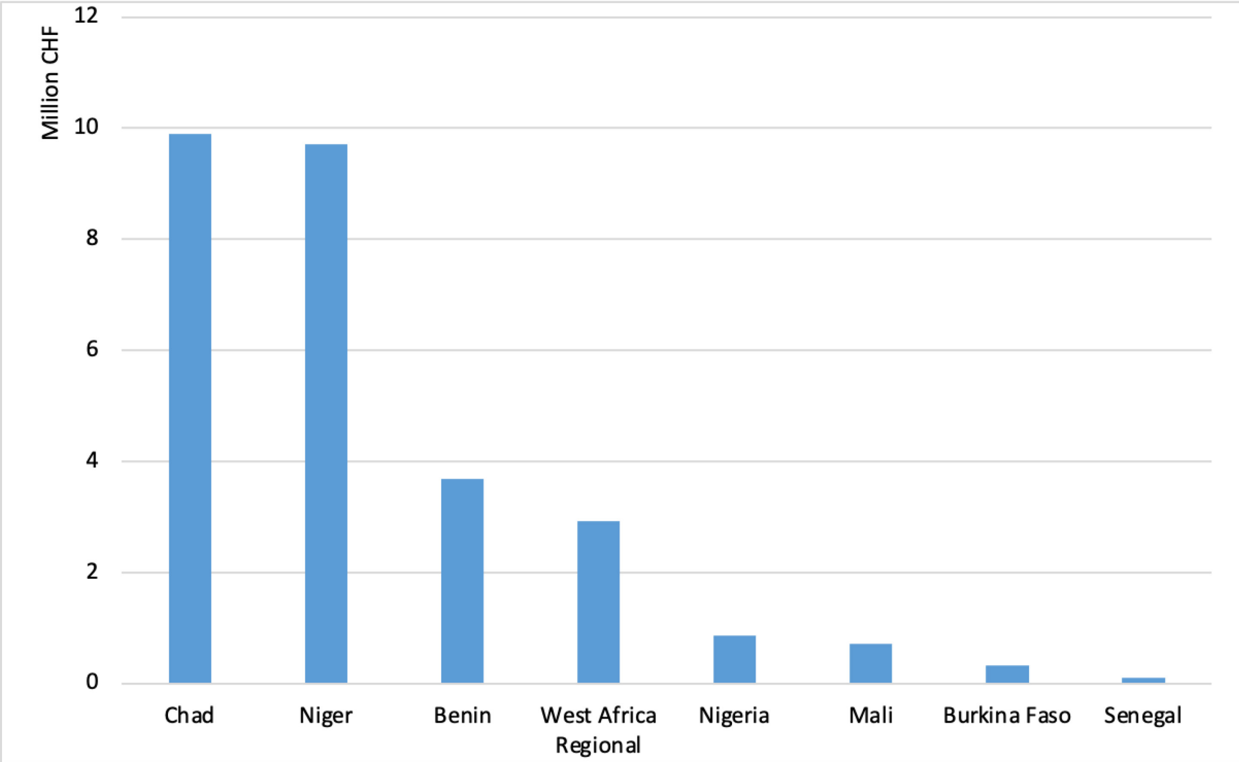
SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Figure 15. VSD funding South Domain: Southern, Eastern, Central, North Africa, by country (2017-2023)



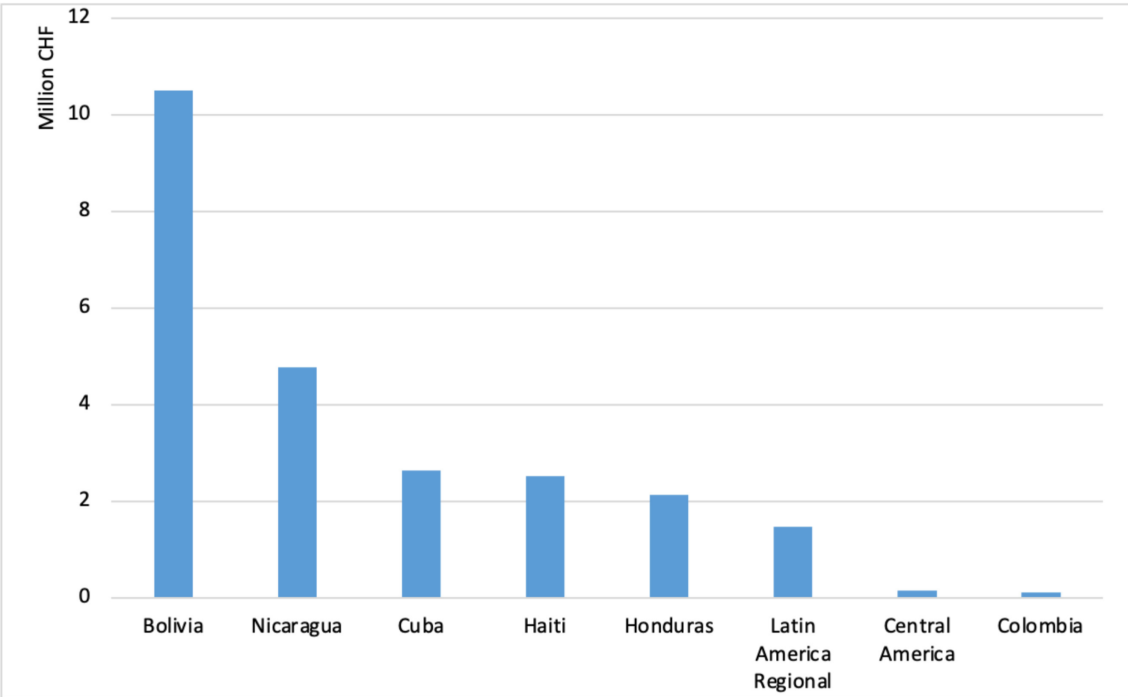
SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Figure 16. VSD funding South Domain: West Africa, by country (2017-2023)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

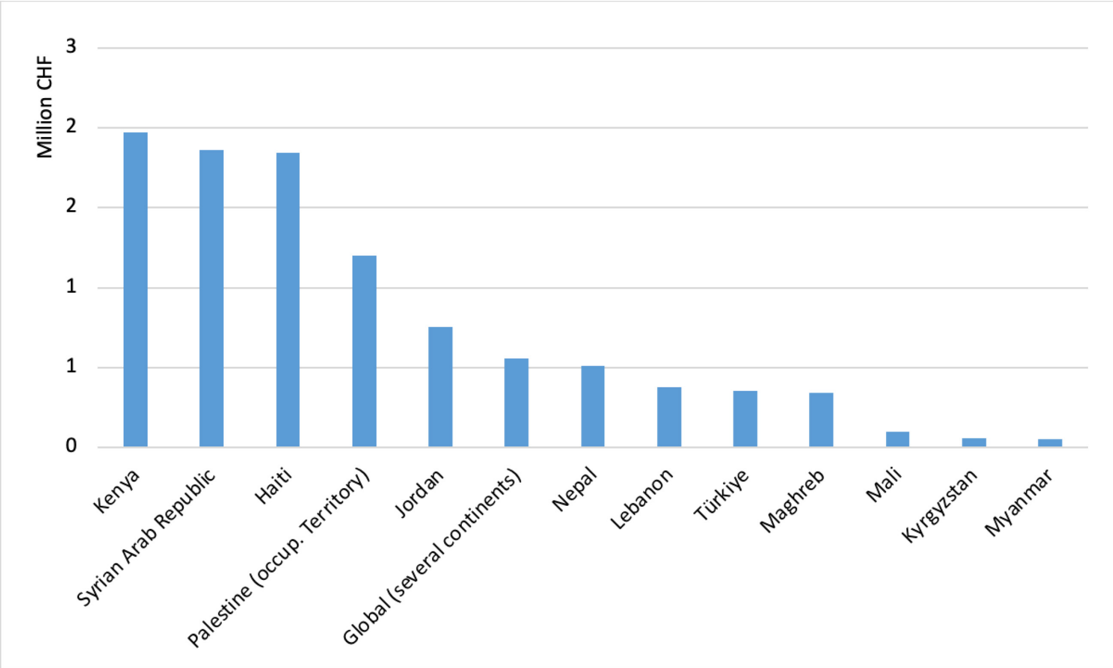
Figure 17. VSD funding South Domain: Latin America and the Caribbean, by country (2017-2023)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

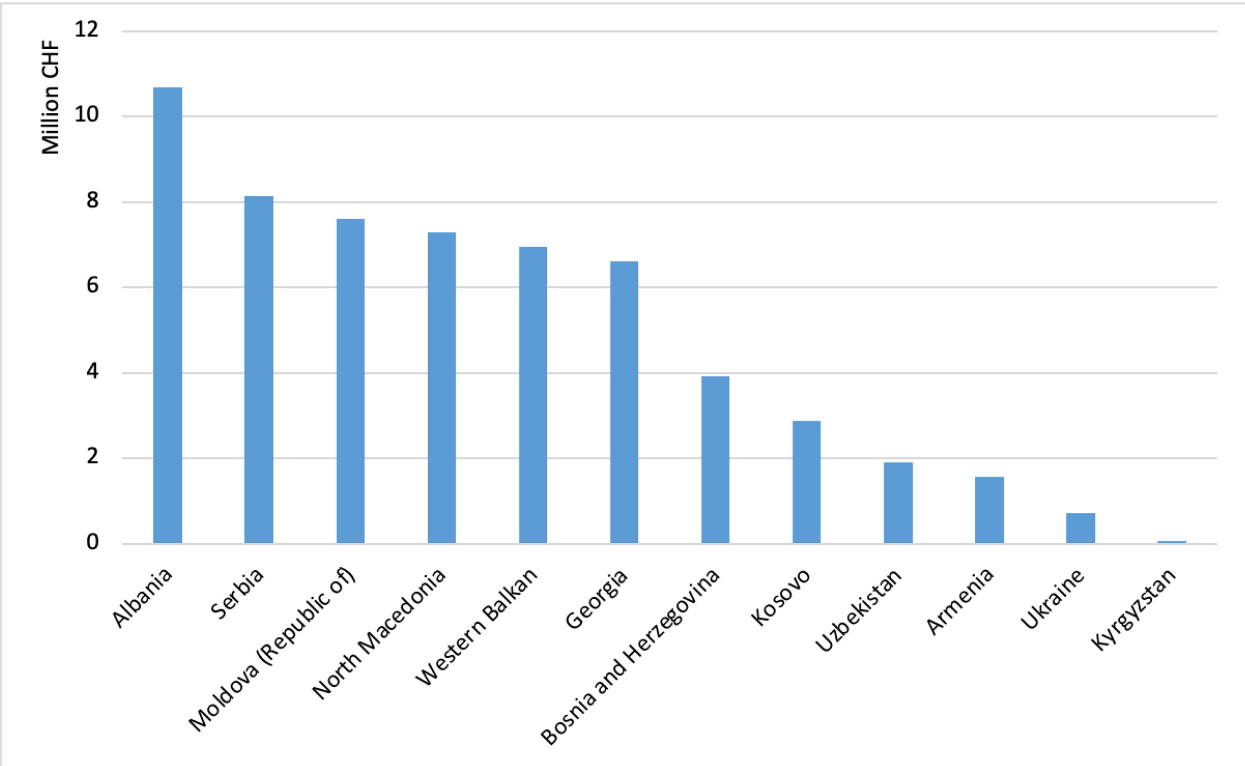
While the overall volumes of Humanitarian VSD funding are low compared to other domains (see Figure 10), Figure 18 shows the greatest beneficiaries are Kenya, Syria and Haiti.

Figure 18. VSD funding Humanitarian Domain, by country (2017-2023)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Figure 19. VSD funding East, by country (2017-2023)



SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024.

Distribution by countries: volume and number of projects

This section examines the distribution of VSD projects across regions and countries by the volume of VSD expenditure and the number of VSD projects.

Distribution by volume

Several countries stand out when examining VSD expenditure per country. These are Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Albania, Bolivia, and Chad.

In the South Domain, Asian nations have been the primary recipients of VSD funding, accounting for 53 per cent of the total, followed by Southern, Eastern, Central and North Africa (17%) and West African countries (16%). The remaining 14 per cent represents spending in Latin America.

Delving deeper into the regions, specific countries stand out:

- In East, South, and West Asia: Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar.
- In West Africa: Chad and Niger.
- In Southern, Eastern, Central, and North Africa: Tanzania, Egypt and Tunisia.
- In Latin America: Bolivia, Nicaragua and Cuba.

In the East, Albania, Serbia, Moldova, North Macedonia, and Georgia were the major beneficiaries of Swiss VSD support.

Kenya, Syria, Haiti, Palestine, and Jordan were notable recipients of Swiss VSD support in the humanitarian domain.

Distribution by number of projects

Global interventions stand out when examining the number of VSD interventions, followed by VSD interventions in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bolivia, and Cambodia.

From a regional perspective, the following countries stand out:

- In East, South, and West Asia: Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- In West Africa: Niger, Mali, Chad, and Benin.
- In Southern, Eastern, Central, and North Africa: Tanzania and Kenya.
- In the East: Moldova, Albania, BiH, and Serbia.
- In the Humanitarian domain: Palestine, Syria and Jordan.

Figure 20. Number of VSD projects by country/region (2017-2023)

Country/Region	Projects	Phases		Country/Region	Projects	Phases	
		A	C			A	C
Nepal	7	6	3	Georgia	2	3	0
Bangladesh	6	4	3	Haiti	2	2	1
Global (several continents)	7	6	6	Jordan	2	1	1
Myanmar	5	2	4	Kosovo	2	2	1
Egypt	4	3	1	Kyrgyzstan	2	1	1
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	4	3	2	Latin America Regional	2	1	1
Moldova	4	4	2	North Macedonia	2	3	0
Mongolia	4	0	5	Tunisia	2	1	1
Niger	4	3	1	Türkiye	2	2	1
Not specified	3	1	5	Uzbekistan	2	1	1
Palestine	3	0	3	West Africa Regional	2	2	0
Syria	4	4	0	Afghanistan	1	0	1
Tanzania	4	4	2	Armenia	1	1	0
Albania	3	3	1	Croatia	1	0	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	3	0	Great Lakes	1	1	1
Chad	3	4	1	Honduras	1	1	0
Kenya	2	2	2	Lebanon	1	1	0
Mali	3	2	1	Maghreb	1	1	0
Mekong	3	2	2	Nicaragua	1	1	1
Mozambique	2	1	1	Nigeria	1	1	0
Serbia	3	3	1	Pakistan	1	1	0
Benin	2	2	1	Senegal	1	1	0
Bolivia	2	1	1	South Sudan	1	1	0
Burkina Faso	2	2	1	SADC	1	1	0
Cambodia	2	2	2	Sri Lanka	1	1	0
Cuba	2	3	0	Ukraine	1	1	0
Eritrea	2	1	2	Western Balkan	1	1	0

SOURCE: SDC SAP Database 2024. A = Active project phases. C = Closed project phases.

Annex 5. List of documents reviewed

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (2021) *Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021–2024*, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Bern

— (2016) *Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2017–2020*, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Bern

— (2018) *SDC Guidance Leave No One Behind; 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, SDC, Bern.

— (2018) *Switzerland´s International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation*, Bern.

Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC, 2024) "Input Paper on Green Skills; Why skills are important for the green transition, what green skills are, and how SDC can define entry points for embedding green skills in VSD programs." Workstream on Inclusive Green Economy. E+E SDC, Bern.

— *(2023) Approach Paper; Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Vocational Skills Development 2017-2023*, Final Version, 24 July 2023, Bern.

— (2023) "Capitalization exercise on Technical and Vocational Training Systems in Latin America", *Brief*. Bern.

— (2023) "Independent Evaluation of SDC's Private Sector Engagement 2015–2021", *Evaluation 2023/1*, Bern.

— (2022) *SDC Thematic Guidance on Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development,* Bern.

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Annex 6. Country case studies

Country case 6.1: Albania

Country case 6.2: Bangladesh

Country case 6.3: Burkina Faso

Country case 6.4: Egypt

Country case 6.5: Niger

Country case 6.6: Nepal

Country case 6.7: Serbia

Country case 6.8: Syria

Country case 6.9: Tanzania

Annex 6.1. Albania Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Albania, a middle-income country, is making the difficult transition to a more modern open-market economy. Over the past decade, sustained economic growth has led to significant job creation and reductions in unemployment for all age groups. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has averaged over five per cent annually over the past two decades before weathering the consequences of the 2019 earthquake, COVID-19 pandemic, and cost-of-living crisis. The formal private sector has expanded rapidly. The World Bank reports GDP growth of 3.3 per cent in 2023 as private consumption, exports, and investment increased despite rising energy and food prices. Despite another year of exceptional growth in tourism, growth is likely to remain at similar levels in 2024. Poverty is expected to continue to decline as employment and wages rise. The country's medium-term prospects hinge on global recovery, structural reforms, and fiscal consolidation.[4]

As with other countries in the Western Balkans region, services have been the major driver of job growth. These have tended to be low-value-added, low-paying services such as retailing and wholesaling, construction, and services linked to tourism such as hospitality and transport. Labour-intensive manufacturing, mainly the garment and footwear sectors, and business process outsourcing activities have also added jobs. Although agriculture's contribution to employment and GDP has shrunk over time, it is still the major driver of economic activity and employment in rural areas. Close to half of the Albanian workforce, including informal jobs, are employed in activities either directly or indirectly linked to agriculture.

These positive trends have translated into employment growth. The employment rate averaged 50.58 per cent from 2012 until 2023, reaching an all-time high of 57.70 per cent in the third quarter of 2023, while the unemployment rate was slightly above 10 per cent. Youth unemployment is around 22 per cent. While this is high by Western European standards, it is amongst the lowest in the Western Balkans.

Migration has helped keep unemployment numbers low over the past decade. Although emigration during this time has been significantly lower than in the 1990s and 2000s (total net migration for these two decades was 1.08 million), young people have continued to leave in significant numbers in recent years. About 165,000 Albanians, primarily young people below the age of 30 or six per cent of the current population, have emigrated since 2010. People with higher education and skills tend to migrate to more economically advanced countries in Western Europe (i.e., mainly Germany and the United Kingdom) and the United States. In contrast, those with lower qualifications and skills tend to migrate to Greece and Italy.

Outward migration and low birth rates mean Albania's population is projected to decrease by ten per cent over the next decade. Sustained migration indicates local deficits in the number and quality of jobs. Many young Albanians continue to migrate despite having job opportunities at home.

The prospect of European Union (EU) membership is an important factor shaping the country's recent growth and development. Albania has received over one billion Euros in pre-accession development assistance since applying for EU membership in 2009. In March 2020, the European Council decided—and European leaders approved - to open accession negotiations with Albania. Although the country is now firmly on the path to full EU membership, reforms are still required to satisfy the country before it becomes a full member.

In 2013, the Government of Albania transferred responsibility for the vocational education and training (VET) system from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Labour and VET. However, in 2017, the government dismantled the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Finance and Economy took responsibility for the sector. The National Employment Services

4 World Bank (2024) The World Bank in Albania, website, 18 April, accessed 1 May 2024.

(NES), the National Agency for VET and Qualifications (NA VETQ) and the two existing public types of VET providers fall within the Ministry of Finance and Economy. The Albanian VET system is built on a network of 41 public institutions that deliver upper-secondary initial VET (i-VET) programmes and short-term vocational training (c-VET) (as of June 2024). Thirty-one secondary vocational schools and ten adult learning centres currently prepare around 14,392 upper secondary vocational education students and 15,134 adults (Academic Year 2023-2024). The Ministry of Finance and Economy endorsed an Optimization Plan for VET providers in 2022, which is expected to be completed in 2024.

The National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2023-2030 guides the VET reform. The government coordinates the reforms through the Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) on Human Capital Development, which brings together all related public institutions and donors.

2 Development cooperation

Switzerland and Albania established diplomatic relations in 1970. From 2018 to 2021, the Swiss economic development and employment portfolio centred on macroeconomic stability, private sector development, youth employment, and vocational skills development. The current country cooperation strategy (2022-2025) indicates that Switzerland will continue its "key focus" on capacity and skills development. "Young men and women should be able to find decent employment, with the aid of an optimised VET system, characterised by increased private sector participation as well as gender-responsive and innovative learning methods and technologies. New and inclusive approaches to labour market activation (as a means of strengthening social protection), whilst increasing opportunities for innovative private training and emerging job intermediation services, will contribute to the life-long development of people's skills and potential."

Albania is the largest recipient of SDC VSD support by volume in East cooperation, but it is only 22nd in the number of VSD projects globally.

The projects falling within the scope of this evaluation are presented in the figure below and then briefly summarised.

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Albania reviewed.

PROJECT NAME	REFERENCE	PERIOD	PARTNER	TOTAL (CHF) [SDC]
Skills Development for Employment (SD4E)	7F-07024			
Phase 1: Local Level Responses to Youth Employment Challenges Project 1/Inception Phase		December 2013 December 2014	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	1.2 million
Phase 2	7F-07024.02	December 2014 December 2018	UNDP	3.2 million [3 million SDC funding]
Phase 3: Consolidation	7F-07024.03	January 2019 December 2022	UNDP	2.5 million
Skills for Jobs (S4J)				
Phase 2	7F-08727.02	May 2019 June 2023	Swisscontact	9.6 million
Phase 3	7F-08727.03	July 2023 June 2027	Swisscontact	7.72 million

RisiAlbania – Making Labour Market Work for Youth	7F-08310		Helvetas	
Inception Phase		March to October 2013	Helvetas	
Phase 1	7F-08310.01	November 2013 October 2017	Helvetas	
Phase 2	7F-08310.02	November 2017 October 2021	Helvetas	
Phase 3 (Exit Phase)	7F-08310.03	November 2021 October 2025	Helvetas	6.8 million

Skills Development for Employment (SD4E)

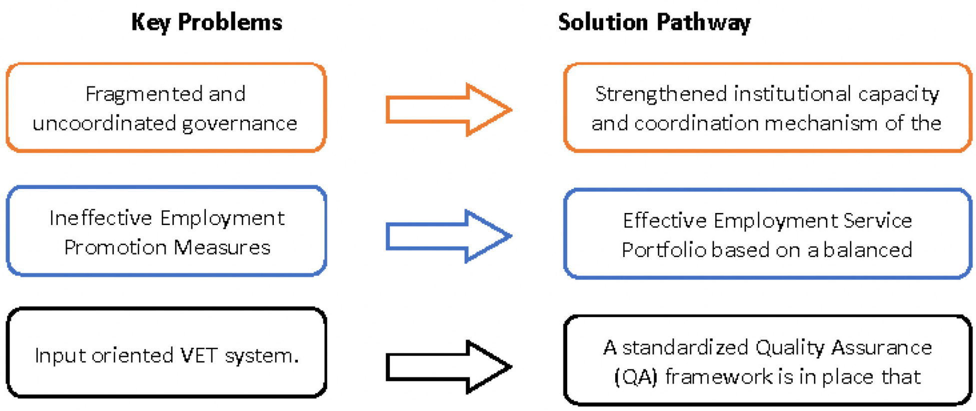
The Consolidation Phase of this project ran from January 2019 to December 2022. There were two previous phases:

- Phase 1 Inception Phase: Local Level Responses to Youth Employment Challenges Project (LLRYEC): 2013 – 2014.
- Phase 2: Skills Development for Employment (SD4E) Programme: 2015 to 2018

The overall goal of this phase of the project was that “the Albanian VET system and Employment Service supply the labour market with a skilled workforce that contributes to the sustainable and inclusive economic development of the country.” To achieve this, the project pursued three strategic interventions (Outcomes):

1. The institutional capacity of key actors in VET and Employment is strengthened (i.e., Ministry of Finance and Economy or MFE, National Employment Service or NES, future NAES, the National Agency for VET and Qualifications or NAVETQ).
2. The employment service portfolio is based on a balanced demand- and supply-side-oriented approach.
3. A standardised Quality Assurance framework is in place, improving the image of VET and fostering linkages between school and the world of work.

The SD4E programme was a macro-level intervention that aimed to strengthen the institutional capacity of the ministry and national agencies in charge of VET and employment promotion. The programme strategy followed a systemic approach to address the key challenges in the prevailing system of VET and Employment Promotion by turning key problems into desired positive changes (intended outcomes of programme interventions). See the figure below.



SOURCE: SD4E (2023) Annual Project Report.

The project is now in its fourth and final phase (Exit Phase, July 2023-June 2027). This phase is beyond the scope of the current evaluation, which covers the portfolio from 2017 to 2023.

RisiAlbania, Making Labour Market Work for Youth - Phase 3.

The project's goal is: “young women and men, equipped with well-informed career advice and market-relevant skills, access to better and inclusive jobs that are provided by competitive and resilient businesses.” The current Phase 3 (November 2021 to October 2025), the preceding phases were Inception phase (March to October 2013), Phase 1 (November 2013 to October 2017) and Phase 2 (November 2017 to October 2021). VSD is a relatively minor component of this project, while it focuses mostly on private sector development and applying a market systems development methodology. The project supports business growth through increased market access and improved competitiveness and resilience. This is intended to lead to the creation of more and better jobs for young women and men. It scales up its support for improving career intermediation, guidance, and non-formal skills provision for youth to get access to jobs.

The outcomes are:

1. Private sector development: Private sector businesses grow sustainably and create employment opportunities for young women and men.
2. Labour market intermediation and career guidance: Thanks to a strengthened labour market intermediation system, more young women and men make informed career choices and have more employment opportunities.
3. Training and skills development: More young women and men increase their skills and employability due to access to quality private, non-formal training opportunities.

The project targets young women and men aged 15-29 years. Implemented by Helvetas, the project works with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the National Agency for Employment and Skills, the private sector, and various youth organisations.

RisiAlbania’s theory of change describes a process whereby “if businesses adapt innovative and market-oriented business models, use appropriate professional services and continue contributing to a public-private dialogue, and if labour market intermediaries and private non-formal skills providers diversify, innovate and improve their offer in an inclusive way, then businesses can grow, invest and create more and better jobs, and intermediaries and private training providers reach a higher number of young people and companies, because improvements in the business environment and in the labour market system leads to more young people, including the most disadvantaged youth, getting more and better jobs.”

Skills for Jobs (S4J)

This Swisscontact implemented project aims to contribute to an improved inclusive Albanian VET system and increased competitiveness of the Albanian economy. The project promotes the modernisation of teaching and learning by fostering work-based learning with employers and blended learning, using digitalisation as an instrument. It supports the strengthening of internal processes and management of VET institutions and facilitates for industries and national authorities the update and enrichment of the VET offer while supporting VET providers in delivering labour market-oriented programmes and courses, thus diversifying the offer. In this consolidation and exit phase, the project will facilitate the horizontal and vertical transfer of innovation processes to VET providers and companies by capacitating and empowering transfer agents to ensure the sustainability of the project interventions.

The goal of S4J was for young women and men from all social groups in Albania to find attractive and gainful employment thanks to improved skills. Thanks to a better and market-oriented VET provision, the ratio of women and men who are employed or self-employed 12 months after graduation will increase from today 49 to 60 per cent in 2022 (i.e., 45 to 60% for VTC students). Forty per cent of them will earn 150% of the minimum salary - today 29% (i.e., VTC 49% to 57%).

The project had two outcomes:

1. Young women and men can access performing, labour market-oriented education and training offered in growth-promise sectors. Thanks to the project, 10,000 (20% female) or 51.8 per cent of all VET students in Albania have used improved vocational education, and 6,000 (40% female) used short training (10% of all trainees). The drop-out rate decreased from 15 to nine per cent. The number of apprenticeship students increased from 709 to 3,000, and VTC interns from 72 to 600.
2. The private sector takes responsibility for the definition, provision and financing of VET as providers. The number of companies co-financing VET provision increases from 300 to 500, the number of companies offering apprenticeships and internships increases from 300 to 420, and larger companies will cooperate, having an even bigger influence on apprenticeships. Two hundred and fifty in-company mentors will be certified.

In Phase 2, S4J continues to facilitate change at the public provider level. However, an increasing focus is given to scaling up its experiences and hence influencing the Albanian VET model. The project complements and closely collaborates with the SD4E project, which accompanies the VET reform processes by providing advisory service and capacity building at the macro level. RiSiAlbania and Swiss Entrepreneurship projects aim mainly to create employment; the former also aims to improve the training provided by private providers. The Swiss coordination platform on job creation is a good basis for exchange and coordination on a formal and organised level. Cooperation and exchange with SD4E will be more intensive, as innovations developed by S4J should feed into the policy support of SD4E. The two projects will also sit in the other's Steering Committee and align their yearly operations plan. The project's direct target group are the public VET providers in Shkodra, Lezha, Tirana, Berat and Vlora.

3 Country case methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC's support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while field missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania), and one country study (i.e., Burkina Faso) was conducted as a hybrid involving a desk-reviews, online consultations, and the commissioning of a local consultant to undertake field research.

The Albania case study was prepared as a desk study, which involved reviewing the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), detailed reviews of project credit proposals, project documents, mid-term review reports, evaluation reports, and other available reports and literature. A list of the documents reviewed is presented at the end of this study.

4 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**

Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The evaluation has found strong evidence that SDC's VSD support in Albania is tailored to demographic, economic, social and political contexts. SDC has a long history of supporting VSD in Albania and has undertaken a series of analyses, evaluations and project reflections (i.e., capitalisation processes) to better understand the priority needs of the VET sector. There is strong evidence that all SDC VSD projects in Albania are designed to respond to private sector needs and opportunities. There is good evidence that SDC project interventions are tailored to the needs of defined target groups and based on an assessment of marginalised groups—predominantly young people and women. Evidence shows that SDC projects are explicitly designed for social inclusion through mainstreaming rather than through specialised interventions. There was no evidence found that projects have attempted to influence gender traditions.

The evaluation has found strong evidence that SDC's VSD support in Albania is tailored to demographic, economic, social and political contexts. SDC has a long history of supporting VSD in Albania and has undertaken a series of analyses, evaluations and programme reflections (i.e., capitalisation processes) to better understand the priority needs of the VET sector. The 2011 case study on the Albanian Vocational Educational and Training Support Programme (Maurer and Wieckenberg 2011) found it to be a highly complex intervention that has been designed following a comprehensive review of some of the country's key challenges in VET.

A 2014 Capitalisation of Experiences report covering 20 years of Swiss VET support to Albania (Kehl, 2014) describes how Swiss cooperation has supported the Albanian VET system at all VET levels and by applying different delivery approaches reacting to the contextual situation. VSD interventions were designed to cause lasting change. Thus, "in each intervention, the complex interdependencies and cause-and-effect relationships between the VET system elements and factors have been tackled and followed carefully." All interventions applied a systemic perspective.

VSD projects are closely aligned with national frameworks. The 2021 MTR report for the SD4E programme found that the programme is fully aligned with the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2014-2022 and based on a sequential approach of supporting changes to regulatory frameworks with capacity-building interventions. It builds on lessons learnt from the previous stage and broad consultations with partners and beneficiaries. RisiAlbania is aligned with the National Strategy on Skills and Employment 2019-2022, which the Ministry of Finance and Economy manages, the Economic Reform Programme 2021-2023, the Law on Promotion of Employment (in force since April 2019), and the Law of Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF, 2010). The 2022 MTR for the Skills for Jobs project (Phase 2) found the project to be "highly relevant."

Some evidence was found that SDC projects supported good governance within national economic, social and political contexts. While RisiAlbania does not appear to deal with governance issues, the SD4E project seeks to improve service provision governance and quality in VET and employment. It works with national institutions to implement the sector's policy framework and optimise delivery with innovative tools and financing instruments while supporting data-driven employment policies. The S4J project describes its support for governance in terms of transparency and anti-corruption rather than governance of the VET system.

While migration is a major feature in Albania's national context and is referenced in all project documents, there is little evidence that SDC projects explicitly identify migration as a challenge influencing its design.

There is strong evidence that all SDC VSD projects in Albania are designed to respond to private sector needs and opportunities. RisiAlbania is a private sector development project that specifically integrates skills development, while SD4E and S4J all have a strong focus on building a more private sector demand-driven VET system. For example, the current phase of the SD4E project seeks to strengthen the "engagement of the private sector in the VET reform by restructuring existing programs so that they can deliver quick, effective, short-term training solutions responding to the pressing need for new skills and upskilling current workforce. This requires the adoption of a new mindset on building a system that is driven by demand."

There is little evidence that SDC projects explicitly identify climate change as a challenge influencing its design. While the overall goal of the Cooperation Programme 2022–2025 includes its contribution to climate change mitigation, this issue is not featured in the three projects reviewed.

There is good evidence that SDC project interventions are tailored to the needs of defined target groups and based on an assessment of marginalised groups. These groups predominantly include young people and women. Evidence shows that SDC projects are explicitly designed for social inclusion through mainstreaming rather than through specialised interventions. SD4E focuses on young and adult women and men and their employability by improving the attractiveness and labour market relevance of an inclusive employment and VET offer. S4J targets young women and men, while RisiAlbania follows a programmatic approach to improving youth employment through job creation, job intermediation and skills development measures, emphasising gender and social inclusion.

The RisiAlbania (Phase 3, 2021-2025) Project Document describes how gender and social inclusion will be addressed through a gender and social inclusion specialist and the integration of gender and social inclusion across all project interventions.

No evidence has been found that projects have attempted to influence gender traditions.

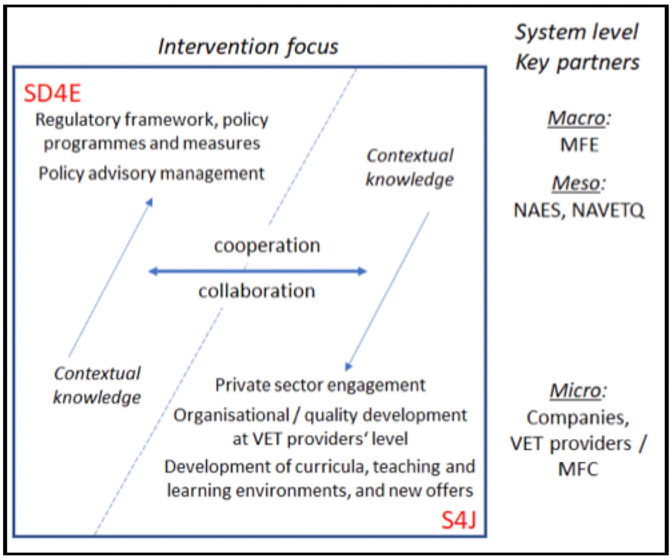
4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Strong evidence shows that SDC in Albania has worked across divisions when designing, implementing, and monitoring projects. This includes intentionally designed VSD projects to support or complement private sector development. SECO and SDC appear to collaborate closely on projects related to VSD and private sector development. There is good evidence to show that SDC VSD interventions in Albania interact with or complement other donor-supported projects and programmes. SDC plays a leading role in the thematic donor working group on VET, the DACH+ forum and supports government-donor coordination.

Strong evidence shows that SDC has worked across divisions when designing, implementing, and monitoring projects. This includes intentionally designed VSD projects to support or complement private sector development. SECO and SDC jointly define and implement the Swiss cooperation programme in Albania. Together, they are active in the areas of democratic governance, economic development and employment, urban infrastructure and climate change, as well as health. SECO mainly focuses on supporting a reliable macroeconomic framework, innovation-friendly business environment reform, and sound urban infrastructure services and energy management. The 2022 MTR for the S4J project (Phase 2) reported positive SDC and SECO collaboration. SECO's interventions complement SDC's project ambitions and contribute to improving framework conditions for private sector development.

Project documentation shows clear efforts to ensure coherence across the SD4E and S4J projects. While SD4E focuses primarily on the macro and meso levels, S4J complements this by focusing on the micro-level of the system. Collaboration between the projects intensifies in the final implementation phase to enhance overall impact.

Figure 1: Interplay of SD4E and S4J projects



The collaboration between SD4E and S4J centres on two main themes: quality development and private sector engagement. The projects jointly address a range of areas, including optimising the VET provider network, legal and regulatory framework consolidation, digitalisation in VET, enhancing private sector engagement, ensuring quality assurance in VET, Albanian Qualification Framework (AQF) implementation, and diversification of the VET offer. A joint Steering Committee was established to facilitate coordination between the two projects, and a technical committee was formed to coordinate efforts in common areas of action.

There is good evidence to show that SDC VSD interventions interact with or complement other donor-supported projects and programmes. The current country cooperation strategy (2022-2025) describes how SDC will co-lead the thematic working group on VET and support government-donor coordination, contributing to reforms.

The S4J Project Document prepared by Swisscontact describes Swisscontact as one of the founding members of the DACH group (i.e., Deutschland, Austria and Switzerland) and DACH+, which includes Liechtenstein. The DACH+ was reactivated to focus on private sector engagement in work-based learning. The Austrian Development Agency, GIZ and Swisscontact have committed to investing more to keep the structure running. The S4J project describes its engagement in regional SDC exchange platforms on VSD (i.e., Kosovo, North Macedonia) and its membership of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the DCdVET.

Hilpert (2020) describes the DACH+ forum as a good mechanism to enhance the exchange of experience. However, this forum "cannot replace the need for a national coordinating body - which currently does not exist—to take the lead and ownership for steering and coordinating the efforts of the international donor community."

The Government of Albania has established Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMGs) to provide a platform for coordinating donor activities. IPMGs were among the priority areas in moving the country closer to EU accession, including employment and skills.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives?   **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?**

EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The evidence reviewed supports the view that completed SDC VSD projects achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. In some cases, project targets were exceeded. This was particularly the case for results focused on training (i.e., numbers of people trained). However, concerns were raised regarding institutional and policy, legal and regulatory outcomes. While there were good results at these levels, the longer-term impacts are heavily dependent on factors beyond the influence of the projects. There is solid evidence that SDC VSD projects sought successful private sector collaboration, including working with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow and play their role in VSD processes. SDC projects have identified lessons learned and built on past experiences when engaging the private sector. There is good evidence to suggest that SDC VSD projects have supported the transformation of the national systems for VET. The SDC VSD projects in Albania have worked with a wide range of public and private national stakeholders, and the strengthening of the national VSD institutional framework or system was a consistent part of the support provided.

The evidence reviewed supports the view that completed SDC VSD projects achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. In some cases, project targets were exceeded. This was particularly the case for results focused on training (i.e., numbers of people trained). However, concerns were raised regarding institutional and policy, legal and regulatory outcomes. The 2022 MTR for the S4J project raised concerns regarding the establishment of multifunctional training centres and highlighted that the finalisation of the regulatory framework was beyond the influence of the project. Similarly, the 2021 MTR of the SD4E project found that changes in the organisational culture and tangible improvements in actual service delivery require time to consolidate and that “many of the driving factors for the change to be absorbed by the national structures are outside of the project’s remit.” Moreover, the project’s success in updating the regulatory frameworks needs more time to respond to the absorption capacities of the beneficiaries.

SDC’s VSD projects in Albania have engaged with all relevant system actors, including government, schools, training centres, and private sector employers. There is solid evidence that SDC VSD projects sought successful private sector collaboration, including working with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow and play their role in VSD processes. RisiAlbania paid particular attention to SMEs in stimulating growth and investments and creating new jobs. It helped young people use innovative labour market information and job intermediation services, creating 900 new full-time equivalent jobs (54% women) by partnering with SMEs in the three selected sectors of agriculture processing, tourism and ICT. It also facilitated 5,376 (51% women) job placements through the supported public and private labour market information and intermediation services.

SDC projects have identified lessons learned regarding engaging the private sector. The 2021 MTR report for the SD4E project found that more support should be directed towards reflecting private sector needs for VET-produced skills and facilitating the engagement of the private sector through business associations and groups of companies. Specifically, the MTR recommended that SDC reconsider a possible role for SD4E in engaging with the private sector to facilitate ways to increase business interaction with VET providers by capacitating business association staff or membership on human resource and skill development.

In a review of Albania’s VET system commissioned by UNDP, Hilpert (2020) found that work-based learning is essential to any quality VET provision but lacks a uniform national approach.

The 2020 MTR of RisiAlbania identified several lessons for applying a market systems development approach, including working with business partners based on business plans encompassing cost and risk sharing and applying a mix of interventions with market system actors, such as service providers and rule setters. However, there is no evidence that the SDC

VSD has increased the productivity and profitability of the benefitting private enterprises, even in the RisiAlbania project, where this might have been expected.

There is good evidence to suggest that SDC VSD projects have supported the transformation of the national systems for VET. The SDC VSD projects in Albania have worked with a wide range of public and private national stakeholders, and the strengthening of the national VSD institutional framework or system was a consistent part of the support provided. The 2014 Capitalisation of Experiences report describes the importance of taking a systemic approach with a "full package" of implementation covering all aspects of the intervention, ensuring its sustainability. Projects such as SD4E appear to have heeded this advice. The 2021 MTR report for the SD4E programme found the programme to be "very broad and ambitious given the relatively limited time and resources to consolidate systemic change." While the programme is comprehensive and addresses "virtually all employment and skills policy areas at the strategic and regulatory level", many of the "driving factors for the change to be absorbed by the national structures are outside of the project's remit."

The 2011 case study on the Albanian Vocational Educational and Training Support Programme (Maurer and Wieckenberg 2011) found it too ambitious, seriously hindering implementation in the many components of Phase 1. While some components were phased out, the scope of Phase 2 remained "vast, all the more as SDC insisted on including a completely new component, dedicated to a target group that it was catering to in one of its other projects."

Evidence was found that SDC plays a role in VSD international policy dialogue. The SD4E project has been specifically designed to incorporate dialogue at the macro and meso policy levels, providing policy support and advice. The S4J MTR report noted that policy dialogue was conducted systematically and continuously, resulting in open and trustful relationships with different stakeholders on the national level. The Swiss Embassy participates in many formal bodies and networkes informally in many ways. A recent Internal Audit of the Swiss Embassy highlighted the role of policy dialogue regarding VET at the macro-level and identified low levels of government VET financing and weak business membership organisations as obstacles to more efficient private sector engagement). The auditors recommended further policy dialogue on these challenges. RisiAlbania sees private companies as the main drivers for policy changes and adaptations.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across headquarters, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
There are strong evidence showing that SDC's VSD projects were delivered across headquarters, regional and country offices based on a broad body of knowledge concerning SDC support for the sector. SDC and SECO have collaborated well on VSD matters and projects have been implemented in a cost-efficient manner based on a sound intervention logic.

Strong evidence shows that SDC's VSD projects were delivered across headquarters, regional and country offices. Again, SDC's substantial time supporting VSD in Albania appears to have created a situation in which multiple project phases, a systems-based approach, and private sector-oriented projects have produced a broad body of knowledge that country, regional, and headquarters bodies have participated in. As described earlier, SDC and SECO have collaborated well on VSD matters.

VSD projects have been implemented in a cost-efficient manner, according to market conditions and in a timely manner.[5] For example, the 2021 MTR report for the SD4E programme found that the programme is based on a sound intervention logic designed to respond to contextual challenges in developing labour market and skills development policies.

Quality assurance processes have been consistently applied across the project design, approval and monitoring lifecycle. Moreover, SDC's VSD organisational and institutional set-up is conducive to achieving VSD-related objectives under the IC Strategy 2025-28.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's project interventions created high-level effects on policy and norms. This included the establishment of a comprehensive legislative framework that defines the guiding principles and structure of the VET system, the roles and responsibilities of the key actors and overall standards for VET provision, assessment and certification.

There is strong evidence that SDC's project interventions have created high-level effects on policy and norms in Albania. These results were identified in the period before this evaluation (i.e., before 2017). The 2014 Capitalisation of Experiences report describes how Swiss cooperation has supported the Albanian VET system at all levels by applying different delivery approaches reacting to the contextual situation. VSD interventions were designed to cause lasting change. Thus, "in each intervention, the complex interdependencies and cause-and-effect relationships between the VET system elements and factors have been tackled and followed carefully." All interventions applied a systemic perspective (Kehl, 2014).

Hilpert (2020) found that the major achievements of the last six years of the VET reform - since the adoption of NESS - concern the establishment of a comprehensive legislative framework that defines the guiding principles and structure of the VET system, the roles and responsibilities of the key actors and overall standards for VET provision, assessment and certification that includes the following: the amended Labour code (2015), the Law on Craftsmanship (2016), a new VET Law (2017), amended Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Law (2018), amended Law on Pre-university Education (2018) and the Employment Promotion Law (2019). The challenge is to make this legal framework operational (Hilpert 2020).

The UNDP, the SD4E programme implementer, in its Annual Project Report for 2022, claimed that the programme had consolidated the VET and employment policies reform agenda in the areas of legal and institutional framework, built the capacities of the institutions to design and deliver the new systems, diversified the Active Labour Market Programmes portfolio and further consolidated the quality assurance and development in the VET system. It described its support for policymaking as "outstanding." This included a comprehensive functional review of the Ministry and the National Employment Service, which guided the transformation process of the former National Employment Service into the National Agency for Employment and Skills. It also supported changes to the organisational structure of the responsible Department for Employment and Skills Development and policies and secondary legislation within the Ministry of Finance and Economy (i.e., Employment Promotion Law no.15/2019 and VET Law no.15/2017).

5 In a somewhat dated case study on the Albanian Vocational Educational and Training Support Programme Maurer and Wieckenberg (2011) noted difficulties in project implementation within a decentralised VET system.

RisiAlbania has made significant contributions to the employment prospects of young people in Albania during the project's two phases. Over 12,000 young women and men were employed because of activities initiated by RisiAlbania during the last two phases. The 2020 MTR indicated that RisiAlbania had supported business growth by facilitating access to high-value export markets, increasing product value, and accessing growth-oriented services, including finance, through business development services. The project employed a market systems development approach to working with the private sector in market development. This included the development of responsive training providers and create mechanisms for interaction with employers directly and with respect to the qualifications system for longer-term effects. The project supported the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development 2019-2023, which the government adopted, and improvements to a more inclusive labour market system.

Donor funding for VSD, employment, and social inclusion roughly equals the available state budget funds. The massive influx of donor money and the plethora of reform initiatives suggested or introduced on a pilot level are too ambitious for the national level to be scaled up and sustained. Thus, it also becomes inefficient for donors when they see some of their investments not being sustained. This suggests a more rigorous review by top decision-makers and perhaps scaling down the number of VSD reform initiatives (Hilpert 2020).

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While the sustainability of VSD projects in Albania have been consciously considered over the long history of VSD programming, multiple project phases suggest that this goal is elusive. VSD projects have built on the experience gained through past projects and phases and contributed to policy, legal and institutional reforms. However, sustainability of the VET system is not assured, which will likely continue the demand for long-term donor support.

All SDC's VSD projects in Albania include an explicit exit strategy. Projects have supported the development of local expertise in the VET system and sought to address threats to sustainability. However, as noted above, there are external threats to sustainability.

Evidence was found that project outcomes have continued, or are likely to continue, after project closure. However, in most cases, these projects have transitioned to a new phase of SDC support. Many projects are on their last "consolidation" or "exit" phase. The SD4E project's 2021 MTR describes how the sustainability of some of its outputs depends on continued political will and commitment, as well as the perceived quality and value-added of these changes. Similarly, the S4E project's 2022 MTR indicates that because S4J is part of a comprehensive VET reform, sustainability relies on continuing conducive contexts, and project interventions may be jeopardised if relevant frame conditions are no longer favourable.

The RisiAlbania (Phase 3, 2021-2025) Project Document describes how project interventions will consolidate changes that provide means for young women and men to derive benefits beyond the project period. This includes regulatory reform and the creation of more client-oriented public institutions and growing businesses.

The 2021 MTR report for the SD4E project found that the programme built on the experience gained and accumulated in previous phases and was on track to achieve the desired change in the institutional structure of the public institutions in charge of employment and skills development. This demonstrates an increasing service and beneficiary orientation of the public institutions and a change in the perception and willingness of groups of businesspeople to engage from their side in employment and skills development. In future, VSD support should address a series of structural issues, including rigidities in the delivery of vocational education and training and the need to define a flexible model for work-based learning, dual models, and post-secondary VET. More support should be directed towards reflecting the private sector's need for VET-produced skills and facilitating the engagement of the private sector through business associations and groups of companies.

It is clear that organisational and financial sustainability was an element of the SDC VSD projects. Projects like RisiAlbania have deliberately identified sustainability incentives by applying a market systems development approach. Similarly, SD4E and S4J have sought to improve how VET institutions and labour market service providers operate. SDC has invested in ensuring that lessons are learned from its support of VSD in Albania, including identifying factors contributing to or inhibiting sustained change.

The 2021 MTR report for the SD4E programme found that stakeholder ownership over the programme's outcomes had been achieved, and changes in governance structures in employment and skills towards SD4E have contributed are very likely sustainable. While risk management has been updated periodically, mitigation measures for new and existing risks could have been spelled out more explicitly. However, the MTR also recommended that the programme strategy be revised and refocused on a narrower set of goals and objectives that are feasible within the timeframe and budget of the project.

Donor funding for VET, employment, and social inclusion roughly equals the available state budget funds. The massive influx of donor money and the plethora of reform initiatives suggested or introduced on a pilot level are too ambitious for the national level to be scaled up and sustained. Thus, it also becomes inefficient for donors when they see some of their investments not being sustained. This suggests a more rigorous review by top decision-makers and perhaps scaling down the number of VET reform initiatives (Hilpert 2020).

The 2014 Capitalisation of Experiences report made several observations regarding future VET support for Albania. This included providing support at the macro, meso and micro levels. While SDC's strength is "to work at ground level, in the classrooms and workshops, with teachers and students, with special needs groups and private providers", it should also work with public offices and policy actors simultaneously. Thus, support for policy dialogue and national systems reform was recommended. Similarly, the report argued that "VSD is not an end in itself." As a result, SDC should select sectors that are relevant for future employment generation. The capitalisation process also recommended interventions that combined several entry points to national systems reform (e.g., support for non-formal VET for young adults, implemented by the new multifunctional VET centres in close cooperation with private businesses, which are also targeted by other SDC interventions).

In her review of the Albania VET system for the SD4E project, Hilpert (2020) found that the VET system was underfinanced in terms of teacher salaries, infrastructural deficits, funds for extracurricular activities, scholarships and dormitories. As a result, innovative solutions are needed to explore additional funding sources. Equitable system funding is more likely to be achieved if the private sector is willing to invest in skills training.

5 Lessons learned

The 2020 MTR for the RisiAlbania project identified the following lessons:

- It pays to follow good MSD practice: interventions-based sector implemented with appropriate partners, based on business plans, with a level of cost (risk)-sharing below 50% that does not cover operational expenses. Such a solid approach does not have to result in a counterproductive avoidance of risk or innovation.
- A judicious mix of interventions with "system players" such as service providers and rule setters and more direct interventions with businesses such as exporters that are in line with systemic change objectives, results in solid and sufficient short-term impact to satisfy stakeholders and partners and potential longer-term impact as a result of emerging systemic change.

- Interventions with public sector partners are facilitation intensive and take time, but the MSD approach can deliver results when this is accepted by a project and its donor.
- Even when the goal of a project is reflected in quantitative indicators and targets to be achieved, a donor such as the SDC can take a longer-term view of developing the labour market by supporting an essential systemic change that will not immediately contribute to the targets, such as in this case development of Career Guidance Service.
- A logical framework with targets for GSI and investing in a staff member dedicated to GSI leads to better GSI results.

6 References

General

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RisiAlbania

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Annex 6.2. Bangladesh Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Despite impressive progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Bangladesh faces challenges that impede the effective functioning of the labour market. According to the World Bank's data, approximately 70 per cent of the population still lives on less than US$2 per day.

At the same time, Bangladesh's labour market is suffering due to a shortage of skills, disproportionate dominance of the informal sector, lack of general awareness of safety at work and discriminatory practices. At the same time, there is a disconnect between the skills in demand by the labour market and the vocational education and training (VET) curricula. Of the 54 million people who constitute the active workforce, only half have an education beyond primary level. Each year, more than 400,000 workers leave Bangladesh for overseas employment. Most are low-skilled. Although two million people enter the labour force annually, the existing TVET schools (i.e., public and private) can accommodate roughly one-fourth of the total entrants.

The main public providers of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are the Department of Technical Education under the Ministry of Education; the Bureau of Manpower, Education and Training (BMET) under the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment; and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. In total, about 20 ministries and departments deliver some skills training. Located in the Ministry of Education, the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is the apex body responsible for quality assurance through accreditation of training providers, curriculum development, examinations, and certification. Almost 500,000 students are enrolled in formal TVET programs. Compared with general secondary education, only about 2.85 per cent of students enrol in secondary-level vocational programs. The formal Bangladesh TVET system has several weaknesses: economic relevance, social relevance, quality and effectiveness of training delivery, organisational effectiveness, and finance and internal efficiency. To overcome the lack of qualified labour, the Government of Bangladesh introduced the National Training and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) to improve the quality of informal vocational training to satisfy the needs of the labour market. Despite the support of different donor organisations, the NTVQF has not yet developed an effective instrument to improve the labour market situation.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme for Bangladesh 2022-25 includes support for vocational skills development (VSD) in Bangladesh under the heading 'Income and Economic Development'. This theme focuses on skills and private sector development, including inclusive and climate-resistant agricultural market development and promotion of innovative agricultural programmes. Safe labour migration and refuge security are other focus areas of the SDC programme.

2 Development cooperation

The projects falling within the scope of this evaluation (i.e., 2017-2023) are presented in the figure below and then briefly summarised. Only one of the projects (B-SkillFUL) is implemented directly by Swisscontact, with SDC funding only.

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Bangladesh reviewed

Project Name	Period	Partners	TA Provider	Budget (CHF)
Ashshash – for men and women who have escaped trafficking F7-08654	August 2015 February 2029	Ministry of Home Affairs	Winrock International	26,000,000
Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) F7-08916	August 2014 February 2029	ADB Loan		29,700,000
Skills and Employment Programme (SEP) F7-08973	April 2014 October 2020	Delegated Cooperation Agreement with DFID	Palladium UK with British Council and Swisscontact	16,500,000
Building Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour (B-SkillFUL) F7-09219	December 2014 April 2024		Swisscontact	25,000,000
SDC BRAC Social Cohesion Fund for Cox' Bazar District F7-09931	April 2020 September 2024		BRAC	5,200,000
Reintegration of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh F7-10392	May 2020 April 2031	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment	BRAC and ILO	20,000,000

The VSD elements of the six projects are as follows:

Ashshash. This provides skills development and job placement support for women and men who have escaped tracking. While job placement is a key focus of the project, VSD is a secondary activity.

Skills for Employment Investment Programme. Provides large-scale basic vocational training for disadvantaged youth with special attention to women. Activities include the strengthening of industrial skills councils and the creation of a National Skills Development Authority (NSDA). The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Industry is getting special attention. SDC's contribution sought to strengthen the technical capacity of the sector to deliver market-oriented skills training and better target women, the poor and the disadvantaged.

Skills and Employment Programme (SEP/Sudokkho). Due to resource constraints, this project closed before its completion date in 2020. It provided basic vocational training for unskilled, poor men and women related to the RMG industry and construction sector through partnerships with industries and private training providers.

B-SkillFUL. The key element of this project was short-term workplace-based skills development for semi-skilled and skilled workers already working in SMEs, with special attention to women. Work-based training and business development service interventions were important activities intended to stimulate employment creation.

Social Cohesion Fund for Cox' Bazar. This project supported apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training for adolescent women and men, with special attention paid to out-of-school youth.

Reintegration of Migrant Workers in Bangladesh. VSD only appears as an element of this project, in which services are offered to returning migrants during their reintegration. The main focus is on placing the returning migrants in self/wage employment that matches their competencies.

3 Country case methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC's support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while field missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania), and one country study (i.e., Burkina Faso) was conducted as a hybrid involving a desk-reviews, online consultations, and the commissioning of a local consultant to undertake field research.

The Bangladesh case study was prepared as a desk study, which involved reviewing the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), detailed reviews of project credit proposals, project documents, mid-term review reports, evaluation reports, and other available reports and literature. A list of the documents reviewed is presented at the end of this study.

4 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**

Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
All the reviewed projects were based on an initial assessment of the economic, social and political context in which they were implemented. However, it seems as if three of the projects (i.e., Ashshash, SEP/Sudokkho, and B-SkillFUL) would have benefitted from a more thorough assessment of the demand for the services provided. In different ways, for all six projects social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged women were a focus area. Several of the projects conducted gender analyses from which Gender Action Plans were developed. For the Reintegration of Migrant Workers project, three out six partners (i.e., UN Women, MJF and OKUP) were mandated to work with female returnee migrants.

The evaluation found strong evidence that all the reviewed projects were based on an initial assessment of the economic, social and political context in which they were implemented. However, it seems as if three of the projects (i.e., Ashshash, SEP/Sudokkho, and B-SkillFUL) would have benefitted from a more thorough assessment of the demand for the services provided. The end of the Ashshash Phase 1 report found that the project is highly relevant to the current trafficking in person context with pronounced potential for becoming even more pertinent in the upcoming years, especially if its design is further elaborated to address the emerging needs at policy and community level. However, the relevance of the project could be further increased by adopting a tailored need-based approach to meaningfully address the needs of the trafficking-in-person survivors and the specific local contexts.

The SEIP project, implemented by ADB, addressed the urgent need to provide disadvantaged persons with employable skills. The project also focused on increasing engagement with the private sector to better define the skills needs and ensure a more employable workforce.

SEP/Sudokkho applied a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach to address the underlying causes of market systems underperformance through facilitation rather than direct support (e.g., training to the poor). While the project's progress towards its outcome was limited dues to the willingness of other development partners to subsidise skills development and business services, there were some successful partnerships formed with large brand factories (e.g., Primark).

B-SkillFUL Phase 1 only partially addressed the core challenge of job creation for unemployed and underemployed youth, which has become more urgent due to the current COVID-19 crisis. Market saturation in the occupations promoted was the main reason. Also, for those who actually secured employment, the income derived by the beneficiaries from their occupations remains low. This situation caused SDC, in consultation with Swisscontact, to reposition the project for the next phase by adopting a more market-oriented strategy, leading to job creation and better income opportunities, in line with the Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2018-21. During Phase 2, the project did not work exclusively on training but coupled it with enterprise development by providing better business development services.

The Social Cohesion Fund project was intended to strengthen social cohesion and reduce fragility by mitigating the negative consequences of the Rohingya crisis on vulnerable communities in Cox's Bazar. The point of departure for the Migrant Workers project is the high number of returning migrant workers, which is an increasing concern to the government and the international community.

Evidence was found that all six projects paid attention to social inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged women in various ways. Indeed, several projects have prepared Gender Action Plans. Social inclusion is a key element of the Ashshash project, which prepared and applied a gender action plan. The SEIP project focused on poor and disadvantaged segments of the population, with special attention paid to women. The SEP/Sudokkho project was designed to stimulate private sector investment in training for the poor, particularly women and the disadvantaged, to pave the way for their decent employment.

The B-SkillFUL project was designed to create economic opportunities for poor men and women within small and medium-size enterprises in the furniture, light engineering, and leather goods sectors, combining business development services with workplace-based training. The intervention introduced a time-bound incentive grant scheme to hire qualified women in MSMEs. Under this scheme, the programme offered partially subsidised wages for new women recruits for the first 3 months as they were onboarded into WBT offered at MSMEs. The incentive grant scheme generated a 'word-of-mouth' awareness of the benefits of hiring women. Although the evidence collected was at an early stage, it demonstrated the high potential of such schemes to promote women's participation in non-traditional sectors and roles.

Finally, the Social Cohesion Fund project implemented a set of outputs to enable poor and disadvantaged women and men of the host community to gainful employment, including apprenticeship-based skills training for school dropout adolescents. After successfully completing the training, more than 2,400 learners were placed into decent jobs.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
In general, the projects are well aligned to SDC policies and priorities. Although SECO has a number of engagements in the Bangladesh through its global and regional programmes, the reviewed documentation does not have a reference to these. For all the six projects, coordination with other development partners is taking place. Two of the projects are even based on co-funding arrangements.

The documentation reviewed supports the view that the VSD projects in Bangladesh are well-aligned with SDC policies and priorities. Although SECO has several engagements in Bangladesh its global and regional programmes, the reviewed documentation does not reference these.

While VSD is not a key activity of the Ashshash project, the support provided by SEIP was coordinated with the Swiss-supported skills programme, Sudokkho. Efficiency gains were achieved through the partnership between the two Swiss-funded programmes. SEIP's support to operational costs was complemented by Sudokkho's technical assistance to focus on the structural, governance and management aspects, including mobilising the technical working groups. The SEP/Sudokkho project was implemented closely with the SEIP project, which also targeted skills needs in the Ready-Made Garment industry.

According to the Entry Proposal, the B-SkillFUL project was originally designed to create synergies between SEP-B and SEIP. While those projects mainly work in the formal sphere, B-SkillFUL was linked through the Informal Sector ISC, which is a cross-cutting ISC. The project was due to end on 31st August 2024, but it was phased over to another Swiss-supported project, Prabriddhi, which focuses on local economic development from 1st July 2023. Swisscontact also implements Prabriddhi. This gave the SDC and Swisscontact a unique opportunity to consolidate the Swiss local inclusive economic development portfolio by integrating skill and BDS components into the Swiss engagement in local economic development.

The Social Cohesion Fund intervention complements Swiss Humanitarian Aid's engagement, while the Migrant Workers project is aligned with the SDC International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24 and the Swiss Cooperation Programme for Bangladesh 2022–2025.

Coordination with other development partners has been found in all projects reviewed. Two of the projects involve co-funding arrangements. The Ashshash project was implemented especially in coordination IOM and USAID, which finances several anti-trafficking initiatives. The SEIP project was implemented by ADB, with SDC providing technical advice.

SDC's contribution to the SEP/Sudokkho project was significantly less than the United Kingdom's contribution. SDC was very much engaged with project management and provided advisory support alongside DFID. SDC encouraged the project to strengthen its focus on gender and social inclusion. The B-SkillFUL project pursued a market-driven approach to BDS, while most other development partners favoured free or highly subsidised services.

Due to the refugee crisis, the Social Cohesion Fund engages with numerous development cooperation actors working in the Cox's Bazar district, in the camps and in the host communities. BRAC continuously monitors this space to identify potential cooperation opportunities with all other regional donors. In the Reintegration of Migrant Workers project, closely coordinates its activities with the EU, and Denmark, whereas ILO coordinates with the World Bank and Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment for synergies and complementarities.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While most projects have trained the planned number of persons, several of the projects have experienced serious challenges in terms of employability of the trainees. Partially, this is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, but insufficient targeting of the training activities combined with overly optimistic employment opportunities have contributed to the low employment rate. SDC VSD projects in Bangladesh have sought to engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development. Four of the projects prioritise formal private sector involvement. However, the sector is poorly organised, and most private enterprises employ low-skilled labour, making it difficult to engage the sector in the projects' VSD activities. SDC's support for transforming national systems for VSD in Bangladesh was very limited.

There is evidence that SDC's projects have achieved their intended outputs. While most projects have trained the targeted number of persons, several have experienced serious challenges in terms of the employability of the trainees. Partially, this is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, but insufficient targeting of the training activities combined with overly optimistic employment opportunities have contributed to the low employment rate.

The Ashshash project's efforts to place beneficiaries into wage employment turned out to be more challenging than supporting them to start their own businesses due to the specific local context, the inability to conduct face-to-face vocational and on-the-job training during the pandemic, and the modest engagement of the private sector to support trainees with per diems and retain them into employment after the end of the on-the-job training.

The SEIP project exceeded its trainee targets. Against a total enrolment target of 260,000 trainees, a total of 279,750 (of which 80,465 were female). Among the certified trainees, 180,881 were either placed in jobs or self-employed (i.e., 71.7% of the certified graduates). Stipends were offered to the disadvantaged trainees as an incentive for enrolment.

The SEP/Sudokkho project progressed well against the log-frame targets and, in most cases, exceeded them. The project supported close to 200 RMG factories. However, the early closure of the project due to budget cuts by the British Government resulted in underachievement of certain indicators.

Within the B-SkillFUL project, 47 per cent of a total of 575 MSMEs gained business efficiencies from the WBT and BDS interventions. This includes the majority of MSMEs benefitting from WBT interventions in terms of higher productivity (over 80%) and reduced waste and product defect rates. As a result of WBT, 3,623 (i.e., 50% of total enrolled) workers have reported an increase in their income levels due to improved skills. In total, 5,665 workers (i.e., 78% of the total enrolled) successfully completed the training. Eighteen per cent of persons trained enjoyed a monthly additional income higher than the market average. The low turnover amongst workers is an unintended effect. Despite of the upskilling, a few are switching their jobs for better pay and positions, which is appreciated by the employers hence the overall net impact for the sector is positive.

The Social Cohesion Fund successfully provided skills and basic business training to more than 4,000 vulnerable men and women. The employment rate of those trained is not known. No information is available concerning the achievements of the Migrant Workers project.

SDC VSD projects in Bangladesh have sought to engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development. Four of the projects explicitly prioritise formal private-sector involvement. However, the sector is poorly organised, and most private enterprises employ low-skilled labour, making it difficult to engage the sector in the projects' VSD activities.

There is considerable potential for private sector engagement in the Ashshash project. Phase 1 achieved some success in motivating the business to support TiP survivors. To further scale this effort, the project would have benefitted from customising its private sector engagement strategy to align with the size, type and scope of the private sector stakeholders' activities and the form of cooperation and engagement sought.

The government did not adequately support industry skills councils (ISCs) in becoming operational. Therefore, the SEIP project had to support the Readymade Garments and Textiles Industry Skills Council (RTISC) in partnership with the SEP/Sudokkho project. SEIP has successfully engaged the private sector to deliver employment-led training by working with 12 industry associations.

The limited success that SEP/Sudokkho had in linking private training providers to factories in the RMG industry was primarily because most of the manufacturers do not feel the need to engage with private training providers since they can source workers from their factory gates and through their networks. On the private training provider side, the reluctance was to take up the linkage model. According to the End of Project report, this is because they do not face financial shortfalls in this heavily subsidised incumbent training market. Many other donors are financing fully subsidised training for the readymade garments industry, not a cost-sharing model. The market is crowded with subsidy-driven programmes that do not necessarily focus on linkages with the industry or job creation.

The B-SkillFUL project initiated several partnerships with private sector organisations that increased the competitiveness and growth of targeted MSMEs. The project demonstrated that upskilling of workers under the work-based training approach yields results in the form of increased productivity and income. However, assessing how much of the benefits can be directly attributed to work-based training is important. As these are small incremental changes in production, MSMEs need to be aware of the benefits and how much it can contribute to business growth.

The private sector played only an indirect role in the Social Cohesion Fund project as the destination of employment for trainees.

While the local private sector employers and chambers of commerce and industry would not typically be interested in reintegration, they stand to benefit through skills-matching (i.e., if skilled returnees who have experience abroad can be placed for wage employment in their organisations). The Reintegration project will prepare a strategy for the local private sector and chambers of commerce and industry engagement to encourage them to engage with returnee migrant workers.

SDC's success in transforming the way VSD is financed in Bangladesh was limited due to circumstances beyond its control. Policy reform was not part of the design of the Ashshash, Social Cohesion Fund or Reintegration projects.

The SEIP project championed the creation of a National Skills Development Authority (NSDA), which is intended to bring skills development activities under one regulatory umbrella, and a National Human Resources Development Fund (NHRDF). The project developed a concept paper for the NHRDF and an initial concept paper for the NSDA. SEIP engaged an international specialist to develop the concept of the proposed NSDA further. The documentation does not indicate its effect.

According to the project documentation, because of the SEP/Sudokkho project's efforts, there are early signs of the industry contributing in kind to skills training by RMG factories independently setting up in-house training centres.

The B-SkillFUL project had limited opportunities to work on broader systems issues. However, to improve the overall governance of the selected service providers at an institutional level, the project developed and implemented a checklist to assess their operational and financial procedures.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across headquarters, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The Evaluation Team has not been able to assess the efficiency of the VSD portfolio as Bangladesh was not among the countries visited (i.e., desk study only).

The synergies and complementarity between the projects are not clear. Rather, there appear to be significant overlaps regarding beneficiaries and interventions. The high number of projects implemented by other organisations (i.e., five out of six) indicates that the synergy potential was not fully utilised.

Certain outputs in the Ashshash project have not been suitably formulated and positioned within the results chain. No indicators are set to measure enhancement concerning accountability, effectiveness, quality and accessibility of the targeted institutions. The indicators of achievement at the output level are predominantly quantitative, and there are no mid-term targets defined at the project level to allow for robust monitoring of the achievement at the donor level and more systematic planning of potential mitigation measures; the predefined employment track ratio creates challenges at the operational and beneficiary levels.

The SEP/Sudokkho business case proposed using payment for results (P4R) to incentivise PTPs to actively assist graduates in finding employment or self-employment. In the Bangladesh training market, which has been flooded with donor-driven, subsidised skills development programmes, implementing the P4R system has been difficult due to the high risk of fraud. While PTPs have shown interest in job placements where they have benefitted financially, many did not have the required capacity or systems in place to secure genuine job opportunities for their graduates.

Although the SDC grant was a small proportion of the total programme, the SEIP project focused on specific activities that were much needed for the proper functioning of the programme, supporting training conducted by the Bangladesh Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry on entrepreneurship and operationalising the construction industry skills council (CICS). The targeted approach assisted SDC in identifying niche areas where the grant support could add value.

The B-SkillFUL project faced challenges in personnel development. Recruiting for the senior positions of the project was a challenge from the onset. Key positions, including two international team leaders and two coordinators, resigned during implementation. Recruiting the team leader was the most challenging element, mostly due to the required profile.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While most projects delivered the immediate outputs expected, there is little evidence concerning the impact at macro and meso level.

The Ashshash Phase 1 end-of-project report found that there are good chances that the impact objectives will be achieved by March 2023. The SEIP project has had a significant impact on the employability of the trainees. At the same time, the end-of-project report found that the duration of certain courses needs to be revised, and the training curricula need to be periodically reviewed to ensure that it is aligned with labour market requirements. In addition to technical skills, literacy, numeracy, and other soft skills must be addressed to provide a holistic education for certain target groups of trainees. In addition, it was recommended that more social marketing efforts be made to reach out to marginalised groups.

The SEP/Sudokkho project's progress towards its outcome has been limited due to its short implementation time (i.e., only 2.5 years of implementation). The most important impact was the project's effort to introduce a Market Systems Development approach based on cost-sharing of training services. The fact that other projects provided free assistance to market players and free training to job seekers made it challenging to 'sell' this idea.

According to the End of Project report for the B-SkillFUL project, there is more demand and willingness to pay for training workers on advanced technology, tools, and machinery than basic-level skill training. As a result of access to advanced training, MSME owners purchased modern machinery to expand their businesses after being exposed to the benefits of such tools during the cluster-based training. Cost-sharing arrangements and affordable financing options are required to support MSME's technology upgrades. So generally, the demand for training skilled workers is higher than for training unskilled workers.

The Social Cohesion Fund project is challenged by the substantial size of the population in the refugee host communities; these feared that they may have been deprived of their desired jobs or business opportunities because of the focus on the Rohingya refugees. Among those who believe that they are deprived because of Rohingya existence, the most prominent reason (42%) is because they believe that the Rohingyas have more advantages compared to the locals.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Sustainability is a serious challenge for most projects. It is questionable whether the activities will continue once the external funding comes to an end.

Sustainability is a serious challenge for most of the projects reviewed. It is questionable whether the activities will continue once the external funding ends. The only exception to this is the Ashshash project, which has a high potential for sustainability because of its overall approach and strategy to supporting survivors. It provides several services, simultaneously builds the capacity of the relevant stakeholders, and implements strategic policy-level interventions.

With its sole focus on fully subsidised training, the B-SkillFUL project-promoted training remains unsustainable without continuous financing by development partners. The Reintegration project is designed as an add-on to the World Bank's loan of USD 50 million to the government for the reintegration of migrant workers. There are two pillars to the project – grassroots implementation and policy advice. The policy advice component, implemented through ILO/IOM and UN Women, works on sustainability to ensure that the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment ensures an inclusive and accountable framework for reintegration through capable institutions and systems, even after the external funding ends. By design, the Social Cohesion Fund project is not sustainable, and no information about sustainability was found for the SEIP project.

5 Lessons learned

While skills development is an element of all the six examined projects, dual apprenticeship has played a less prominent role. Most of the supported training has been short-term, not exceeding six months. Several reports highlight the challenges related to securing decent employment for those trained, partially because the big companies in the Ready-Made Garment industry prefer to conduct the training in-house. Besides, for those placed in employment, the income has often been low (often below the minimum wage). This has been addressed through two interventions, not part of the original design: a) business development services to existing MSEs to expand the number of employees, and b) support to trainees starting their own businesses.

The duration and content of the training is critical for the employability of the trainees. Experience suggests that for most occupations, six months should be the minimum duration of the training. The lessons learned also pointed to the importance of steadily adjusting the training content to the needs of the labour market. For some groups like returning migrant workers, it appears that the programme's relevance can be further increased by adopting a tailored need-based approach. Interestingly, there has been more demand for and willingness to pay for training workers on advanced technology, tools, and machinery than for training unskilled workers.

Applying a market systems development (MSD) approach proved challenging, as it seeks to address the underlying causes of market systems underperformance through facilitation rather than direct support. There appear to be two reasons for this: a) adverse market conditions caused by COVID-19 and b) SDC being the only donor in TVET in Bangladesh applying this approach. Other projects provide free assistance to market players and free training to job seekers. The market is crowded with subsidy-driven programmes that do not necessarily focus on linkages with the industry and/or job creation. Most big manufacturers, e.g., in the

Ready-Made Garment industry, do not need to engage with private training providers since they can source workers from their factory gates and through their networks.

Similarly, implementing the payment-for-results (P4R) system was very difficult due to the high risk of fraud. While private providers have shown interest in job placements where they have benefitted financially, many did not have the required capacity or systems in place to secure genuine job opportunities for their graduates. Instead, the temptation to produce fake certificates to secure the results payment is high.

Several projects, especially B-SkillFUL, have been concerned about the sustainability of the supported skills development initiatives. The project's sole focus on the supply side and fully subsidised training delivery approach made it unsustainable without continuous financing by development partners.

Engagement in safer migration requires a long-term, cross-border approach that involves multiple stakeholders and addresses the economic and social aspects of the lives of migrant workers and their families. Close collaboration between humanitarian and development partners helps attain greater government ownership and reduces potential fiduciary and reputational risks.

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SEP End of Programme Report, Oct. 2020
SEP Project Completion Report, Oct. 2020

Annex 6.3. Burkina Faso Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Development cooperation in Burkina Faso takes place in a complex and dynamic social, economic, and political context. Burkina Faso is a country with a young and rapidly growing population - in 2022, the population size was 22,673,762, with an annual population growth rate of 2.6%. In 2021, an estimated 25% of the population lived in poverty. 21.2% of the population is estimated to be exposed to severe food insecurity. [6]

Over the past decade, Burkina Faso has experienced *coups d'état* and political transitions. In 2014, a popular uprising led to the departure of then-President Blaise Compaoré, who had been in power for nearly 30 years. In the seven years following the coup, the country experienced a democratic transition, but also an insurgence - spilling over from other countries of the Sahel region - of Islamist terrorism in many parts of the country, and with terrorist attacks leaving many civilian casualties between 2015 and 2022.

The inability of the government of Roch Kaboré, in power since 2015, to deal with terrorism was a key factor contributing to two military coups in 2022: the transition military government under Ibrahim Traoré brought in as a result of the September 2022 coup, justified it with the need to combat terrorism; however, the army has repeatedly been implicated in massacres on civilians.[7] The military government has been unable to deliver on its pledge, and the security situation has further deteriorated. As a result of insecurity caused by Islamist insurgencies, over 2 million of Burkina Faso's 22.67 million inhabitants were internally displaced at the end of 2023, a figure that had sharply risen from around 50,000 in 2019.[8] It is estimated that around half of the territory of Burkina Faso is now outside of the government's control.[9]

In September 2023, Burkina Faso, along with Niger and Mali, created the "Alliance of Sahel States", a mutual defence pact with the stated intent to more effectively address terrorism, although none of the three countries individually, nor jointly, would seem to have the military or economical capacities to effectively do so. In early 2024, the three countries left the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In combination, these two steps have contributed to a reshaping of the geopolitical constellation in the region.

The military coup has undermined the democratic legitimacy of the state - the constitution remains suspended since 2022, with an impact, *inter alia*, on development cooperation and leading to a withdrawal of bi-lateral development partners from the country.

The key challenge for the country is "to address the underlying root causes of violent extremism, which include poverty, youth unemployment, inequality, illiteracy, poor governance and environmental degradation" and at present, the institutional capacity to do so is not in place.[10]

Despite some progress, access to education remains limited for many people, especially in rural areas where a large part of the population lives. UNICEF estimates that due to the deteriorating security context, around a quarter of schools had remained closed at the beginning of the academic year 2023/2024.[11] In 2021, UNESCO put the primary school completion rate at 62% for boys and 72% for girls. At lower secondary education, 33.6% of boys and 41% of girls complete, with enrolment in this education tier at 41% for girls and

6 Burkina Faso | Data (worldbank.org)
7 Burkina Faso Crisis Continues to Spiral – Africa Center for Strategic Studies and Burkina Faso: Army Massacres 223 Villagers | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)
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11 Burkina Faso: New academic year starts with one million children out of school due to ongoing violence and insecurity – UNICEF and Education Under Attack in West and Central Africa - 2023 Update - Burkina Faso | ReliefWeb

37% for boys. 12% of boys enrol in tertiary education, compared to 7% of girls.[12] The quality of education is a serious concern, and learning poverty—the share of children unable to read and understand age-appropriate texts by the age of 10—is estimated to be 74%.[13]

The country faces persistent economic challenges, including dependence on commodity prices, low economic diversification, and high unemployment, especially among young people. Burkina Faso's economy is largely based on agriculture. The sector contributes to about 18.5% of Burkina Faso's GDP, and employs nearly three-quarters of the working population. About 26% of the population is engaged in subsistence farming, with cotton being the main cash crop, accounting for a significant share of export earnings. The productivity of the agriculture sector is low, and the effects of climate change pose considerable challenges. The deteriorating internal security situation described above led to the displacement, in 2023, of an estimated 1.7 million rural residents, resulting in a considerable loss of cultivated agricultural land.[14]

Vocational training has become increasingly important in reducing the rate of youth unemployment. The Burkinabé government has pledged to develop the country's human resources with a view to improving the employability of young people and facilitating their professional integration.

2 Strategic Framework

Cooperation between Switzerland and Burkina Faso has a history of almost fifty years. Consecutive strategy periods have focused on support in four main areas: (i) basic education and vocational training; (ii) rural development and food security; (iii) state reform, decentralisation, local government and citizen participation; and (iv) macroeconomic management (public financial management), with a cross-cutting focus on gender.

Vocational training, understood as a strategic lever for development (and, more recently, one response to addressing the root causes of youth radicalisation) has featured in successive cooperation strategy periods. During the period covered by this evaluation (i.e., from 2016 to 2023), three interventions were supported:

- **PAFPA-Dual**: Projet d'appui à la formation professionnelle par apprentissage dual - Project to Support Vocational Training through Dual Apprenticeship
- **APOSE/EFTP**: Appui à la Politique Sectorielle d'Enseignement et de Formation Technique et Professionnels – Support for Sectoral Policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training;
- **IWILI – Lève-toi**: Appui au dispositif national de formation professionnelle - Stand up: Support for the national vocational training system

12 Burkina Faso: Education Country Brief.International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (unesco.org)

13 Ibid.

14 World Bank (2024) Burkina Faso: Agro-Silvo-Pastoral Sector Public Expenditure Review. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/41419 License: CC BY-NC 3.0 IGO

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Burkina Faso reviewed

PROJECT NAME	REFERENCE	PERIOD	PARTNER	TOTAL (CHF) [SDC]
PAFPA Projet d'appui à la formation professionnelle par apprentissage dual - Project to Support Vocational Training through Dual Apprenticeship	7F-04514.04 (BF 68)	1 January 2016 – 30 June 2023	National Council of Burkinabe Employers	9,000,000 CHF (The overall amount is CHF 14,823,601, which comprises a contribution of the Burkinabè government and other development partners)
APOSE/EFTP Appui à la Politique Sectorielle d'Enseignement et de Formation Technique et Professionnels/ Support for Sectoral Policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training	7F-04514.04	1 January 2019 to 31 December 2023, extended until October 2024	Ministry of Sports, Youth and Employment	3,000,000 CHF (The overall amount is 28,398,122 Euro, which comprises a contribution of the Burkinabè government and other development partners)
IWILI – Lève-toi ! Appui au dispositif national de formation professionnelle/ Stand up: Support for the national vocational training system	7F-10660.01	1 January 2022 to 31 December 2034	GOPA, finalisation of project design underway at time of the evaluation	54,000,000 CHF for the three phases foreseen

PAFPA-Dual: Projet d'appui à la formation professionnelle par apprentissage dual - Project to Support Vocational Training through Dual Apprenticeship. The main objective of the project, and where the National Council of Burkinabé Employers was the institutional counterpart, was to contribute to the reduction of youth unemployment and underemployment in Burkina Faso by promoting sustainable professional integration. To achieve this goal, the PAFPA Dual specifically aimed to:

- Strengthen the capacities of actors involved in vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Improve the quality and relevance of vocational training to meet the needs of the labour market.
- Promote in-company apprenticeship as an effective means of vocational training.
- Facilitate the professional integration of young people trained through support and accompaniment mechanisms.

While the project targeted a limited number of youth (8,000) in select regions of the country, the underlying rationale was that the approach would have a pilot character with a prospect of scalability.

APOSE/EFTP: Appui à la Politique Sectorielle d'Enseignement et de Formation Technique et Professionnels – Support for Sectoral Policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training. APOSE is a multi-donor initiative with the Directorate General for Vocational Training at the Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Employment as the main institutional counterpart. The project aims to support the sectoral policy of technical and vocational education and training in Burkina Faso by contributing to the improvement of access, quality and relevance of vocational training. APOSE is the result of a partnership between the government of Burkina Faso; a number of development partners, including France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Monaco, Austria. The project focuses on:

- Supporting institutional reforms in the vocational training sector.
- Improving access to and quality of training.
- Certification and recognition of skills.

The project had ambitious objectives targeting the systems level. However, it has faced protracted difficulties in its implementation, including because of a lack of capacity at institutional level to lead the project.

IWILI – Lève-toi: Appui au dispositif national de formation professionnelle - Stand up: Support for the national vocational training system. The projects overall objectives are to:

- Strengthen the capacity of the private sector in the development of training schemes.
- Integrate young people, in particular young women, into enterprises or through self-employment.
- Promote green jobs and the mining sector to contribute to the protection of the environment and to address climate change.

The project has a particular focus on vulnerable groups, particularly internally displaced persons.

3 Methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC's support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while in-country missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania).

Given the fragile security situation, the Evaluation Team did not visit Burkina Faso, and, in consultation with the SDC evaluation manager, it was decided to conduct the case study in a hybrid way, whereby a local consultant was commissioned to undertake part of the in-country research (in particular in-person meetings with the Burkinabé institutional stakeholders) using standardised data collection instruments. Other elements of the case study included desk review of a select number of project documents, online interviews with the SCO and other development partners, and the Regional Thematic Advisor at SDC HQ.

Ultimately, the hybrid approach posed a number of challenges, some of which might be related to the country's governance and security situation.

4 Findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's VSD projects in principle align with the economic, social, and political context of Burkina Faso. The rationale for engagement in the sector is, among other, based on demographic pressures and the nexus between youth unemployment and potential youth radicalisation. However, over the evaluation period, programming shifts can be observed, away from a bottom-up approach that was intended to lead to scaling up of initiatives towards a greater focus on policy and institutional level reform of the sector. This is an acknowledgement of the scale of the challenges to be addressed, and which cannot be resolved through bottom-up approaches, which will not result in the systemic changes needed. VSD projects consider social inclusion and include a focus on women. More recently, new and highly vulnerable groups have emerged as a result of the deteriorating security situation, and interventions have sought to include these groups.

In principle, SDC's interventions in the TVET sector are in line with the realities of the national context (economic, social and political in Burkina Faso) and are consistent with national and sectoral policies, strategies and action plans. They are based on the National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PN-TVET) and the country's sectoral and strategic policies related to TVET and Youth. Interventions considered contextual aspects such as security (youth unemployment as a root cause for radicalisation) and public health (Covid-19).

Acknowledging the importance of the private sector, **PAFPA-Dual** worked with the National Council of Burkinabé Employers (CNPB); private vocational training structures; and professional organisations. Stakeholders consulted for the evaluation variously questioned the extent to which the private sector role within the project was well calibrated with view to its capacities and the mainly informal nature of the economy. Views were voiced that the expectations were too ambitious for the Burkinabé context, and that meaningful formats of private sector involvement have as yet to be found.

PAFPA-Dual took a bottom-up approach (focus on pilot regions and a ring-fenced target number – 8000 - of youth to be trained, and which was expected to lead to upscaling beyond the project locations). Stakeholders consulted suggested that this was not adequate to the Burkinabé realities, which, as a function of demographic development, sees around 400.000 young people enter the job market every year. In combination, development partner-supported projects are able to train a maximum of 40.000 people (i.e., 10% of new job market entrants), which highlights the limitations of the approach in a context where there is also considerable urgency for solutions. As one stakeholder posited (and a view that was echoed by other interlocutors): "We will not resolve this problem by training individual people - this is clear to everyone by now."

APOSE and, more recently, **IWILI**, in principle reflect an evolution of the programming approach towards a greater emphasis on systems-level reform (institutional and policy level) in the VET sector. Challenges relate to weak capacities of the state and its institutions overall: there is institutional fragmentation of competences between different ministries, i.e., the Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Employment on the one hand, and the Ministry of Education on the other hand and a whole-of-government approach to reforms would be needed to attain reform momentum.

The private sector remains, in principle, an important stakeholder in **IWILI**, the most recent intervention in the portfolio. However, stakeholders consulted for the evaluation admitted to not having found, yet a consensus on what its meaningful inclusion entails in the Burkinabé context. Perverse incentives created through earlier projects might make novel and potentially more relevant engagement with the private sector more difficult. Other development partners in Burkina Faso are facing this challenge, too.

Stakeholders clearly identify the Swiss VSD support with an emphasis on the Swiss model of dual education but variously posited that there are limitations as to how well such an approach can work in the context of Burkina Faso. From across the stakeholder spectrum, there was hope for somewhat more nimbleness and adaptability to the country context.

Swiss cooperation projects primarily target young people aged 15 to 35 and women. In the specific security context of Burkina Faso, new and very vulnerable target groups have emerged. These are internally displaced persons, mainly women and children, who have fled their places of origin due to recurrent terrorist attacks. SDC's financing has adapted to this situation by putting specific conditions in place for their integration into the host areas and financial autonomy. APOSE and PAPFA-Dual have financed training courses and have trained and provided other support to these vulnerable groups.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Swiss interventions are consistent and complementary with other development partners operating in BF. APOSE—despite uneven results—is a joint effort of several development partners, i.e., the results of donor coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Given the scale of the challenges in the TVET sector, stakeholders from within the Swiss system argue for a greater focus on policy and political dialogue; however, in reality, this is difficult to achieve.

Swiss VSD interventions are coherent with the funding of technical and financial partners in the VET sector. APOSE results from a partnership between development partners, including France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Monaco, and Austria. Even if the project faces implementation challenges, it is undeniably a good example of synergy and harmonisation between development partners.

Stakeholders have identified Switzerland as a key development partner in VSD and is highly visible and active in terms of donor coordination. Stakeholders unanimously highlighted the collegiality and pragmatism of the SCO in terms of coordination, information sharing, and being an intellectual sparring partner for sectoral projects of other donors. The SCO is actively participating in and has co-chaired the relevant donor coordination mechanisms.

Stakeholders from within the Swiss system signalled that a reset of development partners' approaches towards VSD towards a clearer focus on policy and political dialogue in the sector is needed - but is difficult to achieve, given that development partners have adopted and tend to be set in their programming approaches. Achieving a greater coordinated focus on policy and political dialogue is now also complicated by the deterioration of the political situation (see "Context" chapter above), and which is leading to a constriction of development partner presence in Burkina Faso due to concerns around the legitimacy of the military government.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
At output level, PAFPA achieved its objectives, or overachieved them. At outcome level, results are more uncertain, as the underlying theory of change - localised, bottom-up actions with a projection of upscaling at a higher level - proved to be elusive, and motivations in particular from private sector stakeholders have been skewed by perverse incentives, rather than fostering demand-driven skills development. For APOSE, results are uncertain, too, while for IWILI, the project design is still being finalised to learn lessons from PAFPA and APOSE, in the case of IWILI, a more considered approach to systems transformation will be attempted, working top down rather than bottom up, as this approach has been found to have considerable limitations.

PAPFA-Dual closed in June 2023 and reported the following results:

- Youth training: The programme trained a total of 9009 young people in the agro-sylvo-pastoral, fisheries and wildlife sectors, as well as in emerging professions. This training allowed the beneficiaries to acquire essential skills for their professional integration.
- Skills certification: of the young people trained, 469 were certified.
- Professional integration: At least 4357 beneficiaries were professionally integrated as a result of their training, either as employees of a company or as independent contractors. This corresponds to a 54 per cent rate.
- Support for beneficiaries: 1187 beneficiaries were supported with installation kits in the agriculture, livestock, agri-food, crafts and construction sectors, encouraging them to start their professional activity.
- Creation of direct jobs: The programme has contributed to the creation and consolidation of 56 direct jobs with project partners.
- Training of trainers: 1632 trainers were trained, exceeding the initial target of 1000 trainers. This training has improved the quality of the supervision of beneficiaries and strengthened the capacities of the actors involved in vocational training.

In sum, **PAFPA-Dual** has achieved results at the micro-level in terms of training young people, skills certification, professional integration, support for beneficiaries, direct job creation and training of trainers. Stakeholders consulted for the evaluation reported that both **PAFPA-Dual** and **APOSE** strengthened the awareness of dual VET among stakeholders and has raised capacities inside the Ministry for Sports, Youth, and Employment. **PAFPA-Dual** strengthened the training and reception capacities of training structures (training centres, companies, farms, etc.) to be models for implementing dual or modular training according to a skills-based approach of 75%-80% practice and 20%-25% theory.

In particular through **APOSE**, funding mechanisms for VSD at institutional level were sought to be strengthened. While an institutional Support Fund for Vocational Training and Apprenticeship exists and has been supported by Switzerland and other development partners, including through APOSE, but its income - fed through a tax from businesses - goes into the general budget rather than VSD.

As discussed above, **PAFPA-Dual** adopted a bottom-up approach, and where the intention was that successes at local/regional levels would lead to a scaling up of initiatives. This theory of change has not materialised, and both **APOSE** and, more recently **IWILI**, reflect an attempt to shift direction towards a clearer system-level approach, as the need for reform of the legal and institutional framework has become more evident.

The following challenges have been identified:

- The Ministry of Education was not included in the VSD system reform despite being a central stakeholder.
- Lack of weight/gravitas of the Ministry for Sports, Youth, and Employment within the system of government.
- Development partners lack capacity and experience in political and policy dialogue around VSD reforms.
- The development partner landscape is contracting due to the government's lack of legitimacy, and thus, fewer voices are joining a policy-level dialogue around effective VSD reform.
- Development partners continue their programming bottom-up despite approaches not being adequate for the scale of the challenges.

While **PAFPA-Dual** attempted the inclusion of the private sector in the design, stakeholders consulted for the evaluation have conceded that this has not been successful, as mentioned above, this is not unique to Swiss-funded projects, as other development partners have reported similar problems from their interventions. Moreover, stakeholders have pointed out that cooperation incentives (i.e., financial benefit from engagement in PAFPA-Dual and other projects) might have inadvertently impacted future engagements, as private sector stakeholders are reluctant to be involved on what they consider less attractive terms than in previous engagements (which demonstrates the lack of results, as the private sector has not understood the value of the engagement). Private sector stakeholders consulted by the Evaluation Team indicated that they would not support any project that an international NGO would implement.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While PAFPA achieved results at the level of the individuals involved, a more in-depth cost-benefit analysis is likely to reveal that the ratio between inputs and outcomes is problematic. APOSE and IWILI face(d) considerable difficulties in implementation, leading to significant delays, including in disbursement.

As there is no comparative analysis—for example from other development partners - available, it is difficult to conclude as to whether the resources spent, and the results achieved during **PAFPA-Dual** are in a favourable ratio. A cost-benefit analysis might conclude that the input-outcome ratio is problematic.

Given the delays in implementation, including disbursement, efficiency has to be rated weak with regard to **APOSE**.

IWILI has taken longer than is typically the case to commence implementation. This is because the SCO is adamant, based on lessons learned and the results of the 2021 independent evaluation, on ensuring a strategic shift in its approach to VSD. The longer inception phase could ultimately contribute to greater efficiency, as a more considered approach based on lessons learned should result in a better use of resources.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
VSD interventions have had impact at the level of the individuals participating in the measures. At meso-level, dual VSD has become more known in Burkina Faso, including among private sector actors who recognise the benefits of quality training of prospective employees. At macro level, dual VSD is a familiar concept at institutional and governmental level, however, contextual factors thus far have prevented greater traction and are likely to remain challenges in the future.

The impact of Swiss VSD support in Burkina Faso remains, by and large, at the micro level. PAFPA-Dual has trained some 9,000 young people, over half of whom have been integrated into the job market. Others have started their own businesses. The project has also contributed to increasing the number of trainers and improving the learning environment of public and private training providers through improved infrastructure and equipment. However, stakeholders struggle to maintain or replicate VSD approaches piloted through projects due to the country's economic environment constraints.

At the meso-level, SDC's support has increased awareness and contributed to greater knowledge and acknowledgement of the importance of dual VET as a VSD approach among domestic stakeholders and development partners. A peer development partner consulted for the assignment specifically highlighted the inclusion of a theoretical part of training as a key Swiss contribution. Others highlighted Swiss support as having contributed to greater recognition of the importance of certified professions. Stakeholders have attributed a shift across all development partners from previously free-of-charge training towards a contribution by the apprentice/trainee to the cost of training to SDC.

APOSE and, more recently, IWILI are trying to achieve a greater focus on system-level/macro-level changes. APOSE has had uneven results, and IWILI is still in its inception phase.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Exit strategies have not been sufficiently defined, and sustainability of results is uncertain.

There is a likelihood of sustainability of results from PAFPA-Dual at the micro-level, as young people trained through the project are likely to have acquired skills and formal certification that provide them with either employment or better prospects on the job market. Domestic stakeholders suggested that PAFPA-Dual had not sufficiently defined exit strategies: "the project has neither defined an exit strategy at the level of individual stakeholders, nor at the institutional level."

APOSE is under the direct technical supervision of the Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Employment and is working through a range of relevant domestic institutional stakeholders.

This, in principle, is geared towards sustainability. Stakeholders from the Ministry consulted for the evaluation report that capacity has been built by the project to implement dual VET-type of activities. However, without project support, activities are unlikely to continue as there is no alternative funding available.

5 Lessons Learned

Given the scale of the challenges facing Burkina Faso, development partners' interventions have to be more strategic than in the past. Historic "bottom-up" approaches have shown their limitations, and it has become increasingly clear that they are unsuitable for addressing systemic issues. The new project (IWILI) acknowledges the need to put greater emphasis on policy dialogue in an attempt to influence the policy and institutional framework for VSD more impactfully. Interlocutors raised a question as to the capacities of SDC and SCO to engage in policy dialogue and the possible need to develop these further.

The importance of the private sector in VSD is acknowledged, but modes of engagement have not yet been calibrated to the private sector's capacity and motivations. Providing project funding to private sector development partners inadvertently might have made future engagement more difficult, as participation might now be conditional on financial benefit for private sector actors' involvement. The challenge is not unique to Swiss-funded interventions but applies across development partners.

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Annex 6.4. Egypt Case Study

1 Introduction and context

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has estimated that 25-30 per cent of Egyptian youth are unemployed (i.e., 17% men, 50% women), and according to the World Bank, 40 per cent of youth are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Despite the persistent unemployment rates and significant rates of informality of jobs, employers find the lack of skills the key barrier to their competitiveness and growth. Egypt faces two skills mismatches: quantitative (indicated by the short supply of TVET graduates to sectors needing labour) and qualitative (where the level of available skills is lower than the required level to perform the job).[15]

Systematic involvement of the private sector in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has so far been limited; there is little interaction between the private sector and TVET institutions in the design of TVET programmes, and reliable information regarding the needs of the labour market is lacking. Public technical schools have insufficient labour market relevance, outdated curricula, teacher-focused approaches, poor teaching and learning conditions, and inadequately qualified and poorly motivated staff. The essential systemic prerequisites, such as quality management systems and efficient institutions for the qualification of TVET, are recently established and in need of support to function effectively.

Despite the lengthy support to the TVET sector, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (METE) lacks the availability of sufficient staff with expertise in planning, implementing, and monitoring TVET programmes. Another challenge concerns the identification of labour market trends and skills needs. The TVET system in Egypt is highly fragmented and the governance system is weak.

Egypt hosts over 6.3 million migrants and 261,701 registered refugees and asylum seekers as of March 202116, including 131,989 Syrians (50%).[17] The remainder are from Sudan (49,670), South Sudan (19,951), Eritrea (19,497), Ethiopia (16,098), and 57 other countries. Among these 6.3 million, 900,000 persons are considered vulnerable.

The Government of Egypt is aware of these challenges. It has addressed them through a new TVET strategy focusing on formal technical education. It has taken several reform measures, such as developing competency-based curricula, establishing more than 70 Applied Technology Schools, and setting up three new institutions, namely the Egyptian TVET Quality Assurance and Accreditation National Authority, Centre for the Enhancement of Quality Assurance of Technical Education and Technical and Vocational Teachers Academy. Furthermore, several initiatives have been taken to modernise vocational schools to address the need for digital skills.

2 Development cooperation

Switzerland has been engaged in Egypt in the skills sector through its SECO-funded Economic Inclusion project implemented by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) since June 2017, which has supported the private sector to change policies and operations to become more inclusive to women and marginalised communities. This support further entailed sub-projects that supported:

15 This section is based on the SDC Entry Proposal for the Vocational Skills Development project in Egypt from 2021 and the Mid-Term Review report of the UNIDO Inclusive Green Growth project from 2023.

16 UNHCR, Factsheet Egypt, March 2021, www.unhcr.org/eg

17 IOM, Sitrep, Sept-Oct 2020: https://egypt.iom.int/sites/default/files/SitRep%205%20September_0.pdf

1. Establishment of the Sector Skills Councils for the electrical equipment and cables sector.
2. The Sewedy Technical Academy (STA) in offering three-year dual education.
3. Youth inclusion through improved skills governance and high-quality dual learning provision in hospitality and tourism in Egypt (i.e., Project Osiris).
4. Retail training at the Almaza Training Centre and raising awareness on training of people with disabilities.

On the policy side, working with Swiss experts, Skillsonic, the project supported establishing Egypt's first sector skills council consulting on curricula development in the electrical cables sector. Further, the mid-term review of the cooperation strategy 2017-2020 recommended expanding VSD to address the mismatch between students' skills and employee demand and to improve accessibility for refugees and migrants.

The midterm review of the cooperation strategy 2017-2020 recommended expanding VSD to address the mismatch between students' skills and employee demand and to improve accessibility for refugees and migrants.[18] Thus, as part of the preparations for the new strategy 2021-2024; OIC conducted an initial mapping exercise on opportunities for Swiss engagement in Egypt in November 2019. This was followed by an in-depth analysis whereby Helvetas was mandated to identify specific entry points concluding possible Swiss involvement through supporting initial and continuous VET through Advanced Technologic Schools or Center of Competence.[19] Due to the high complexity of the TVET sector in Egypt and limited Swiss budget comparatively to other donors, the study recommended not to design a stand-alone Swiss bilateral project but to opt for a contribution or expansion of an existing engagement.[20] Furthermore, the stakeholder mapping showed that the most important actor in the TVET system from the GoE is the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE). They are leading the Technical Education Reform (TE 2.0) and cooperating with the big donors, especially BMZ, USAID and the EU. In 2021, HLB Makary consultants were mandated to conduct a labour market review of six pre-selected sectors for possible engagement: agriculture, textile, construction, tourism, pharmaceutical and nursing. The labour market review looked into the sectors' economic and labour market potential.

Currently, the SDC Egypt project portfolio includes VSD within the Inclusive Green Growth in Egypt project implemented by UNIDO and the Vocational Skills Development in Egypt project implemented by GIZ. The first phase of the green growth project was launched in 2020 and is planned to continue until June 2025, while the VSD project was launched in early 2022 with a tentative closure in December 2032.

SDC also funds the Youth for Future project, which, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), UNICEF and ILO, delivers life skills training and services to migrants and Egyptian youth, resulting in improved employability and reduced unemployment.

18 VSD includes all learning processes in technical, social and personal skills that contribute to a sustainable integration of trained people in decent jobs in the formal or informal economy, either on an employed or self-employed basis.

19 VET includes education and training which aim to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market.

20 TVET includes apprenticeship training, technical and vocational training, occupational and vocational education, career and technical education as well as workplace education.

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Egypt reviewed

Project Name	Period	Partners	TA Provider	Budget (CHF)
Inclusive Green Growth in Egypt **7F-09748**	July 2020 May 2025	Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Environment	UNIDO (ILO)	5,060,000
Vocational Skills Development in Egypt, Phase 1 **7F-10708**	November 2022 June 2026	Ministry of Education and Technical Education	GIZ	18,000,000

The VSD elements of the two projects are as follows:

Inclusive Green Growth in Egypt (IGGE) project

This project seeks to train or retrain 1,000 unemployed and vulnerable young people (aged 15-35, 50% of which are women) in the target governorates to access green jobs, based on market research and MSMEs' consultations. Ten selected technical and vocational training providers offer new training and employment services in the green economy.

Vocational Skills Development project

SDC is a 20 per cent contributor to this project which is also funded (80%) by Germany and implemented by GIZ. The project seeks to enhance the quality and provision of dual vocational education and training (VET) in agriculture, tourism/hospitality, construction and ready-made garments whilst reaching 70,000 students (out of which 20,000 are young women) and capacitating 1,200 TVET school personnel in 110 schools, as well as 700 in-company trainers and 40 METE staff. The intervention is intended to address gender stereotypes and climate and environment-related dimensions. The target group is youth (including migrants and refugees), teachers, and in-company trainees.

3 Methodology and projects selected

The Egyptian VSD portfolio focuses on VET and labour market integration. None of the two evaluated projects are implemented by SDC; the implementing organisation for the Inclusive Green Growth project is UNIDO, while the Vocational Skills Development project is implemented in partnership with GIZ.

The assessment in this case study is based on a combination of pre-mission interviews with selected SDC staff, a review of project documentation, and interviews with SDC country office staff, representatives of the implementing organisations, government and private sector representatives, beneficiaries, and development partners during the visit to Egypt. In addition to the two projects selected for evaluation, the evaluation team visited STA, a non-governmental technical academy offering dual apprenticeships, as well as the GIZ Migration portfolio.[21]

4 Findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

21 The mission was conducted 17-20 March 2024.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries?   **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's VSD interventions in Egypt are designed in response to the economic, social and political context and aligned with the relevant government frameworks.   SDC's VSD interventions in Egypt have sought to promote social inclusion of young people and particularly young women. However, engaging women in non-traditional occupations has been challenging. The challenges facing migrants and refugees (who are typically treated as guests and excluded from full employment) are growing.

There is good evidence that SDC has engaged with government, business and other donors to tailor its support to the national context. Both projects clearly meet the Government of Egypt's priorities: IGGE concerns the greening of the economy, and VSD concerns the urgency of improving TVET's labour market relevance.

The Inclusive Green Growth project focuses on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with the potential to green their production. The project proved relevant to the country's context since it is aligned with Egypt's national priorities on growth, productivity and job creation, and reduction of environmental pressures and thus with the country's climate change commitments. It also aligned with Egypt's long-term plans to fight unemployment as outlined in Egypt's Vision 2030, which sets the target of reducing the national unemployment rate to ten per cent by 2020 and five per cent by 2030.

The Vocational Skills Development project is based on the government's Technical Education Reform Strategy (T.E 2.0). It builds on previous experience, from support to introducing the dual apprenticeship model in Egypt.

The issue of migration - both inward (e.g., refugees and asylum seekers) and outward (e.g., Egyptians leaving for employment elsewhere in the region) - is an increasing challenge for Egypt. Moreover, the challenges facing migrants and refugees (who are typically treated as guests and excluded from full employment) are growing.

Both projects are strongly focused on responding to private sector needs and opportunities. SDC considers responding to private sector demands for skills important and encourages government training providers to interact with the private sector. While the private sector is involved in identifying skills gaps and developing curriculum, translating these processes into employment is minimal.

The SCO considered the VSD Typologies when designing its interventions within the Helvetas study.

SDC's VSD interventions in Egypt have sought to promote the social inclusion of young people, particularly young women. However, engaging women in non-traditional occupations has been challenging. The Swiss contribution will contribute to the development of a gender-sensitive Quality Management System (QMS) to act as the framework for both Centre for the Enhancement of Quality Assurance of Technical Education (CEQAT) and the Egyptian TVET Quality Assurance and Accreditation National Authority (ETQAAN) in qualifying all TVET schools under MoETE.

The IGGE project is explicitly focused on responding to climate change. It directly and indirectly addresses several of Egypt's major environmental challenges, including waste management and, in particular, the sustainable management of agricultural wastes and related solid wastes from agro-industries. Sustainable agriculture and its related agro-industries have a proven potential for high growth and job creation in the green economy and sustainable energy. The project targets vulnerable communities, especially young women and men, who are supposed to be the main beneficiaries of the promotion of green growth approaches for start-ups and MSMEs. It applies a "gender-sensitive value chain" (GSVC) methodology that GIZ and Oxfam Quebec have developed. The GSVC approach enables the strengthening of the economic role of women in the clusters and value chains and encourages more holistic and effective interventions to increase their economic participation and opportunity together with their resilience. During the mobilisation phase of the IGGE project, several concepts and tools were used to integrate the gender perspective and assess women's current access to and control over key resources as well as the interactions between female entrepreneurs, support institutions and policy representatives, in particular during the cluster and value chain assessment and the rapid employment and labour market analysis. Thus, IGGE interventions have been designed to address the barriers that hinder women's participation in the target sectors, green value chains and potential clusters in Luxor and Qena Governorates. The project tracks women's participation in the target MSMEs as entrepreneurs (female founders/senior management), and employees (female full-time, female part-time and female seasonal employees).

Women constitute an important target group for the Vocational Skills Development project, but especially after the Corona pandemic, engaging women in non-traditional occupations has been challenging.

SDC has been supporting the inception phase of a forthcoming project, Youth Empowerment and Integration in Host Communities. If approved, this would further support Meshwary, one of the national programmes implemented in collaboration between United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This project aims to improve livelihood opportunities and strengthen the socio-economic resilience of migrants, refugees, and host community youth through increased awareness and capabilities of key stakeholders, employability skills, career prospects and inclusive youth centres. Phase 1 will include an upscaling plan to increase the number of Job Search Clubs and Innovation Labs and new interventions related to climate change. Based on the experiences during COVID-19, UNICEF is digitalising the training manuals with plans to expand the digitalisation to cover all training material under Meshwary.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Projects are in line with the Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2017-2020, under the domain "inclusive sustainable economic growth and employment" and there is close and effective coordination with SECO. Cooperation with other development partners working in VSD is good and improving. SDC plays a lead role, along with GIZ.

The Inclusive Green Growth project was designed in line with the Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2017-2020 under the domain "inclusive sustainable economic growth and employment".

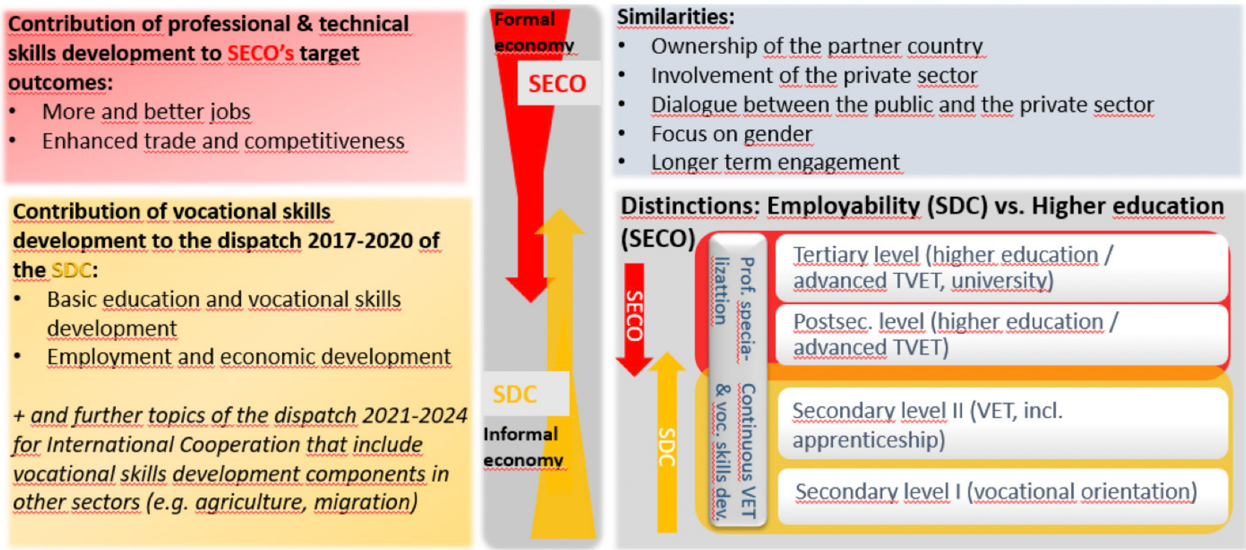
The SCO works closely with other donors and development partners in Egypt. There is good collaboration in the VSD portfolio under the leadership of GIZ, which also involves USAID and the EU. SDC is not a large donor but is well regarded as an authority in VSD and a cooperative partner.

The Inclusive Green Growth project is coordinated with similar initiatives by other development partners, while GIZ implements the Vocational Skills Development project in coordination with other development partners

While the projects have addressed specific skills concerns, their impact on the overall systemic challenges experienced by the Egyptian TVET system is limited and too early to measure.

The Vocational Skills Development project is closely coordinated with SECO's (regional) activities in Egypt. While skills development is a feature of both the SDC and SECO engagements, the SECO-supported activities are more directed at the private sector's needs and interests. Although SDC and SECO have different government partners, there is considerable synergy and collaboration across their interventions. Applying the Cooperation Programme 2021-2024 SDC and SECO agreed on complementarities in the Vocational Skills Development project. This is illustrated in the figure below. The planned long-term engagement begins with an SDC contribution to the German-funded skills system, emphasising promoting dual vocational education. The contribution to the German-funded Technical Support for the Comprehensive Technical Education Initiative (TCTI), implemented by GIZ, will strengthen the TCTI, aiming in the first phase at vocational skills development, among others, through working with and through the Applied Technology Schools. With SECO interested more in the higher education levels and professional specialisation, a staged approach with SECO's engagement starting later, when sector-wide Centres of Competence will be established.

Complementarity between SDC and SECO: Vocational Skills Development in Egypt



SOURCE: Vocational Skills Development in Egypt, 2021 Phase 1 Credit Proposal December 2021-December 2032

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Within the scope of each project, there is evidence that projects are on track to achieve their intended objectives. Clear attempts have been made to engage the private sector in all projects. However, there are major challenges in defining and responding to private sector demands for skills. While all projects are aligned with the national VSD system, not all projects specifically seek to strengthen or transform the system. Overall, very little attention has been given to transforming the national system. Earlier project phases assisted in introducing the dual apprenticeship model in Egypt. However, this model is still facing challenges.

SDC's VSD projects in Egypt appear to be on track to achieve their objectives. The Inclusive Green Growth project does not directly fund VSD interventions. Instead, it focuses on greening the curricula of existing TVET and higher education programmes, upgrading the staff teaching the new programmes and supporting students in finding employment related to their education.

It's too early to assess whether the Vocational Skills Development project will be able to achieve the planned outcomes and, thus, the intended objective. However, project staff indicated that the labour market absorption of the apprentices upon completion is very low, reflecting the depressed labour market situation in Egypt.

There is no synergy across the projects (i.e., VSD and IGGE), partially due to the implementation arrangement and the different focus areas.

Clear attempts have been made to engage the private sector in all projects. However, major challenges exist in defining and responding to private sector skill demands.

While traditionally, the links between the state and the private sector have been rather weak, the Vocational Skills Development project is trying to intensify the collaboration with relevant private sector associations. Finding adequate on-the-job training opportunities for the apprentices remains a challenge. The Vocational Skills Development project is based on GIZ's approach to dual apprenticeship. SDC has no conceptual input but is a member of the advisory board.

A noteworthy organisation visited by the evaluation team was the El Sewedy Electric Foundation. This is a development organisation established in 2018 to support the community in the areas of health, education and social solidarity. SECO supported the El Sewedy Technical Academy (STA), which is one of the entities affiliated with the Corporation that works in the field of technical education and vocational training to develop the skills of young people in various industrial fields with the aim of supporting the industry. STA offers dual apprenticeships for fee-paying students and claims a very high success and employment placement rate. Thus, STA is a not-for-profit entity funded by the private sector and provides nationally and internationally accredited training that meets the demands of private employers.

Considerable effort is required to raise the quality and reliability of the dual apprenticeship to a level that meets the private sector's expectations. Also, the low employment rate of graduates suggests that more attention should be given to job placement and promotion of the scheme. Stronger private sector ownership would help address this challenge. The STA/ElSewedy Technical Academy is an example of a successful non-governmental dual apprenticeship scheme. The experience from this is highly relevant to how the Vocational Skills Development project is implemented.

The IGGE project is implemented closely with Federations of SMEs in the two targeted governorates. While not entirely focused on VSD, the IGGE addresses the skills mismatch in green growth and, specifically, in selected sectors and value chains, such as waste management. As the Project Document describes it:

> The challenge is for MSMEs to turn these promising ideas into a sound foundation for a thriving enterprise. Some of these challenges are informational: waste producers often do not have a clear understanding of what else could be done with the waste, nor do they necessarily understand the potential monetary value of their waste… On the demand side, there will be enterprises that would be open to partnering with waste producers to create new products, services or business models around their wastes, but they lack the managerial and technical skills of both their existing employees and job seekers in the market…

Securing employment for the benefitting youth has proved to be a major challenge for both projects and related initiatives. The depressed Egyptian labour market partly causes this, but factors such as weak job-search assistance and limited labour market relevance also seem to contribute to this situation.

While all projects are aligned with the national VSD system, not all projects specifically seek to strengthen or transform the system. Earlier project phases assisted in introducing the dual apprenticeship model into Egypt's national VSD system. However, this model is still facing challenges. National systems reform is not part of the Inclusive Green Growth project's objective, but the green skills programmes developed with the project's support may inspire other TVET and higher education institutions to duplicate them.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's support for VSD is well coordinated by the SCO, which has benefited from regional and HQ advice.

SDC's support for VSD is well coordinated by the SCO, which has benefited from regional and headquarters advice. Both projects have solid project management and governance procedures in place.

According to a mid-term review commissioned by UNIDO, delivering the Inclusive Green Growth project outputs has been highly efficient, considering the project's implementation time.

Since the Vocational Skills Development project is implemented by GIZ, the SCO's role is limited.

Both projects are still in their early stages, which makes efficiency assessments difficult.[22]

22 A final evaluation of the IGGE project will be conducted end of this year, while an evaluation of VSD will be conducted in 2026.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's support for VSD in Egypt has contributed to change at macro, meso and micro levels. However, the impact of these changes have been modest.

SDC's support for VSD in Egypt has contributed to macro, meso and micro changes. However, the impact of these changes is still early to assess.

The Inclusive Green Growth project has primarily contributed to developing and piloting VSD and higher education programmes with a green profile in two governorates; the project has not been designed to address macro-level VSD issues. The UNDIO mid-term report describes a range of impacts of the project. None of this is specifically related to skills development.

IGGE Impacts
• Beneficiaries and stakeholders are becoming more aware and convinced of the green potential. • There is an interest of green economy opportunities among the young population and there is noticeable start of behavioural change at the side of the farmers, NGOs, Qena governorate. • The MSME Development Agency is actively participating in capacity building activities and initiates awareness activities for clients; increasing the financial support for green business; interested to • participate in discussions for bridging legal and policy barriers for supporting green business; expansion of the scope of work and a new sector for cooperation with farmers. • NGOs and farmers are convinced of the green potential; NGOs are recognised as a partner with an important role to reach out to the farmers; Farmers – what once was identified as waste, now is largely becoming an animal feed or being used for compost due to the positive examples in the regions. • In Qena governorate there is active involvement in the project; ban on burning plant residues adopted to foster the sound waste management; providing active support to young people in the green businesses; putting focus on management of sugarcane residues.
SOURCE: UNIDO (nd) IGGE Mid-Term Review Report

While an earlier EU-funded VSD project was instrumental in introducing the dual apprenticeship model in Egypt, the current German and Swiss-funded project primarily consolidates the previous results through capacity building and strengthening quality assurance mechanisms.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
There are continuing challenges in Egypt's VSD sector. While SDC's support has sought to build the capacity of key actors (in particular government actors), the sustainability of these efforts is not convincing.

There are continuing challenges in Egypt's VSD sector. While SDC's support has sought to build the capacity of key actors (i.e., mainly government actors), the sustainability of these efforts is not convincing. Given the serious resource constraints experienced by the Government, the sustainability prospects for both projects are questionable.

The UNIDO mid-term review of the Inclusive Green Growth in Egypt (IGGE) concluded that there are open risks concerning sustainability that need attention in the second project period, especially regarding the partner organisations' capacity to continue the activities initiated by the project. This challenge appears to remain.

An earlier EU funded VSD project lost momentum once the external funding ended. The present phase is intended to revive and consolidate the dual apprentice model in Egypt. In spite of the interest of the government and private sector in the scheme, there is a considerable risk that the effectiveness and efficiency will suffer once more when the project comes to an end. However, mitigation measures have been undertaken by the project to institutionalise the efforts and spend more time in training trainers and building the capacity of staff at different levels within the ministry.

5 Lessons learned

- Egypt presents a good example of close and effective collaboration between SDC and SECO in VSD based on a clear and agreed-upon understanding of each agency's competencies and mandates.
- SDC has relevant and credible experience in dual system models that can complement those of other development partners (e.g., GIZ).
- SDC is improving programme relevance and coherence through a bottom-up approach that involves partnerships with other donors and development agencies (e.g., the El Sewedy Technical Academy is a non-for-profit entity funded by the private sector and provides nationally and internationally accredited training that meets the demands of private employers).

6 References

Inclusive Green Growth (7F-09748)

2019 Credit Proposal, September 2019 to August 2023

2019 Project Document, September 2019 to August 2023

Mid-Term Review

2023 Change of Credit Duration (from 01/01/2020-31/12/2023 to 01/07/2020-30/05/2025)

30 May 2023 Letter regarding project amendment

2023 Revised work plan

Vocational Skills Development in Egypt (7F-10708)

2021 Phase 1 Credit Proposal December 2021-December 2032

Other

2021 Hemaya - Leaving no one behind, enhancing survival skills and self-reliance of migrants and forcibly displaced persons in Egypt.

2020 Youth Empowerment and Integration in Host Communities (Y4F) – Project Document: Phase 1 November 2020 to April 2025; Phase 2 May 2025 to May 2029.

2019 Operational Report for the Main Phase of the SDC Contribution (Co-financing) to the Project "Technical Support for the Comprehensive Technical Education Initiative (with Egypt)" (TCTI)

2019 Technical Support for the Comprehensive Technical Education Initiative (with Egypt) Results Matrix

STA/ElSewedy Technical Academy – slide deck

United Nations Children's Funds (2024) Project Document: Youth Empowerment and Integration in Host Communities

Annex 6.5. Nepal Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Nepal's constitution highlights employment as a fundamental right. To this end, the country's fifteenth periodic plan aims to provide dignified and productive employment for all citizens. However, high unemployment rates are still prevalent. Out of the country's total labour force of 7.99 million, nearly one million are without a job, and 39 per cent of the employed labour force is underemployed.

The promulgation of the constitution in 2015 transformed Nepal from a unitary government to a federalised one. As part of Nepal's overall federal state-building process, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector is undergoing a reform process. In the federalised TVET system, the federal government, through the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), is mandated by the constitution to develop national TVET standards, while provincial and local governments have the mandate for TVET implementation. However, TVET functions are entirely new to provincial governments. The federalisation process creates a conducive political environment to restructure and further strengthen the development of an effective TVET system in Nepal. Furthermore, the devolution of TVET functions to provincial and local levels offers the opportunity to strengthen linkages between TVET service providers and the private sector at provincial and local level and in the overall TVET system, to increase market-orientation and financial sustainability.

At least 500,000 young people enter the labour market annually. These youth either do not find appropriate jobs inside the country or are low-paid due to a lack of required competencies. As a result, many of the labour force, especially young people, opt for overseas migration for work and higher income. At the same time, the industry complains that it has difficulty recruiting workers with the right level of skills. Major challenges in addressing pervasive unemployment and underemployment are the lack of appropriate skills and competencies of the workforce, particularly youth, combined with a lack of adequate mechanisms for better alignment of supply and demand. Fostering vocational skills development for young people is a way to increase their employability, reduce youth unemployment, and provide a valuable alternative for labour migration. With a long history of supporting VSD in Nepal, Switzerland has been one of the main development partners supporting the development of the Nepalese vocational training system for more than 10 years. Introducing the dual-apprenticeship approach is one of the major achievements of this support.

Nepal is one of the flagships in SDC's VSD portfolio. It had the second-highest number of VSD projects during the evaluation period and the largest VSD envelope by volume. The projects cover all four themes of the SDC typologies for VSD: VET, access and inclusion, industry solutions, and labour market integration.

2 Development cooperation

The SDC Nepal project portfolio contributing to developing the national VSD system includes the National Vocational Qualifications System project, the Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment project, and the Quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Youth (QualiTY) project. The Safer Migration project has a narrower focus, providing prospective migrant workers with skills relevant to their intended destination and dealing with the migration conditions. The second phase of the Employment Fund project, completed in 2020, focused on training courses in construction-related occupations following the 2015 earthquake.

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Nepal reviewed

Project Name	Period	Partners	TA Provider	Budget (CHF)
National Vocational Qualification System (NVQS) **7F-08972**	January 2014 July 2024	MEST NSTB CTEVT	Swisscontact	
Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) **7F-09104**	August 2014 July 2025	MEST CTEVT	Helvetas	
Quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Youth (QualiTY) **7F-10737**	June 2021 July 2026	MEST CTEVT	Swisscontact	
Safer Migration Project (SaMI) **7F-07207**	July 2018 July 2024	Migrant Resource Centres Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security	Helvetas	28.000.000
Employment Fund – Skills for Reconstruction Phase 2 **7F-06976**	July 2015 June2020	MEST NRA CTEVT	Helvetas	

The VSD elements of the five projects are summarised below.

National Vocational Qualification System (NVQS) project. Phase 1 assisted the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in establishing a National Vocational Qualification Framework and a corresponding NVQ authority (the National Skills Testing Board, NSTB) to manage it. Phase 2 focuses on consolidating the NVQ and strengthening the capacity of the NSTB, including developing occupational standards in collaboration with Sector Skills Committees. NSTB is a unit under the CTEVT. The project has assisted with developing a system for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the accreditation of skills testing centres.

Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) project. Phase 1 of the project developed mainly two types of dual VET training, namely dual VET apprenticeships of 24 months duration, short courses including on-the-job training, and further training (skills upgrading) for existing workers. As a TVET-related service, the project has developed a career orientation/guidance module for secondary school leavers. Phase 2 prioritises the institutionalisation and implementation of a federalised TVET sector, building on the foundations of Phase 1. As part of this process, Phase 2 supports the creation of institutional arrangements between the private and public sectors at the federal and provincial levels to increase the TVET system's effectiveness.

Quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Youth (QualiTY) project. This project complements the ENSSURE and NVQS projects. Its focus is on strengthening the provincial governments' units responsible for steering and administrating the TVET system and anchoring the monitoring procedures for assessing standards in TVET schools. Furthermore, the project supports the national Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) in engaging with the Sector Skills Committees to develop curriculum models and frameworks, including for green jobs.

Safer Migration (SaMI) project. The project provides information on VSD opportunities for migrant workers and co-finances short-term skills training for prospective migrants.

Employment Fund – Skills for Reconstruction 2 project. As part of the reconstruction efforts, the project supported an update of the stone-layer and bricklayer masons' curriculum and co-financed youth training based on the updated curriculum.

3 Methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC's support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while field missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania), and one country study (i.e., Burkina Faso) was conducted as a hybrid involving a desk-reviews, online consultations, and the commissioning of a local consultant to undertake field research.

The Nepal case study was prepared through a field mission to Nepal in March 2024, which included consultations with key informants in Bagmati and Koshi provinces. The study also involved a review of the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), detailed reviews of project credit proposals, project documents, mid-term review reports, evaluation reports, and other available reports and literature. A list of the documents reviewed is presented at the end of this study. The Team's visit to Nepal occurred during the Mid-Term Review of the ENSSURE project. The concurrence allowed productive exchanges of observations by the two teams.

4 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC has gone to great lengths to ensure its VSD projects are designed and managed in response to Nepal's economic, social and political context. Over its many years of engagement, SDC has deep roots in Nepal and good relationships with many local partners. SDC's support for VSD has evolved over time. The phasing of projects allows for adjustment to project interventions to ensure they are relevant to current contexts that change over time. VSD projects are typically strongly focused on promoting social inclusion, including inclusion of groups from poor, disadvantaged areas and the inclusion of women. The major VSD projects seek to include marginalised and disadvantaged groups into the national TEVT system. Other projects, support resilience and in some cases livelihoods among people who are not being integrated into the national TVET system, but leaving the national labour market (e.g., migrants to Jordan).

SDC has gone to great lengths to ensure its VSD projects are designed and managed in response to Nepal's economic, social and political context. Over its many years of engagement, SDC has deep roots in Nepal and good relationships with many local partners. SDC's support for VSD has evolved over time. The phasing of projects allows for adjustment to project interventions to ensure they are relevant to current contexts that change over time.

With its own federated system of government, Switzerland considers its experiences and advice on VSD relevant to the newly federated Nepalese system. VSD is important for Nepal's stability. Unskilled and unemployed young people are at risk of joining Maoist groups. Thus, VSD is a source of hope for the future.

The NVQS project supported the creation of a National Vocational Qualification Framework and empowered the NSTB to manage it effectively. This is highly relevant, but the unexpected delay in enacting the TVET Act has seriously affected the rollout of the NVQF.

The ENSSURE Phase 2 project is based on a solid understanding of the Nepalese TVET system. It would have benefitted from an in-depth assessment of the private sector's demand for skilled labour. Similarly, the QualiTY project is based on a good understanding of the challenges faced by the Nepalese TVET system.

The SaMi project is responding well to the situation of potential migrant workers but would benefit from including the high number of returning migrants as a target group.

The Employment Fund Phase 2 project appears to be adequately adjusted to the emergency caused by the earthquake. The project was aligned with the Government of Nepal's Rural Housing and Reconstruction Programme.

SDC VSD projects are typically strongly focused on promoting social inclusion, focusing on groups from poor, disadvantaged areas and the inclusion of women. The major VSD projects seek to include marginalised and disadvantaged groups in the national TEVT system. Other projects support resilience and, in some cases, livelihoods among people not integrated into the national TVET system but leaving the national labour market (e.g., migrants to Jordan). There is some evidence that gender norms are being influenced, primarily by ensuring that women are included in the target group and through positive role models of women in the workforce.

The NVQS project explicitly targeted youth, especially from disadvantaged groups, while the OJT component of ENSSURE 2 caters specifically for out-of-school youths. Furthermore, all training programmes target the inclusion of women and socially disadvantaged groups.

The QualiTY project assumes that improving the quality of education/TVET will benefit disadvantaged groups. Women from disadvantaged families constitute an important target group for the SaMi project.

The Employment Fund 2 project is clearly intended to cater to disadvantaged families. Due to prevailing social norms, the project had limited success with women's participation in non-stereotypical training.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
There is evidence that SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal are consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and the work of other Swiss agencies. SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal are consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries.

There is evidence that SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal are consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and the work of other Swiss agencies. This includes two domain objectives of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal (2018-2023, i.e., Domain 1 Federal State Building and Domain 2 Employment and Income) and the Swiss Cooperation Programme for Nepal (2023-2026). Interventions also align with the Regional Guidance for Asia 2021-24.

SDC describes its operations at three levels: politics, policy and programs. Support for VSD is framed within these three levels: politics (state building in a federated system), policies (TVET Act, NQF, etc.) and programs (introduction of dual system, etc.). There is strong coherence of VSD programming within the SDC country office. However, 20 active VSD engagements in the evaluation period (2017-2023) present a significant workload to the SCO.

Phase 2 of the NVQS project contributes to the objective of Domain 2 of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy Nepal 2018-21, which is to help "women and men, especially from disadvantaged groups, find employment and increase their income." Similarly, the ENSSURE 2 and QualiTY projects are intended to contribute to federal state building.

QualiTY supports Domain 1 (Federal State Building) and Domain 2 (Employment and Income)'s objectives of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Nepal 2018-2023 and aligns with the Regional Guidance for Asia 2021-24, where poverty reduction and sustainable development are key objectives.

The SaMi project contributes to reaching the Migration Domain goal of the SCS (SDC Country Strategy) 2018-21: "Migrants (men/women/discriminated groups) and their families are better protected by democratic institutions in Nepal and benefit from decent work conditions abroad."

SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal are consistent and complementary with those of other donors and development partners operating in partner countries. SDC works closely with other donors, leading a VSD donor group. Many other donors see SDC as an authority on VSD in Nepal. There are mixed views among donor agencies supporting VSD, but there is a genuine effort to coordinate, share information and find complementarities. The NQF provides a mechanism for donor alignment. Donors are working towards a sector-wide approach (SWAP) in VSD.

There is a well-functioning VSD donor coordination group comprising the EU, ADB, the World Bank, and KOICA, among others. The ambition is to establish a joint donor platform to support VSD/TVET in Nepal.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The lack of approval of the TVET Act limits the extent to which SDC's VSD interventions can contribute to its objectives associated with national systems development. These projects are hampered in their efforts to created higher level impacts. More effort is required to improve training outcomes and to learn from the experiences of on-the-job and dual apprenticeship schemes. Small, more tightly focused projects, such as those dealing with migrants, appear to achieve their objectives, but these appear to have limited systemic effects (i.e., limited scale). VSD projects have taken deliberate steps to engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development.

VSD projects and programmes in Nepal have a long history of engagement with government VSD system actors and actively support the transformation of national systems for VSD. SDC VSD interventions have been very ambitious, and while the support does contribute to improving national systems and achieving higher-level results, this has proved to be a slow and protracted process in the context of a newly federated government system.

The delayed approval of the TVET Act, has limited the extent to which SDC's VSD interventions contribute to its objectives associated with national systems development. These projects are hampered in their efforts to create higher-level impacts.

The NVQS project design assumes that the TVET Act is endorsed and responsibilities for TVET, in general, and NVQS implementation, in particular, are federalised. However, to date, the TVET Act has not been endorsed. The delay has seriously hampered the achievement of Outcome 2 (The CTEVT/NSTB on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology implements the National Vocational Qualification System in partnership with the private sector) and Outcome 3 (Provincial governments implement the Vocational Qualification System) of the project.

Phase 1 of the ENSSURE project developed two types of dual VET training:

1. Dual VET apprenticeships of 24 months duration.
2. Short courses including on-the-job training, skills upgrading for existing workers, and career guidance training for secondary school leavers.

The dual apprenticeship scheme has a high dropout rate due to low payment (i.e., 25% of the minimum wage), and some students were shocked when confronted with manual work at the workplace. In addition, the pass rate on the final exam is less than 50 per cent due to the curriculum's emphasis on theoretical knowledge. The employment rate of graduates appears to be low; some sources suggest that it is less than 50 per cent. While the entry requirement for the apprenticeship scheme is Grade 10, the exit exam is equivalent to Grade 10, and there are no immediate pathways to higher technical education, which reduces the scheme's attractiveness. The demand for the ten-month skills training programme for disadvantaged youth appears to be high. The Phase 1 tracer study found that 62 per cent were in employment after six months.

Skills upgrading courses for the existing labour force, with private sector associations in the driver's seat, have finally taken off. However, it is too early to evaluate the effects on productivity and competitiveness of the benefiting enterprises.

Due to the delayed approval of the TVET Act and the early stage of QualiTY project implementation, it is not possible to assess the project's effects on provincial governments' capacity to implement the national TVET accreditation procedure, coach TVET school principals and collaborate with local governments to manage TVET schools.

More effort is required to improve training outcomes and to learn from the experiences of on-the-job and dual apprenticeship schemes. Small, more tightly focused projects, such as those dealing with migrants, appear to achieve their objectives, but these appear to have limited systemic effects (i.e., limited scale).

VSD projects have taken deliberate steps to engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development. SDC has been instrumental in ensuring that government ministries and public training providers interact with the private sector. However, significant challenges remain in ensuring that VSD is demand-driven, particularly through mechanisms for on-the-job training.

The NVQS project involved the private sector by establishing sector skills committees, which is an important element of the project. The ENSSURE 2 project's interaction with the private sector is a key element of the dual apprenticeship scheme and the short-term on-the-job for out-of-school youth. Private sector associations are directly involved in the identification of training needs and the selection of training providers. The Sami worked with Jordanian private employers to deliver short-term skills training for prospective migrants. The training is based on the requirements of the migrant workers' future employers. The Employment Fund 2 project tried to engage private providers in delivering the training courses.

VSD projects and programmes in Nepal have a long history of engagement with government VSD system actors and actively support the transformation of national systems for VSD. SDC VSD interventions have been very ambitious, and while the support does contribute to improving national systems and achieving higher-level results, this has proved to be a slow and protracted process in the context of a newly federated government system. Government bureaucratic systems are immature and weak. Federal and provincial governments are also unstable (a new coalition government was formed the week before the evaluation mission). SDC describes investing in transforming national systems for VSD in Nepal as an important and strategic "bet". It has many challenges, but it is the only strategically relevant approach.

Once completed, the NVQS project will have had a major impact on the Nepalese TVET system, and it is likely that ENSSURE will have three lasting effects on the national VSD system: a) availability of dual apprenticeship as an alternative to conventional TVET, b) short-term skills upgrading training for the existing labour force; and c) career guidance for secondary school students. Similarly, the QualiTY project will likely have had a lasting effect on the quality of TVET in the country.

Although all the provincial Ministries of Social Development have established TVET units, the provincial CTEVT offices are responsible for TVET in the provinces, including implementing VQS and managing TVET schools. The capacity of the provincial governments to secure the quality of TVET and manage funds is extremely weak. Once responsibility for managing the TVET system is de facto transferred to the MoSDs, substantial capacity building is required.

While local governments have assumed responsibility for short-term skills training for out-of-school youth, the quality of this training is not well documented.

Due to the private sector's reluctance, operationalising the dual VET approach has required more time and resources than expected. Still, collaboration between private businesses and TVET institutions remains a serious challenge. At the federal and provincial levels, the private sector wished to get a stronger say on TVET-related policy issues.

Partially due to the practice by development partners, the private sector expects a high level of subsidisation of all kinds of skills training. This situation has made it difficult for SDC to pursue a demand-oriented strategy for VSD.

The SaMi project has contributed to better preparing prospective migrant workers, but the institutional framework for this is still fragile and needs consolidation. SaMi was not designed with the transformation of the VSD system in mind, and the Evaluation Team has not been able to assess the effects of the Employment Fund 2 project on VSD in the country.

The Employment Fund 2 trained the planned number of young people, but it was also concluded that skills training does not enhance youth access to the labour market. Additional tools are required to secure employment for the trainees.

The QualiTY project has limited direct interaction with the private enterprises.

4.4 Efficiency

Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
VSD projects are mainly efficiently delivered across HQ, regional and SCO. There are challenges created by the non-approval of the National TVET Act, which has contributed to the need to fill gaps in government administration with project staff.

VSD projects are mainly efficiently delivered across HQ, regional and SCO. The three projects (i.e., NVQS, ENSSURE and QualiTY) operate in parallel. While efforts are made to streamline reporting and governance (e.g., project steering committee meetings held back-to-back), this reduces efficiency. With the benefit of hindsight, one larger project may have been more efficient. It is understood that this is the direction proposed for future projects.

Given the somewhat fractured state of the federated bureaucracy at present, SDC is doing a lot to fill the gaps in the government systems. Projects to help government plan, manage and monitor skills development. This is a pragmatic response to current challenges in which government is the implementer of VSD. However, it can undermine effectiveness and be a challenge to sustainability. The NVQS project's technical advice team works closely with the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), the NSTB, and the provincial authorities. The three SDC advisers embedded in CTEVT appear to collaborate closely.

There is an excess supply of TVET schools. Several TVET schools under CTEVT's management are running at half capacity.

Due to the institutional vacuum caused by the delayed approval of the TVET Act and the corresponding lack of TVET management capacity at the provincial level, the TA provider for the ENSSURE 2 project (i.e., Helvetas) has established quite large provincial units. To a large extent, the units serve as gap-fillers for the provincial administrations.

The three VSD projects implemented in partnership with CTEVT have clear complementarities and overlaps in terms of partners. The planned consolidation of the projects into a sector-wide programme is likely to significantly improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

The Evaluation Team could not assess the SaMi project's efficiency, but previous reports describe delays in establishing partnerships with the participating local governments, finalising modalities of project implementation, deploying SaMi staff at all three levels of the government, initiating the procurement of national and local level service providers, and recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Evaluation Team was not able to assess the efficiency of the Employment Fund 2 project, as it was closed in 2020.

4.5 Impact

Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal were instrumental in development of the NVQF and at the meso level, the CTEVT/NSTB capacity to manage the NVQF has been strengthened, although NSTB remains fragile. The NVQF has been valuable as a framework against which skills development can be measured and certified. While there have been efforts to introduce work-placed training, such as through the dual apprenticeship scheme, the impact of this has been modest. It will take more time working with the three levels of government and the private sector to achieve the desired impact. Although SDC has supported the rollout of the dual apprenticeship scheme since 2015, it has not yet found its final form. A recent study of the ENSSURE 24-month Dual VET-Apprenticeship project found net benefits for employers. It is too early to assess the impact of the QualiTY project, which is still in an early implementation stage.

Due to the delayed approval of the TVET Act, the TVET system remains highly centralised, with the CTEVT federal office in charge of designing, delivering and monitoring the TVET programmes, including the examination and certification of the trainees. This situation has seriously affected achieving the planned outcomes of the three interrelated VSD projects. According to persons interviewed, it may take a while before the Parliament approves the act. Once the Parliament passes the TVET Act, a major effort will be required to develop and consolidate the new VSD/TVET landscape, including redefining the role and mandate of the federal TVET structures.

SDC's VSD interventions in Nepal were instrumental in developing the NVQF. At the meso level, the CTEVT/NSTB capacity to manage the NVQF has been strengthened, although NSTB remains fragile. While efforts have been made to introduce work-placed training, such as through the dual apprenticeship scheme, this impact has been modest. The strategic direction is correct despite the considerable challenges and somewhat modest impact-level results. Working with the three government and the private sector levels will take more time to achieve the desired impact.

The NVQF has been valuable as a framework against which skills development can be measured and certified. Many job seekers want certification to improve their competitiveness in the labour market, and many businesses want to ensure their staff are certified. In some cases, there is increasing demand that national certifications be globally relevant and recognised.

There is no data available on the employment outcomes from SDC-supported training schemes.

At the macro level, the NVQS project has been instrumental in developing the NVQF; at the meso level, the CTEVT/NSTB capacity to manage the NVQF has been strengthened, although NSTB remains fragile. A model for CBT curricula has been developed, but a serious backlog of curricula to be updated remains. Medium-term challenges highlighted by the MTR in June 2023 include: (i) accelerating standard development; (ii) improving efficiency of the certification process and reducing the lengthy procedures from application to certificate award; (iii) enhancing incentives for ASACs to conduct skills assessment tests and improving mechanisms to transfer payments for skill tests, (iv) strengthening industry participation through SSCs, and (v) further building technical TVET capacity of provincial Ministry of Social Development and province and municipality governments. Observations by the Evaluation Team suggest that these challenges remain.

Although SDC has supported the rollout of the dual apprenticeship scheme since 2015, it has not yet found its final form. Furthermore, the number of apprentices has been rather low compared with the number of NEET youth, so the impact of the ENSSURE 2 project so far has been rather limited. As regards the short-term skills training programme for out-of-school youth managed by the local governments, the main challenges concern the local government's procurement and monitoring capacity and the low enrolment rate due to the limited catchment area of the local governments. and the employability of the trainees to be high. The short-term skills upgrading scheme for the existing workforce is still in the early implementation stage; therefore, it is impossible to estimate its impact. Career guidance for secondary school leavers appears to be well established and significantly impacts the students' career choice.

A recent study of the ENSSURE 24-month Dual VET-Apprenticeship project in which apprentices spend three months in school, followed by 20 months of training and working in a company, estimates that the median company made a net benefit in the order of 130'000 NPR or about 3.7 monthly wages of a skilled worker. This net benefit is largely due to a high productive contribution of apprentices (Renold, et al., 2024). The study suggests that such results should be promoted among private employers so they can become more aware of the business case for skills development. While this is indeed correct, the challenge lies in ensuring businesses can afford to continue to invest in skills development beyond the term of the ENSSURE project and that the impact of such improvements in the worker productivity also improves firm profitability and competitiveness. The challenge for many private fims in Nepal is that they face a difficult business environment with limited access to finance and growing markets. Thus, improvements in worker productivity will not automatically produce broader firm-level results.

It is too early to assess the impact of the QualiTY project, which is still in an early implementation stage.

The 2021 MTR of the SaMi Phase 2 project found that a lot needs to be done before it is possible to fully handover the project to the government: "One of the key steps to making the SaMi model sustainable is to further enhance ownership over it within the federal government system of Nepal. A key aspect of expressing this ownership is the allocation of budget by local governments and provinces to SaMi." This challenge remains.

The most significant impact of Employment Fund 2 was that more than 10,000 households supported reconstructing their homes. The end-of-project report from July 2022 concluded that training alone does not enhance youth access to the labour market. It is equally important to carefully assess the labour market, improve the market-orientation of curricula, and create linkages to finance institutions. Also, selecting trainees based on their genuine interest, including post-training support, is essential.

4.6 Sustainability

Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Expectations related to sustainability are highly ambitious and will take time. There is limited scope for the private sector to invest in skills development. As a result, sustainability requires continued government funding. Within the current fragile and underdeveloped setting, donor funds will be required for some time.

Given the newly established federated state and the fragile and conflict-affected nature of the Nepal situation, expectations related to sustainability are highly ambitious. All projects have been designed to achieve sustainability, and support for national systems is a vital contribution to sustainability, but this will take time. The phasing of projects allows for adjustment to project interventions to address the contemporary barriers to sustainability, but new barriers emerge over time. There is limited scope for the private sector to invest in skills development. Thus, sustainability requires continued government funding and, to some extent, student fees. Within the current fragile and underdeveloped setting, donor funds will be required for some time.

The June 2023 MTR of the NVQS project concluded that there are sufficient indications to assume that the project is likely to be sustainable, considering the federal and provincial governments' commitment to implementing the NVQF once the TVET Act is endorsed. The Evaluation Team finds this statement rather optimistic, given the provincial governments' lack of capacity to deal with TVET issues.

At present, both the dual apprenticeship system and the short-term skills training provided by ENSURE 2 are highly dependent on the co-financing of the project as is the technical support provided by the SDC-financed technical advice teams. Like the QualiTY project, it is difficult to predict when the relevant authorities will be able to take over full responsibility for the activities initiated by the project. The prospects are better for the less costly Career Guidance scheme.

Within the QualiTY project, it is difficult at this stage to predict the extent to which the offices for TVET at the provincial level will be able to take over responsibility for accreditation and quality assurance of skills training and to establish mechanisms of management of TVET schools. It will require a major effort to reach this stage. As regards the ability of the TVET schools to maintain the quality improvements achieved with SDC's support primarily depends on the federal and provincial governments' readiness to allocate the required financial resources.

One of the main aims of SaMi Phase 3 is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the SaMi project and its full handover to the government. One key step to making the SaMi model sustainable is to further align the services provided by SaMi with the federal government system. A key aspect is delegating the budget responsibility to local governments and provinces. It has not been possible to assess the government's capacity to take over the responsibility for financing the supported activities, including the short-term training of prospective migrant workers.

Sustainability is a challenge for all three VSD projects. First, federalising the government structures has been a more complicated process than anticipated. Second, the absence of clear mandates and responsibilities concerning the future management of the TVET system means that the VSD projects are implemented in an institutional vacuum. Preparing a well-defined exit strategy with clearly defined and achievable milestones is advisable.

5 Lessons learned

There is value in paying stronger attention to the demand for employment (i.e., skills and occupations) to better align skills training to the labour market's needs and opportunities. This will improve the project interventions' effectiveness and impact. All the evaluated VSD projects provide youth with employable skills, with special attention given to youth from disadvantaged households and women. The limitation of this supply-side orientation of skills development is the relatively low labour market absorption of the beneficiaries and low wages for those who have managed to secure a job (or start their own business).

Supporting systems reforms across three levels of a newly federated government structure requires high project coordination, time and resources. The federalisation of the TVET system is a major challenge for the government and the private sector.

Switzerland's considerable experience in a federated VET system is valuable, but its support to Nepal requires a deep contextual understanding of the country.

The persistent challenge is to find ways to better align existing TVET programmes to the labour market's needs and opportunities. While employers complain that serious skills shortages remain, leading to the need to import skilled labour, especially from India, the employment rate of TVET graduates appears to be rather low, as indicated by the high number of migrant workers.

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Annex 6.6. Niger Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Niger became independent from France in 1960. It is one of the poorest countries in the world (according to UNDP 187 and last in the ranking of all countries). Forty-three per cent of the population live with less than US$1.25 per day. Its population lives mostly in rural areas (80%) and it has a population growth rate of almost 3.9 per cent, the third highest in the world. The average age of the population is 15; in 2016, 20 million people were counted, and in 2023, it went up to 25 million, with an expected forecast of 32 million people in 2030.

In addition to the official lingua franca, French, Hausa, and Zarma are numbers two and three in the languages spoken. In total, ten languages are considered national languages in Niger. More than 99 per cent of the population are Muslim.

The largely agrarian and subsistence-based economy is frequently disrupted by extended droughts common to the Sahel region. National resources range from uranium, coal, iron ore, tin, phosphates, gold, and molybdenum to gypsum, salt, and petroleum. Agricultural products include millet, cow peas, sorghum, onions, milk, groundnuts, cassava, cabbages, goat milk and fruit. Exports (commodities) include gold, sesame seeds, uranium, refined petroleum, and onions.

Furthermore, Niger is a country with a traditionally low-income Sahel economy with major instabilities. Humanitarian crises have limited economic activities, and COVID-19 has eliminated recent anti-poverty gains. However, the Nigerian economy had rebounded since 2020, when the border to Nigeria reopened, and some investments were made. Niger is a uranium-rich country and has an estimated $1,300 GDP per capita in 2023.

Politically, Niger can be called a semi-presidential republic, which, however, has seen a military coup on 26 July 2023, after which the deposed ex-President Bazoum was put under house arrest and the President of the so-called National Council for Safeguarding of the Homeland (CNSP) has nominated a new Head of Government in August 2023 with Prime Minister Zeine, but has also dissolved the National Assembly.

There are different figures on the literacy rate in Niger. According to World Bank figures, 69.4 per cent of Nigeriens are illiterate, giving the country the lowest literacy rates in the world; in the SDC project documents reviewed, the illiteracy rate in Niger was stated at about two-thirds of the population.

Estimates show that some 400,000 youth try to get into the labour market every year without adequate vocational qualifications, and this number is supposed to go up to 670,000 annually by 2030. In 2022, 500,000 young children were applying for primary school. This socio-economic integration of youth is one of the most difficult challenges in Niger. It is worsened even by the frustrations triggered by other factors, such as the increasing violent terrorism in West Africa and the political instability.

2 Development cooperation

Switzerland has a long development cooperation tradition in Niger like in many West African countries with the so-called “Éducation de base.” For Niger this goes even way beyond the documents reviewed for this evaluation, which started in 2012 and then in particular focused on the period from 2017 until today.

Like in other countries, SDC in Niger pursues the following approaches to achieve its humanitarian objectives:

- Direct implementation (projects implemented by Switzerland and/or international and national consulting partners).
- Support to multilateral and bilateral partners (UN agencies, Swisscontact, Enfants du Monde, I/NGOs).
- Attempt to cooperate with other donors and other agencies and with national, regional, and local government organisations.

The projects under review for evaluation were the three phases of PEAJ (Programme d'Éducation Alternative des Jeunes) between 2012 and today, the last phase (3) of FOPROR (Programme d'Appui a la Formation Professionelle Rurale du Niger) from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2021 and the PADEC project (Programme d'Appui au Developpement Culturel) from October 1, 2017 until 31 March 2022. Data collection and analysis method was a thorough review of all project documents, mid-term and final evaluations including external ones, justifications for project continuation and budget revisions. All documents visited and studies are attached in the annex References. The analysis method also included an interview of one SDC official (Simon Junker) and one ex SDC official (Sibylle Schmutz). As far as the volume of the SDC engagement in the years to review was concerned, it can be seen in the following Figure 1, which has a list of VSD projects in Niger reviewed between 2012 and 2024 and includes the three phases of PEAJ, the third and last phase of FOPROR and the PADEC project. The table gives the SDC internal Reference Number, the periods in which they lasted, the partners and the contributions from SDC and the Nigerien Government.[23] [24] [25]

23 It should be mentioned that the correct total distribution by SDC to its PEAJ project is probably 24 million Swiss Francs (CHF) as it is said so in the project document from 2012. However, adding up the individual figures found in later project documents it does not come up exactly to the figure of 24 million Swiss Francs (CHF) stated in the 2012 stated in the document Proposition d'Entrée en Matière (7F-07170.99) quoted as Reference 3.

24 For the FOPROR 3 project, the disclaimer is similar: in the official project 14.5 Mio Swiss Francs were committed by SDC, however in later documents the SDC contribution is down to 9,560,000 and the Government contribution of 4,940,000 (and in some documents less) and therefore brings the total to 14.5 Mio Swiss Francs (CHF). This is why the term presumable was added in Figure 1.

25 Project design and evaluation of PEAJ 2 will be described in more detail in the Annex to this desk study

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Niger reviewed between 2012 and 2024

PROJECT NAME	REFERENCE	PERIOD	PARTNER	TOTAL (CHF) [SDC]
PEAJ Programme d'Education Alternative des Jeunes				
PEAJ 1 Start-up Financing	7F-07170.01	September 2012 August 2013	Nigérienne Monde des Enfants (NDE), Volontaires pour la intégration éducative (VIE) and Organisation Nigérienne des Enseig-nants Nouva-teurs (ONEN)	[500,000]
PEAJ 1 Main Project Phase	7F-07170.99	September 2012 August 2018		4,000,000 [5,000,000]
PEAJ 2	7F-07170.02	January 2019 December 2022	Swisscontact and Enfants Du Monde	3.887,000 [9,707929]
PEAJ 3	7F-07170.03	January 2024 December 2027	Swisscontact and Enfants Du Monde	[7,850,000]
Total SDC contribution				Presumably [24,000,000]
FOPROR Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle Rurale au Niger				
FOPROR 3	7F-07791.03	January 2017 December 2021	Swisscontact	4,940,000 [9,560,000]
PADEC Programme d'Appui au Développement Culturel				
PADEC Only Phase	7F-09650.01	October 2017 March 2022	Université Abdou Moumouni, CCFN	600,000 [1,600,000]
Total Amount spent in Niger by SDC				**Presumably [35,660,000]**

PEAJ 1-3 Programme d'Éducation Alternative des Jeunes

PEAJ 1-3, through its three phases, has a combined project span of more than 15 years from 1 September 2012 until (presumably 31 December 2027) and with a commitment of about 24 million Swiss Francs throughout. Firstly, it clearly shows that SDC has a long perspective with its development objectives in Niger and has a strong commitment for a significant time to addressing situations in VSD, learning from them, adjusting objectives and outcomes in subsequent phases, and finally trying to consolidate project successes and phasing out eventually.

Secondly, SDC has shown in the PEAJ project phases that it not only works with different implementing partners, both on the national and international level, but it also tries to work with the poorest in VSD, which by itself is difficult enough when the focus on trying to add more formal elements to existing high informality in vocational education in Niger is an objective, but they also focused clearly on the poorest regions in Niger with Dosso and Maradi.

Thirdly, independent evaluations, particularly on PEAJ 1 and 2, added to the learning of SDC`s engagement in Vocational Skills Development in Niger.

With PEAJ 1 mostly taking place before the scope of the current evaluation perspective and PEAJ 3 only starting in January 2024, the main evaluation focus of this report is more on PEAJ 2, which will be described briefly here and then somewhat more detailed in the annex attached to this report. PEAJ 2 aimed to consolidate the achievements of phase 1, and its objective was to capitalise on and institutionalise the alternative education community centres (the so-called CCEAJs). The second phase was supposed to lead to the end of the Swisscontact – Enfants du Monde consortium`s mandate for a global transfer of the management of the alternative education offers and the centres to the Ministry of Education (MEP) and its members, as well as to the communities for generalisations in all regions of the country.

The general objective of the programme was to enable out-of-school boys and girls aged 9 to 14 to participate in social and economic life by acquiring basic skills and the intervention strategy was deployed at two levels: at the political and strategical level to influence the generalization of the CCEAJs and at the operational level in order to consolidate achievements and integrate new students.

FOPROR 3 Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle Rurale au Niger

FOPROR 3 lasted from 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2021and it was funded with 14.5 Mio Swiss Francs (CHF), which included substantial contributions from FAFPA, the Fund for Continuing Vocational Education and Apprenticeship under the Ministry of Vocational Education and training (MEP/T) in Niger. FOPROR 3, as much as its SDC projects before (FOPROR 1 and 2[26]) focused on VSD in rural areas in Niger and was implemented by Swisscontact. FOPROR 3 had an implementation strategy which was based on the four principles of:

1. Consolidating the achievements of the improvements of the second phase by increasing the numbers of VSD centres from 24 to 36 and the numbers of VSD students from 15,000 to 43,000.
2. Further strengthening of the capacities of vocational training actors in schools, national training funds and regional committees for apprenticeships.
3. Gradually reducing the direct funding of training centres.
4. Continuing with political dialogue towards the construction of strategic alliances with other stakeholders in training funds, national and regional government institutions for the improvement of VSD in Niger.

26 Specific documents on FOPROR 1 and 2 were not available for this review, so this report focuses on project documents, and internal and external evaluations of FOPROR 3 only

FOPROR (through FAFPA and the various training schemes) is also linked to the PEAJ project angle by taking over the CCEAJ graduates who wish to continue with vocational training and education and with apprenticeships. Both internal and external evaluations argue for FOPROR's good results in terms of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

PADEC Programme d'Appui au Développement Culturel

The project lasted from 1 October 2017 until 31 March 2022 and was funded with 1.6 Mio Swiss Francs (CHF). It complemented, in a way, the different phases of the PEAJ 2 and the FOPROR 3 projects since it happened at the same time as those two.

PADEC had the objective to focus on more awareness of the cultural aspects of artisans and their contribution to the national cultural heritage, to peace in Niger and to social inclusion of marginalised groups and to advocate stronger for VSD in artisan and cultural professions.

The two implementing agencies in Niger for this project were the University Abdou Moumouni in Niamey and the French NGO CCFN Jean Rouch, the Centre Culturel Franco-Nigérien. CCFN ran different training programs in arts, artisanal design, and the role of VSD in la "Filiére Arts et Culture" (the arts and cultural sector), including courses on vocational orientation and guidance.

Under this project, the University of Abdou Moumoni focused on university courses that reinforce possibilities for professionals in the cultural sector, including contributions from universities. They also focused on contributions from universities to higher vocational skills development and introduced new course elements in their bachelor, master and PhD programmes that included the above-mentioned foci. The internal project and final documents by the University Abdou Moumoni in Niamey and by SDC in Niger concluded in their evaluations that the PADEC project reached the arts and culture sector with an awareness and sensitisation programme that had high relevance, good coherence and effectiveness and a good impact.

4 Key findings

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social, and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The VSD portfolio has been designed based on a clear assessment and understanding or the economic, social, and political context in Niger. There is evidence that the projects in the portfolio focus on the right target, but this approach is more concerned with increasing the opportunities on the supply side of VSD (more teachers, more schools, more programmes, more participants) with a strong focus on young girls and women and promoting easier access to VSD than with the demand side of VSD and integrating VSD graduates into local and regional labour markets (for future and forward looking jobs) and also with integrating these concepts into national systems.

The evaluation has found strong evidence that SDC's VSD support in Niger is geared towards Niger's demographic, economic, social, and political contexts. With careful analysis and project justifications, all projects show a high level of understanding. Access to VSD is a key in the SDC projects in Niger. However, the question remains whether access is enough to provide employment effects of VSD. There is little evidence through tracer studies for the relevant target groups and for the new programmes.

There is little evidence that the four VSD typologies have been applied in project design. Indeed, the typologies do not appear to specifically identify “prototypical approaches” that include the contextual characteristics displayed in Niger. While issues of access and inclusion into vocational education and training are the most likely fit of VSD projects within the four VSD Typologies, the political constraints to vocational educational support in Niger limit the extent to which VSD projects can support government VSD systems.

Good governance within Niger`s economic, social, and political contexts is difficult to achieve when the government actors in national, regional, and local government institutions change frequently, and VSD policies are regularly flip-flopping, as cited as some of the main bottlenecks of the institutionalisation of initiatives.

Little evidence indicates that SDC projects were designed to respond to private sector needs and opportunities. This may be attributed to the fact that the sheer number of young people entering the labour market each year is enormous. Indeed, the informal private sector may not be the best partner to absorb all graduates produced by SDC projects in Niger. At best, project participants, most of whom were unemployed, underemployed or from communities with few formal employment opportunities, were typically oriented to developing skills related to entrepreneurship and self-employment or local economic opportunities. This finding should be understood within the context of the private sector in Niger and, indeed, in West Africa. The private sector is heterogeneous and poorly organised, with more than 80 per cent of firms being informal. VSD projects cannot respond to private sector needs because the sector cannot articulate its needs. Indeed, one of the important contributions of VSD projects is to help structure this private sector and help make it aware of its role and responsibilities in VSD implementation before being a real systemic actor in VSD.

There is little evidence to suggest that SDC projects explicitly identify climate change as a challenge influencing its design.

All projects identify the training of trainers as a clear entry point on the meso level and have those activities form a backbone of SDC`s project design in Niger. However, keeping these newly trained teachers in place is a problem sometimes.

All projects clearly identify beneficiaries and describe their specific needs and challenges. There is strong evidence that SDC VSD projects are based on an assessment of marginalised groups (e.g., women, the poor, migrants, and others). Typically, independent assessments or earlier phases inform later project design.

The reviewed portfolio of VSD projects exhibits a high awareness of conflict drivers. All projects seek the integration and participation of key actors.

All projects show specific attempts to address gender-based disadvantages and to empower girls and women. However, there is little evidence in the project documents that VSD projects in Niger have attempted to influence gender traditions. Occupational profiles for women tend to manifest old images of women, are very conservative, and sometimes are not sufficiently innovative and forward-looking.

There seems to be a stagnation in VSD when new curricula only somewhat better prepare VSD graduates for traditional occupations, but new ones are rarely added and introduced.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies, and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The SDC support for VSD projects in Niger is consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and other Swiss agencies. The portfolio of VSD projects in Niger is largely consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in the country. Conditions for donor coordination are generally poor, but SDC is reaching out to other donors on multi- and bilateral levels.

In Niger, there is no evidence that SDC has intentionally designed VSD projects to support or complement private sector development (PSD). In a highly informal economy, such as the one in Niger, and in a setting where SDC is trying to upgrade structures of informal apprenticeships, SDC does not support formal private sector organisations or representative bodies. Indeed, such organisations do not represent the majority of the business community. Thus, VSD projects support income generation and micro-enterprise development (e.g., tailors, hairdressing, agriculture).

All projects in Niger are projects with a specific focus on supporting or complementing basic education and giving increased and improved access to VSD, including awareness of VSD opportunities and prevocational training services. All projects are trying to improve the situation for school-aged children and youth who experience particular barriers to education and vocational education and training; parents or caregivers with out-of-school children (OOSC) or children at risk of dropout for whom economic concerns are the key reasons for not sending their children to school; teachers and education personnel and vulnerable individuals, particularly, vulnerable caregivers with OOSC's or children at risk of drop-out, to strengthen their economic resilience.

The portfolio of projects across the country displays a range of interventions with different partners. SDC projects, in particular, PEAJ and FOPROR in Niger, relate to each other and reinforce each other and link up with one another, for example, with similar VSD approaches and with foci in particular parts of the country such as in Dosso and Maradi. There is a clear consistency visible in SDC's VSD projects in Niger.

There is evidence of cooperation with other donors and development partners within the portfolio, such as UNESCO, the African Development Bank (ADB), and the World Bank.

It is important to say that existing systems and structures in Niger were used to implement VSD activities.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**

Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
All three VSD projects in Niger have been frequently reviewed and evaluated, both internally and independently externally. The outputs of all projects and relevant project phases are well documented and there are lessons identified from project experiences.

Both big projects PEAJ 1-3 and FOPROR 3 have been independently evaluated in the time of this evaluation (i.e., 2017-2023). Moreover, narrative reports provide details on outputs and identify lessons learned. Narrative reports suggest that most active projects are on track to achieve their intended outputs and outcomes.

Current political constraints indicate that SDC and other donors in Niger VSD projects do not typically seek to engage with all relevant system actors (e.g., government, schools, training centres, and employers). While the 2023 coup was a recent event, this came after a period of poor economic performance. It has been reported that democracy in Niger is fraught, with concerns regarding corruption and the deterioration of public institutions occurring for some time.[27] Indeed, the World Bank's 2018 Country Partnership Framework argued that a combination of deep-rooted structural factors and short-term drivers have exacerbated Niger's fragility and significantly increased risks of conflict and violence. A narrow export-based economy and rain-fed agriculture kept growth rates low and volatile, while rapid population growth combined with persistent low agricultural productivity, climatic change and environmental degradation exerted unsustainable pressure on food supplies, natural resources and public services. At the same time, weak governance and dissatisfaction over the management of public resources and the delivery of services reinforce grievances and encourage alternative forms of mobilisation.[28]

SDC has indicated that it has good access to the central government before and since the coup.

More collaboration with the private sector might also be prevented by the fact that informal VSD in the existing traditional occupations potentially produces competition among small existing small businesses in the informal economy and new apprentices.

Given the circumstances, it appears that the SDC projects have done reasonably well in their efforts to engage with the small business sector and in the informal economy in Niger in VSD projects.

However, the extent to which this can inform policy dialogue with the government is limited. There is no formal or structured mechanism for policy dialogue with the government on VSD.

The difficult social, economic, and political situation in Niger makes it difficult to attempt to measure changes in business productivity and profitability stemming from VSD support. According to this evaluation, the productivity and profitability of VSD activities in Niger have not been monitored.

Evidence from VSD projects in Niger address the needs of stakeholders. The context requires a localised strategy, which SDC has always taken, but how effectively this has been done remains.

27 See Yabi, G. (2023), _The Niger Coup's Outsized Global Impact_, Carnegie Endowment, 31 August.

28 World Bank (2018) _Country Partnership Framework FY 2018 to FY2022_, 13 March.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
VSD programming in Niger seems to be as efficient as in most other countries. Project efficiency is monitored via narrative and financial reports and both internal and external evaluations and there is evidence that project partnerships and modalities have been designed based on lessons learned and good practice.

The VSD project portfolio has been developed through collaboration and coordination across HQ and country offices. The principal mechanism for this is through the Regional Thematic Adviser and provides advice to country offices, and the technical expertise to support project design is valuable. Webinars and workshops help to disburse technical information. Many SDC staff are and have been in the region and in Niger.

While some narrative reports refer to value for many metrics, project management in Niger is difficult, time-consuming, and costly. No independent value-for-money assessments have been conducted.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The context in Niger is a major constraint to measuring the impact of VSD projects on higher level effects at macro, meso and micro levels, at least in terms of how VSD is typically considered. VSD in Niger forms part of a range of interventions designed to promote better access to VSD and improves the meso level (through institutional support of centres and teachers) and has impact on the side of the beneficiaries, young boys, and girls, and in some cases, supports better employability. These are mostly micro-level, some are meso-level effects, very few or no macro-level effects can be found.

The lack of macro-level effects has rarely been pronounced in external or internal evaluations but makes it difficult to determine any higher-level effects (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of VSD programmes on beneficiaries or partners.

Moreover, for the reasons described above, VSD projects have not been designed to contribute to Niger's systems reform or to integrate lessons learnt into government systems. However, SDC is supporting a decentralised approach that builds the competencies of sub-national education and training institutions.

The concept notes, credit proposals, and project documents indicate an ambition to reach a significant number of beneficiaries. The narrative reports suggest a high level of achievement in this regard, and the numbers are impressive.

The impact of VSD programming in Niger is primarily focused on improved and increased access to VSD and on improving the supply side of VSD provision. The PROFOR 3 mid-term review of 2019 found that 57 per cent of beneficiaries increased their income. Moreover, an analysis of the annual survey results on a sample of 1,954 trained graduates in Dosso shows that 83 per cent improved their professional status, with 38 per cent who established a micro-enterprise and 62 per cent who found a job. Sixty per cent of the beneficiaries surveyed were without qualifications when they joined the FOPROR 3 training systems. Some 73 per cent of beneficiaries improved their living conditions through employment after three years.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While there is some evidence that outcomes have continued or are likely to continue (such as PEAJ 3) after project closure, many projects continue in earlier phases or describe future phases. There is little evidence that interventions are embedded in local systems and more so with the political changes in July 2023, this may not even be desired any more.

The overall context in Niger creates huge obstacles to sustainability. Moreover, the educational situation is worsening, and few opportunities for youth employability are available. The more recent deterioration of the security situation in Niger heavily impacts rural areas including in Dosso and Maradi and needs to be factored in when considering sustainability. In 2023, it was reported that, due to the insecurity linked to the presence of GANE in the south-west of the Maradi region, or even to the ban on the presence of NGOs by the authorities in the intervention communes of Gabi, Dan Issa and certain localities of Guidan Roumdji, the travel of the support team of the Community Alternative Education Centers for Youth (CCEAJ) was no longer possible. In order not to abandon the organisation of short training courses for CCEAJ leavers in this volatile situation and to contribute to their economic integration, SDC has made municipalities responsible with implementation agreements. Thus, municipalities are now responsible for project coordination and monitoring at the village level. Local resource people from the villages and the parents of students were involved in providing support.

There is good evidence that SDC projects create local expertise (e.g., building local capacities, new centres, new didactic approaches, modified curricula, and trained teachers) and try to address threats to sustainability (e.g., high turnover of local staff). These issues, however, seem to be small compared to broader political and social challenges.

There is some evidence that outcomes have continued, or are likely to continue, after project closure, such as in FOPROR and PADEC. However, there is little evidence that interventions are embedded in local systems.[29]

Some evidence was found that organisational and financial sustainability was an element of the SDC VSD projects. These features appear in project documents. However, the bigger challenges to sustainability appear to dominate.

SDC does appear to be learning from past programming experience in this difficult context. VSD is a component of a broader set of interventions where the situation does not allow for standalone VSD programming but includes physical infrastructure for VSD, creating safe learning environments for girls, young women and others.

5 Lessons learned

VSD is a component of a broader set of interventions where the situation does not allow for standalone VSD programming, like in many other countries where SDC is active.

SDC has a very long tradition in VSD support in Niger and has experimented with a lot of concepts and with different national and international partners.

Cooperation with employers and government institutions can still be improved significantly, and the institutionalisation of activities carried out jointly with the government can be improved even more.

29 It is noted that SDC supported the institutionalisation of the Community Centre for Alternative Youth Education and Integrated Agriculture Training Site projects in early 2022 following the piloting of these innovations.

Upgrading informal elements of VSD such as in apprenticeships in Niger and trying to formalize vocational education is still a long and hard way away.

However, significant attention is given to the role of VSD in building resilience in a country in the Sahel zone. Skills development is closely connected to social development work through efforts to build community and individual resilience.

Successful examples include activities on the meso and micro level.

High demand for and appreciation of life skills, business skills and practical, vocational skills that are connected to better employability, better preparedness for life and for micro and small business opportunities.

Innovative and new occupational profiles in sectors with growth and job potential in Niger are not covered yet under the current or the previous SDC VSD portfolio.

6 Project case study: Programme d'Éducation Alternative des Jeunes (PEAJ 2)

PEAJ 2 lasted from 1 January 2019 until 31 December 2022 and SDC funded it roughly with 10 million Swiss Francs (CHF) during this phase and almost 4 million Swiss Francs (CHF) were contributed by the Government of Niger for salaries of teachers and directors, for buildings and for maintenance of classrooms.

The overall goal of the PEAJ 2 project was to improve the quality of alternative education provision by strengthening the training system for those involved in the educational chain and by providing pedagogical support to teachers, directors, supervisors, and officials in different levels of government supervision.

Project implementation lay with Swisscontact and Enfants du Monde and was carried out mostly in the Dosso and Maradi regions in Niger.

Context, challenges to be addressed and project objective

School participation, especially that of girls, has been traditionally very low in Niger, and the country has not only repeatedly failed to enrol the 500,000 children applying for primary school every year but has also failed to enable them to acquire fundamental skills in reading, mathematics, and writing. This has kept almost 70 per cent of the population illiterate and continuously leads parents to demand alternative educational opportunities that facilitate the transition to vocational training.

It was in this context that the challenges of unsuitable teaching content and language in old curricula and the highly centralised nature of the Niger education system, were being addressed in the PEAJ project cycle. PEAJ is a pilot program that supports the national 10-year program in Niger (2014-2024) to eradicate illiteracy. At the same time, it fits well into the strategy of SDC in Niger for 2016-2019, especially in its focus on the development of alternatives systems of education and training.

Significant change(s)

The results can be seen in the beneficiary areas in form of educational spin-offs (higher school enrolment rates, increased student numbers in formal educational structures for CCEAJ leavers), social benefits (more open-mindedness and a better quality of life), social (social integration of learners into the community, consolidation of social cohesion, reduction in the phenomenon of early marriages), and economic (higher availability of qualified local labour, empowerment and enhancement of household purchasing power thanks to modest job creation through the promotion of local trades, and moderately lower unemployment and underemployment).

Significant changes also happened in the implementation of in-service teacher training and pedagogical supervision of directors and officials in ministries dealing with training and vocational education.

Furthermore, roughly 100 new centres (CCEAJs) were built and equipped in PEAJ 2.

Moreover, the composition of the alternative education programmes and thoughtful different didactical and pedagogical programmes, such as FIT, which stands for initial vocational training, convinced many parents and communities to let young girls and boys participate in the new education schemes established by SDC over the years.

Explanatory factors for the change

Throughout all the documents on PEAJ 2 (and PEAJ 1) there is very clear evidence of the successes of SDC support for alternative education in Niger. The numbers of young boys and girls trained is impressive (around 10,000) and so are the numbers of teacher and pedagogical advisors having received pedagogical guidance (roughly 400) and more than 100 new centres of CCEAJs were built. Work was also done on the "marketing" side of the interventions with extended community work on the local level and convincing parents that it would be a good idea to let their boys and girls attend schools under different and new circumstances.

Influence of SDC support

The influence of the SDC support in Niger through the implementation of the PEAJ project phase cycle is significant, because of the authentic combination of educational guidance and national and local presence of SDC in Niger, which not only constantly monitored and evaluated its own project but also reached to other national and international partners in project implementation and compared notes with others.

Alternative explanations

It can be argued that given the number of people entering the labour market in Niger every year, the number of successes shown here in the PEAJ 2 project are relatively small.

Furthermore, the external effectiveness of the structures built by SDC through PEAJ 2 is hampered by the problem of post-training transition into local labour markets and retention of learners in them (especially girls) and by the absence of dedicated funding mechanisms and employment services to facilitate the employment of trained young people and to ease the transition from (vocational) school to work.

Government ministries at national level and local municipalities are still more in the observing and controlling function of all these changes, but the institutionalization of these processes of alternative education in more and new centres with newly trained teachers and directors is mostly not in place yet or if it is in place only in rudimentary dosages and not enough for going national with these approaches.

Tracer studies for students finishing their alternative education are not yet in place to not only follow up on successes in qualitative social aspects, but also in quantitative economic terms.

Lessons learnt and wider implications

PEAJ 3 has just started in January 2024 after long and thorough internal and external and independent evaluations have been carried out and it seems that in this new phase will consolidate the approach and harvest the fruits of the seeds laid down in phases 1 and 2.

However, much more cooperation with the private sector, not only in traditional occupations, seems to be called for and new and innovative programme need to be designed in sectors with growth and job potential in Niger.

7 References

PEAJ Project(s)

Évaluation externe prospective de la deuxième phase du Programme d'Education Alternative des Jeunes (PEAJ) dans les régions de Maradi, Dosso et Niamey (2022).

Proposition de Crédit (PEAJ 2 CHF 7,300,000), No. 7F-07170.02 PEAJ (2018).

Proposition de Crédit d'Ouverture (PEAJ 1 CHF 500,000), No. 7F-07170.01 PEAJ (2012) et Proposition de Crédit d'Entrée en Matière (PEAJ 1 CHF 24,000,000), No. 7F-07170.99 (2012)

Rapport de fin de la deuxième phase opérationnel (RFO) du Programme d'Appui à l'Éducation Alternative des Jeunes (PEAJ), (2022)

Niger – (PEAJ 2) Programme d'Education Alternative des Jeunes – Document de projet (2018)

Proposition de Crédit (PEAJ 3 CHF 7,850,000), No. 7F-07170.03 PEAJ (2023)

Niger – (PEAJ 3) Programme d'Education Alternative des Jeunes – Document de projet présenté par Swinsscontact et Enfants Du Monde (2023)

FOPROR Project(s)

Proposition de Crédit (FOPROR 3 CHF 14,500,000), No. 7F-07791.03 FOPROR (2017)

Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle Rurale au Niger (FOPROR 3) – Version Finale Document de Projet SDC (2017)

Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle Rurale au Niger (FOPROR 3) – Évaluation externe prospective à mi-parcours – Helvetas (2020)

Document d'Évaluation Ex-post du „Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle Rurale au Niger (FOPROR 3)" – Michel Grégoire avec Djibrilla Madougou (2022)

Rapport de phase 3 du Programme d'appui à la formation professionnelle rurale (FOPROR 3) – projet de la Coopération Suisse, SDC (2022)

Rapport de fin de phase du FOPROR 3, SDC (2021)

PADEC Project

Document de Projet 2017-2020 de la Filière "Arts" du Département des Lettres, Arts et Communication de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Université Abdou Moumoni – Mission, Vision et Parcours 2014-2017: Prémisses d'un Programme Durable (2017)

Formation, Mobilité, Création Artistique 2018-2021 – Les artistes du Niger au service de la paix, en partenariat avec le Bureau de la Coopération Suisse au Niger, CCFN Centre Culturel Franco-Nigérien (2018)

Rapport Administratif de Fin de Phase SDC 7F-09650.01 CHF 1,600,000 SDC (2022)

Programme d'Appui au Développement Culturel (PADEC) – Phase Unique, Université Abdou Moumoni de Niamey (2021)

Rapport d'évaluation prospective du programme d'appui au développement culturel du Niger 2017-2021 – Bureau de la Coopération Suisse au Niger (2021)

Annex 6.7. Serbia Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Switzerland's cooperation with Serbia dates to 1991, and Serbia remains a priority country for Swiss cooperation. The Western Balkans' geographical proximity means that any instability in the region, like the Balkan wars of the early to mid-1990s, has the potential to have repercussions for Switzerland, which is also home to a sizeable Serbian diaspora.

Swiss cooperation has been explicitly tied to Serbia's ambition and prospect of European Union (EU) integration, where membership is understood as guaranteeing peace and stability. Serbia has been an EU candidate country since 2012, and accession talks opened in 2014. However, many parameters relating to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights have deteriorated, particularly since 2018. Public support for the EU has been declining in recent years because of what might be seen as a hypocritical EU accession process. EU scepticism has considerably increased in the aftermath of the February 2022 full-fledged Russian aggression against Ukraine, fuelled by well-documented efforts by Russia to intensify its influence in Serbia.[30] In June 2022, 51 per cent of Serbs indicated they would vote against joining the EU.[31]

While Serbia's foreign policy has not been aligned with that of the EU in the aftermath of February 2022 (regarding sanctions against Russia), and while the government has for several years maintained a split between its pro-EU and pro-Russia orientation, it remains formally committed to EU accession. This means the reform process is oriented towards complying with EU standards and frameworks, including vocational education and training. As an accession candidate, Serbia is part of EU monitoring and reporting mechanisms against these frameworks, including as part of the European Education Area and its Working Group on Vocational Education and Training and the Green Transition.[32]

Serbia accepted the EU's Revised Enlargement Methodology in 2021. The most recent 2023 EU Progress Report attested a moderate level of preparation in terms of "capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union."[33] The report also highlights that:

> "the structure of the economy improved further and economic integration with the EU remained high. However, the quality and relevance of education and training still does not fully meet labour market needs. […] The authorities are gradually updating both the general and vocational pre-university curricula to make them more relevant to labour market needs, at the same time consolidating the national qualification framework set-up. The adoption of new qualification standards and/or modernisation thereof has continued at a slow pace, with a strong focus on higher education. Efforts have been made to expose students to work-based learning under both upper secondary and higher vocational education and training. As participation rates in lifelong learning are traditionally low (i.e., 4.8% in 2021), the offer of formal and informal learning would usefully be further diversified and promoted among both the working and non-working adult population."

30 Russia's influence in Serbia has been consistent for some time, and includes meddling by the Russian Orthodox Church on the Serbian Orthodox Church, see, for example Religion as a Political Vehicle: An Examination of the Influence of Orthodoxy in Serbia by Russia (georgetown.edu); the Russian Orthodox also opened, in 2018, a "spiritual centre" in central Belgrade. Russian activity in Serbia has intensified since February 2022. For example, Serbia prepared for an official visit of Russian foreign minister Lavrov in June 2022; the Serbian Academy of Science and Culture's hosting of N. Narochnitskaya, one of the key ideologues of the "Russian World".

31 Spoljno-političke orijentacije građana Srbije (demostat.rs), Demostat, June 2022

32 European Education Area explained | European Education Area (europa.eu)

33 Serbia 2023 Report Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions

Formal vocational skills development (VSD) occurs in the context of stalled yet long-overdue education reforms. Key outstanding issues include the need to consolidate the existing number of schools, including in the secondary education tier, to reflect demographic developments better, to improve teacher training and the quality of curricula and their delivery, and thus, the quality of teaching, including in secondary schools with a vocational education and training (VET) orientation (ca. 75% of students are enrolled in such schools). While the need for these reforms is known, given the difficulty of implementing them without affecting election results in a country with very short electoral cycles, successive governments have shied away from decisively tackling them.

Currently, two laws regulate VET: part of the Law on Secondary Education and the Law on Dual Education, which differs in the degree of work-based learning. Most students are enrolled in the "classical" Law on Secondary Education-regulated VET, typically not limited to work-based learning. Enrolment in Dual Education VET has increased for males in the years since its introduction (adoption of the law in 2017, commencement with 2019/2020 academic year), with growth in mechanical engineering, which is a major driver of growth. The government aims to increase the share of VET students under the dual VET law to reach 20 per cent by 2024, which requires the share of participating private sector stakeholders to diversify topics and sectors.

2 Development cooperation

Switzerland is one of Serbia's biggest bilateral development cooperation partners, with programmes implemented by SDC, SECO, and SEM. The overall (i.e., combining SDC, SECO, and SEM funding) Swiss financial contribution since 2014 and up to 2025 is around CHF 285 million. Three cooperation strategies were in place during the evaluated period: 2014 to 2017, 2018-2021, and 2022-2025.

Education as a self-standing domain, initially focusing on teacher training and education, was phased out by the **2014-2017 Strategy** period but has been incorporated into labour market-oriented measures to enhance employment, particularly for young people - an area where Switzerland pledged long-term support. The 2014 to 2017 cooperation strategy focused on increasing competitiveness, supporting employability (particularly of young people) and stimulating a conducive business environment under the Economic Development Domain, where both themes were understood to be interrelated (i.e., supply and demand).

The **2018 to 2021 Strategy** continued this approach under the Economic Development and Employment Domain, with Outcomes 3 and 4. Outcome 3 sought: "Increased competitiveness: Entrepreneurship has become more innovative and competitive; entrepreneurs create more sustainable and inclusive trade and value chains, creating more and better jobs." Outcome 4 sought: "Employability and employment: Young people benefit from inclusive and improved market-oriented skills development, which results in employment." The strategy highlighted strong ownership and demand from the Serbian government for Swiss support in this area, stemming from a commitment, in 2016, by the then prime minister, now president, to introduce dual VET in Serbia.[34]

The current strategy is the **2022-2025 Swiss Cooperation Programme** for Serbia, where one of the focus areas (i.e., "portfolio outcomes") is economic development and employment, and where Outcome Statement 3 is specifically dedicated to Employability and Employment:

34 Vucic: Dual education significant for future of young people - Telegraf.rs

"A labour market-oriented VET system and effective intermediation between the economy and education system improve inclusive labour force participation, productivity and wages. Support will be provided for the VET system reform at policy, institutional and operational levels. Evidence-based decision-making in VET policy and stronger collaboration between the education system and the economy on dual VET will contribute to closing the skills gap, to increased labour force participation, higher productivity, and wages."[35]

Social inclusion of vulnerable groups, gender, and direction of support to geographically underdeveloped areas have been cross-cutting issues over the three strategy periods.

Given both the historical legacy of the former Yugoslavia and all the Western Balkans' countries' EU accession agenda, Switzerland also supports the Regional Challenge Fund WB6, a regional programme in support of VET and private sector development, co-funded by Germany and SDC, and implemented by the German Technical Cooperation Agency (*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit,* GIZ) and the German Development Bank (*Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*, KfW).

Three VSD projects reviewed for the evaluation in Serbia operating in the evaluation period (i.e., 2017-2023).[36] These are presented in the figure below and briefly summarised.

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Serbia reviewed

PROJECT NAME REFERENCE	PERIOD	PARTNER	TOTAL (CHF) [SDC]
Support to Youth Skills Development (E2E) Phase 1 7F-08747.01.01	January 2016 December 2019	Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education, local self-governments, "brokers": youth NGOs/CSOs, and SIPRU.[37] Implementer for component 2: NIRAS	8,010,000
Support to Youth Skills Development (E2E) Phase 2 7F-08747.01.02	January 2020 December 2023[38]	Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education, local self-governments, youth NGOs Implementer for Component 2: NIRAS	9,250,000
Policy Advice for Efficient VET Reform in Serbia 7F-09785.01	June 2018 December 2021	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development to work with the Centre for Educational Policy (Serbian local NGO) and the CES Institute ETH Zurich	954,000
Support to the Dual VET System in Serbia 7F-10788.01	August 2022 December 2029	1. Office for dual VET and NQF to work with the CES Institute ETH Zurich 2. Consortium led by Serbian Chamber of commerce with Wirtschaftskammer Austria WKO, Institut fuer berufliche Weiterbildung IbW, Swiss	10,970,000

35 See Swiss Cooperation Programme with Serbia 2022-2025 on the SCO website.

36 E2E, although having two phases, is viewed as one intervention.

37 The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit under the Office of the Prime Minister, which was been disbanded in 2022.

38 This project has now started its third and final phase, to conclude in 2026.

		Federal Institute for VET SFUVET, funded by SDC, ADA and Consortium	

Support to Youth Skills Development (also known as Education to Employment, E2E).

In the area of non-formal adult education with some transfer of Swiss experience on dual VET, the portfolio contained Support to Youth Skills Development (also referred to shorthand as Education to Employment, E2E). The objective of E2E is to increase decent youth employment in Serbia in a socially inclusive and sustainable way. The initially foreseen two phases have been completed, and an additional third phase began in May 2024. Phases 1 and 2 had a similar set-up and included two interlinked components: 1) a top-down component focusing on support for evidence-based youth employment policymaking, including such based on social innovation approaches and targeting the relevant national-level institutions and 2) a bottom-up approach that focuses on the provision of non-formal skills training (i.e., work-based learning), career counselling and guidance, job matching and placements for unemployed youth. Experience from the bottom-up approach (2) informed policymaking (1). The E2E operated in an environment where the strategic, legal and institutional framework for youth employment was in place but where national and local institutions lacked the capacity to generate effective policies and measures to address and remedy existing system deficiencies. E2E sought to provide practical examples at the level of 5 pilot regions on how to deal with these deficiencies.

Policy Advice for Efficient VET Reform in Serbia

In the area of formal education, the portfolio contained support for dual VET Policy Advice for Efficient VET Reform in Serbia. This project, the overall objective of which was that “youth graduates benefit from a fully-functioning and high-quality system of dual education”, provided policy advice on the Law on Dual Education and Entrepreneurship (itself a response by the government to the missing link between VET and the private sector), which, at the point of adoption in 2017 had several weaknesses. It was the first project specifically related to policy advice on dual education in Serbia and is somewhat of an outlier: policy advice was initially provided in a bilateral arrangement between the government and a leading Swiss dual VET expert; however, this engagement was then formalised to be part of the official Swiss cooperation portfolio. In other words, including policy advice was demand-driven and had not initially been foreseen in programme planning, through was then channelled through the bi-lateral programme and evolved into one specific portfolio segment.

Support to the Dual VET System in Serbia

Also, in formal education, the portfolio funds support for the dual VET system in Serbia. This multi-phase project seeks to support the increase of the share and quality of dual education in the Serbian secondary VET system. There are two strands to this project. One strand is the work on policy and legal advice surrounding the revision and adjustment of the current legislation. This part works with the newly established Office for Dual Education but also provides advice to the top level of government on the introduction of dual VET. Another strand specifically focuses on the private sector via the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and its regional branches, in an acknowledgement of the private sector's key role on the demand side of skills development and its role as a provider of work-based learning.

3 Country case methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC’s support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while field missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania), and one country study (i.e., Burkina Faso) was conducted as a hybrid involving a desk-review, online consultations, and the commissioning of a local consultant to undertake in-country research.

The Serbia case study was prepared through a country mission to Serbia in April 2024, complemented by several online interviews with stakeholders outside Serbia but with involvement in and knowledge of the VSD portfolio. The study also involved a desk review of the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), detailed reviews of project credit proposals, project documents, mid-term review reports, evaluation reports, and other available reports and literature. A list of the documents reviewed is presented at the end of this study.

4 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The VSD portfolio has been designed based on a clear assessment and understanding of the economic, social and political context. Projects in the portfolio focus on a key development challenge in Serbia, youth unemployment, as well as the marginalised and vulnerable groups therein, specifically young women and Roma, as well as other vulnerable groups. Policy advice is provided on the introduction of dual VET in secondary and tertiary education sector; this advice is demand-driven and responds to government requests for Swiss assistance. Projects acknowledge both demand and supply-side, and a recent project is specifically seeking to build capacity of the private sector via the Serbian Chamber of Commerce. Stakeholders also had more critical views regarding the relevance of the Swiss portfolio, suggesting more attention could be given to youth labour market needs and opportunities, as well as marginalisation and vulnerabilities beyond the "youth" category. In response to concerns raised regarding the relevance of Swiss policy advice, a dialogue has been initiated on involving all the interested parties at national and international levels.

The SDC interventions across the portfolio are relevant to the context of Serbia, where youth employment remains a persistent and vexing challenge. According to the Statistical Office of Serbia, in the third quarter of 2023, youth unemployment was 24.9 per cent.[39] And the 2023 EU Progress Report on Serbia suggests an employment rate of VET graduates aged 20-34 at 66.6 per cent in 2022, of which 58.4 per cent were girls and 72.9 per cent boys.[40]

Over the evaluation period, youth employment has been a high priority for the Government of Serbia and the subject of various government policies and strategies. Consecutive National Youth Strategies (i.e., 2015-2025 and currently, 2023-2030) and National Employment Strategies (i.e., 2011-2020 and currently 2021-2030) acknowledge the need to increase youth employment and in particular, the inclusion of women and minorities (Roma, etc.) and assign VET (including dual VET) a central role in achieving this. As highlighted above, young women represent a greater share of unemployed youth, as do vulnerable groups, including Roma. The two consecutive phases of the E2E project have helped shape current national policies. Swiss support in Serbia has consistently targeted youth employment, including women and vulnerable groups. E2E Phase 2 was found to have made "an important contribution to reducing stereotypes related to different forms of disadvantage, including related to gender, disability and ethnic minorities" (Gampert, Ognjanov 2023). Nonetheless, the evaluation team

39 Quoted here: Serbia Youth Unemployment Rate (tradingeconomics.com).

40 See 2023 EU Progress Report on Serbia, p. 123.

also heard more critical voices, suggesting that the focus on youth might benefit from a re-assessment, given labour market demands and vulnerabilities and marginalisation as well as employment potential going beyond the age group that is defined as youth.

The Serbian legal framework for VET is in place. It includes a relatively recent Law on Dual Education and Entrepreneurship (2017/2018) and a Law on Secondary Education covering VET. The policy advice part of the portfolio has addressed weaknesses in the Law on Dual Education and works to remove inconsistencies between both VET laws, responding to a direct demand/request for Swiss expertise and advice by the Government of Serbia in this field. Work-based learning exposure remains a challenge in terms of the implementation of the laws. The most recent 2023 EU Progress Report on Serbia finds that in 2022, only 17.1 per cent of VET graduates had had any relevant work-related exposure.[41] A recent introduction, based on Swiss policy advice, of a share of 60 per cent of work-based learning compared to 40 per cent theory and school-based learning is by many seen as not suitable for the Serbian context. However, in contrast to other legislation and legal reforms, the dual VET reform was quite extensively discussed publicly and with the donor community.

In institutional terms and at the policymaking level, VET is part of the education system and is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development and its predecessors. At operational and implementation levels, various stakeholders at national and local levels are in charge; most recently (2022), an Office for Dual Education has been created, and E2E and the ongoing policy advice projects partner with this new institution. At both levels, capacity gaps exist, and the Swiss portfolio across interventions is seeking to close these. E2E works with institutions and other stakeholders in the system, in particular the private sector. to demonstrate, at pilot level, non-formal educational initiatives to create youth employment. And both policy advice projects sought to promote a more systematic inclusion of the private sector in the advancement of dual education. The 2023 EU Progress Report on Serbia finds that the institutional set up under the National Qualification Framework should be further strengthened, including in terms of qualification standards in secondary VET. The E2E project is relevant in this respect as it seeks to influence the definition of quality standards for practical learning and bridging to formal qualifications (i.e., recognition of prior learning). Stakeholders report that bottlenecks exist in that aspect, as the National Qualification Agency's response rate to curriculum accreditation remains exceedingly slow.

E2E challenged gender stereotypes. The mid-term review of the project's Phase 2 found that "the project has managed to integrate a gender-sensitive approach and that it makes an important contribution towards challenging gender stereotypes." The review found that a key factor is the broker organisations'/CSOs' career guidance and counselling: where these brokers show gender awareness, they are successfully able to pass this on to beneficiaries. Hindering factors are parents, who remain tied to concepts of "gender-typical" professions (Gampert, Ognjanov 2023).

E2E underwent two reviews and discussed the project's mainstream approach to social inclusion: "In terms of inclusion of people with different abilities and hard-to-place youth, the project considers this to be part of its DNA since the start of E2E. The social inclusion mandate was likely more explicit at the time when SIPRU was still operational with separate calls for Hard-to-Place Youth (HPY)…E2E is not predominantly a social inclusion project and needs to stay true to its overall mandate of employment promotion and providing industry solutions. Its ability to deliver will water down if it tries to be a youth employment, a social inclusion, an industry solution provider and a dual VET advocate at the same time" (Gampert, Ognjanov 2023).

Stakeholders have variously highlighted that there is too much emphasis on the dual VET system, to the detriment of the established VET system, and which also requires investments. It is difficult to come to one conclusion here. The inevitable limitation in resources means that no one partner can tackle all parts of the system; in this sense, it is understandable that

41 See 2023 EU Progress Report on Serbia, p. 123.

Switzerland's support must select its focus. However, the statement also seems to indicate that more might need to be done to bring everyone on board with regard to the dual VET system Switzerland is promoting (see also below under Coherence and Effectiveness).

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The SDC support for VSD projects in Serbia is internally and externally coherent, but there is scope for further strengthening of synergies inside the portfolio as well as with other development partners exist.

Swiss interventions at the country level are internally coherent in principle at the design level. E2E had two mutually reinforcing components - practical pilot solutions in structurally weak geographic regions of Serbia that would feed into policymaking at the national level. In practical terms, coherence between the two components was initially challenging and required substantial steering from the SCO. The mid-term evaluation of E2E found that more coherence should be sought between the next, third phase of the E2E project, the policy advice project, and the projects in the private sector development portfolio). Stakeholders maintained that there remained scope for synergies between E2E and the dual VET projects, particularly as Serbia is currently in a transition phase as it is introducing dual VET in secondary education.

External coherence has emerged as an issue insofar as coordination and information exchange with stakeholders were commented on critically. Switzerland is leading the high-level policy advice. While this was generally well received, some stakeholders from within the system perceive what they variously describe as a "rigid" or "dogmatic" approach to transpose the Swiss dual system to Serbia without sufficiently acknowledging existing structures and history and without convincingly considering others' views. However, it is recognised that successful major reforms often create a contestation of ideas and models.

While formal consultation processes are anchored in a Memorandum of Understanding between development partners, it was suggested that more time was needed to allow meaningful input. Indeed, it was questioned whether input is genuinely desired or sought *pro forma*. Several stakeholders expressed scepticism about the methodologies used to justify policy decisions. On its side, SDC, or more precisely SCO, entered into a formal partnership with Austria/ADA in a joint dual VET project that has become a platform to coordinate the efforts better and allow for additional consultations that have already brought results in a little more than six months after the joint project start.

The Swiss Country Office is part of the EU-Government of Serbia co-chaired Human Resources and Social Development multi-donor working group; however, the frequency of the meetings is reportedly low. Development partners acknowledge the need for more information sharing, but there is a reluctance to do this outside the existing formal structures, in particular as Serbia moves forward in the EU accession process, which implies increased government responsibility for policy formulation and implementation and the use of direct budget support, including in the area of education.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
With regards to E2E, consecutive interventions mostly achieved their intended objectives. The private sector is centrally involved in projects, both at company level as well as at policy-making level. In combination, the Swiss portfolio supports the transformation of the national VSD system.

The two phases of E2E have achieved their intended objectives, even though an effective integration along the intended theory of change (interlinking pilot initiatives from the ground with policymaking at the national level) took time to materialise. However, there is evidence that project results have informed youth policies and labour legislation. Specifically, the introduction of non-profit job broker services is likely to be enshrined in the next revision of the labour law, providing the legal basis of operation for organisations supported through E2E. These organisations linked youth (including hard-to-place youth) and the private sector at the local level. The learning schemes were co-funded by the private sector. As a result of the project, there are now standing working groups and consultation councils comprising employment agencies, local government, the private sector, and brokers at the local level. The project also sensitised local, regional, and national stakeholders about the importance of job counselling services and intensive accompaniment of learners during and after their placements.

In terms of labour market integration, E2E achieved or overachieved its results. At the end of E2E's second phase, 67 per cent of work-based learning (the majority of which are women) graduated and were employed by companies. The project produced 52 occupational qualifications in 21 sectors. Beyond that, such measures were hoped to have Innovative models on youth employment and employability with upscaling potential successfully incorporated in local budgets, thus contributing to the financial sustainability of civil society organisations. The project succeeded in establishing multi-stakeholder platforms on a local level (for example, working groups in the Metal Processing Industry, in the Medical Sector/Dental Technicians and in the Wood Industry) as well as the national level (National Dialogue for Youth Employment) that mobilises both the public and the private sector.

The policy advice project on the then-new Law on Dual VET provided in-depth analyses of the legislation's impact on companies, including a cost-benefit analysis for the private sector. This analysis concluded that companies incur net costs from training and make policy recommendations relating to systemic changes. However, some stakeholders have questioned how rigorous the analysis has been. This has been discussed with the partners, and it has been agreed that the cost-benefit analysis will be repeated, and the criticism will be considered for the next cost-benefit analysis edition.

The current first phase of a three-phase policy advice project has the following objective: the implementation of dual VET in Serbia in accordance with the principles established in Article 3 of the Law on Dual VET, and the share of DVET students achieves the target value of the Government of Serbia. Thus, the share of students in dual VET among all first-year VET students should reach 10.9 per cent by 2026, compared to the baseline value of 5.3 per cent in the academic year 2021/22" (Project proposal, 2022).

Effectiveness on the dual VET policy advice side is blunted by challenging institutional coordination, specifically between the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development and the newly established dual VET office, and frequent turnover at the ministerial level. This creates an environment that is not conducive to already unpopular reforms. Another factor is how much the policy advice project takes everyone along. On the one hand, because reforms are urgent, arguments favour decreeing policy changes from the top. On the other hand, implementation depends on ownership, and this requires consensus-building.

Several development partners and other stakeholders described the Swiss approach as “rigid” and “too dogmatic”. Part of the difficulty appears to stem from the genesis of the policy advice support, which was top-down, demand-driven and more personalised than would typically be the case. Here, as part of the preparations for the latest dual VET project, jointly supported by SDC and ADA, a discussion was carried on how to alleviate the tension between providing the government with advice anchored in expertise and the Swiss system on the one hand and building consensus in line with commonly agreed development cooperation standards and best practices.

In combination, the Swiss portfolio of projects supports transforming the Serbian VSD system.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC’s VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The E2E project, after initial difficulties, managed to achieve a better connection between policy-level and practical components, thereby leveraging better results and thus, more efficient use of funding. Efficiency losses occurred in the joint programming phase for the dual VET system, co-funded between Switzerland and Austria, and where preparation of the project was beset with difficulties.

While there were initial problems in bringing policy and practical components together in E2E Phase 1, the review of the second phase found that “the project has a proven track record in leveraging funds from both the private sector and the public sector, leading to up to half of work-based learning training being funded by companies and five different Local Self Governments (LSG), the latter contributing a total of CHF 117,000 in cash – an amount which would allow producing 20 per cent of the current output of work-based learning graduates. This continuously reduces training amounts paid through Swiss taxpayer money” (Gamper, Ognjanov 2023).

The dual VET project is co-funded by Switzerland and Austria, and it is clear that the programming process was exceptionally difficult, resulting in inevitable delays and, thus, efficiency losses.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The Swiss interventions have shown impact, or prospects for impact, at micro-, meso, and macro levels. While the number of participants in project activities has by definition been limited, a reported 67% remain in employment in companies, resulting at impact at individual level. At meso level, impact has been achieved for local and regional authorities in terms of their greater and more meaningful involvement in bringing about employment in their localities, as well as understanding and championing innovative models including public-private dialogue platforms and broker services provided by non-profit organisations. Impact has been limited in terms of accrediting the work-based learning programmes created by the project with the National Qualifications Agency. At macro-level, the policy advice project had considerable impact on the introduction of the dual VET legislation and institutional basis. However, the legislation is in need of revision, and future policy advice might be contingent of the solutions adapted during the revisions. E2E has had impact, or the potential of impact, at the level of policies and legislation, including on youth and labour.

At the micro level, the Swiss interventions are relevant to the needs of the participants in the VET sector and unemployed youth. While the share of students in VET is proportionately higher than elsewhere worldwide (75%), they lack work exposure (see above). Without work experience, VET graduates cannot get jobs. This is also called the "no experience, no job trap." Regarding unemployed youth participating in E2E, the work-based learning opportunities created have directly led to their employment. Around ten per cent of newly registered employment in the pilot regions in which E2E operates can be attributed directly to the project (Gamper, Ogjnjanov 2023).

At the meso level, E2E had an impact in terms of shaping local and regional institutions' understanding and capacities to link job seekers with employers. This concerns the establishment of dialogue formats, a better appreciation of job counselling, and better integration of measures geared towards employment into local and regional budgets. At this level, the potential of the brokers as one possible stakeholder has been established and recognised. The impact has been more modest at the level of the National Qualifications Agency, where the programmes created under E2E have suffered from the inability of the Agency to provide accreditations within a reasonable amount of time.

At the macro level, the policy advice contribution had a considerable impact on shaping the legislation and institutional basis for the introduction of the dual VET system in Serbia; the impact is threatened by the deficiencies in the law and the reluctance of stakeholders within the system to revise the legislation for it to become functional. It is also unclear to what extent this might influence the continuation of the provision of policy advice in the future.

E2E has prospects of impact in terms of youth policies and labour legislation. On the latter, an ongoing revision of the labour legislation foresees an introduction of the broker model piloted through the project as legitimate, licensed stakeholders in the labour market; this will introduce greater capacities that job seekers can draw from (see also Sustainability below).

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
An upcoming revision of the labour legislation is likely to provide the basis for the operation of brokers modelled on those supported through the project. This means that brokers will have access to public funds earmarked for pilot projects or measures to encourage labour market integration at local levels—an important precondition for these organisations' financial sustainability. The formal dual VET system is likely to remain, given that it has been introduced, as a priority, by the top level of government, and has received an institutional "home" through the Agency for Dual VET, which gives the topic high visibility. There is some uncertainty about the path that dual VET is going to take, and whether it can navigate and resolve the multiple challenges that exist.

The E2E Phase 2 mid-term review found that "Institutional capacities at the level of broker organisations, but also in key public sector organisations and in a broad range of companies have been strengthened. Financial sustainability is facilitated through lobbying and advocacy at different levels. Key changes in the enabling environment, e.g., changes in key policies, are opening up the space for CSOs to become key actors for the delivery of local employment and labour market-related services." The evaluation was able to confirm these developments: an upcoming revision of the labour legislation is likely to provide the basis for the operation of brokers modelled on those supported through the project. This means that brokers will have access to public funds earmarked for pilot projects or measures to encourage labour market integration at local levels - an important precondition for these organisations' financial sustainability.

The formal dual VET system is likely to remain, given that it has been introduced as a priority by the top level of government and has received an institutional "home" through the Agency for Dual VET, which gives the topic high visibility and political backing. There is some uncertainty about the path that dual VET is going to take, and whether it is able to navigate and resolve the multiple challenges that exist, including a stalled education sector reform that fails to address the bloated, obsolete, and severely underfunded education system overall, including in the VET area.

5 Lessons Learnt

Serbia is an exceptional case regarding the top-level and personalised demand for policy advice on the Swiss dual VET model. Given that this is not a feature in many other countries reviewed as part of the evaluation, it might merit a separate discussion of what takeaways SDC could derive if it increased its focus on high-level policy advice as part of the systems development approach.

6 Documentation/resources consulted

General strategy documents for the evaluation period

Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017

Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2018-2021

Swiss Cooperation Program for Serbia 2022-2025

Project level documentation

7F-08747.01.01

SCO Serbia (2019). End of Phase 1 Report Review of Education to Employment Project Phase 1.

Hilpert, A., and A. Lakićević Dobrić (2019). Final Report External Review of Education to Employment Project Phase 1.

SDC (2016). Main Credit Proposal. Education to Employment Project Phase 1.

SCO Serbia (2019). Management Response to External Review of Education to Employment Project Phase 1.

7F-08747.01.02

Gamper, T., and G. Ognjanov (2023). Final Report External Review of Education to Employment Project Phase 2.

NIRAS-IP, SIPRU (2019): Project Proposal Education to Employment Project Phase 2.

SDC (2019): Credit Proposal Education to Employment Project Phase 2.

7F-09785.01

SCO (2018) Credit Proposal Signed

SCO (2018) Project Document, Final

SCO (2018) Terms of Reference for Project

ETH Zürich (2022) Proposal for VET Policy Bridging Project

7F-10788.01

SCO (2020) Entry Proposal with Opening Credit

SCO (2022) Project Proposal (final) by implementing consortium

Regional Challenge Fund WB 6

Third party documentation

European Commission (2023): Serbia 2023 Report.

European Training Foundation (2021): Youth Situation in Serbia: Employment, skills and social inclusion.

European Training Foundation (2023): Torino Process System Monitoring Report 2023.

Government of the Republic of Serbia (GoS) (2023): National Youth Strategy 2020-2023

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2020): Improving Evidence on VET: Comparative data and indicators.

Annex 6.8. Syria Case Study

1 Introduction and context

The Syrian conflict has been ongoing since 2011 and has caused one of the most significant humanitarian crises of our time. The civilian population continues to suffer from the devastating consequences of the armed conflict and the associated severe violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The conflict triggered one of the world's worst displacement crises and led to the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, health facilities, water supply and irrigation systems. The situation deteriorated further in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cholera outbreaks, a lasting economic crisis and other reasons.

A series of devastating earthquakes struck southern Turkey and northern Syria in February 2023, further exacerbating the disastrous situation. The United Nations estimates that the earthquake in Syria impacted 8.8 million people to varying degrees. Before the earthquake, it was estimated that in 2023, 15.3 million people throughout the country required humanitarian assistance. Delivering aid remains challenging, as the humanitarian community is facing restricted access and security risks, as well as bureaucratic hurdles. Switzerland implements a "Whole of Syria" approach, helping people throughout Syria according to their needs and independently of the lines of conflict.

In the face of the devastating effects of the conflict on the entire region and specifically on Syria's neighbouring countries, Switzerland has defined a Regional Cooperation Programme for 2019–2024. The programme aims to protect the people affected by the conflict and to alleviate their suffering. It encompasses Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey and focuses on four priority areas: protection and migration, education and income, conflict prevention and peace promotion, and water and sanitation. Gender equality and good governance continue to be transversal themes. It also supports the development efforts of Switzerland's partner countries in the region, notably in Jordan and Lebanon. The programme links international cooperation with migration policy and highlights Switzerland's active engagement in conflict prevention and peace promotion.

2 Development cooperation.

Switzerland has provided continuous support to affected populations in the region since 2011. SDC pursues the following approaches to achieve its humanitarian objectives:

- Direct implementation (projects implemented by Switzerland).
- Support to multilateral and bilateral partners (UN agencies, International Committee of the Red Cross, I/NGOs).
- Expert deployments from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) to partner organisations (specialists in construction, protection, water and sanitation and cash assistance etc.).
- Humanitarian diplomacy.

The projects falling within the scope of this evaluation are presented in the figure below and then briefly summarised.

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Syria reviewed.

PROJECT NAME	REFERENCE	PERIOD	PARTNER	TOTAL (CHF) [SDC]
Tamkeen Project	7F-10311.01	September 2021 March 2024	Aga Khan Foundation	3,541,669 [1,640,000]
Linked Interventions for Emergencies and Economic Stability (LIFE)	7-11006.01	October 2022 September 2024	Caritas	4,000,000 [2,000,000]
Building resilient communities in Rural Damascus through WASH and emergency food security and livelihood (EFSL) interventions	7F-10819.01	January 2022 October 2024	Oxfam Great Britain	4,360,000 [2,180,000]
Field-Oriented Multi-Sector Approach	7F-10445.02	January 2023 December 2024	Première Urgence Internationale	6,000,000 [3,000,000]
Improving Access to Education Services and Livelihood Opportunities for the Most Vulnerable Population in Northern Syria.	7F-09290.05	July 2023 June 2025	People in Need (PIN)	4,000,000 [2,000,000]
Provision of Integrated Protection (Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection) and Empowerment Services.	7F-10785.02	October 2022 March 2024	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	4,710,321 [2,360,000]

SDC supports six VSD-related projects across Syria.

Tamkeen Project. The overall goal of the project, which is implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), is: Conflict-affected and vulnerable children and young people (aged 3-24), especially vulnerable girls, IDPs, and children and young people with disabilities, (re) engage in safe and quality learning and development through non-formal, community-based settings in select districts of Hama, Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, and Homs governorates. To achieve this, the project works towards two interlinked outcomes:

1. Strengthened the capacity of local partners and communities to design, deliver and advocate for community-based, non-formal education initiatives in underserved areas, especially for girls, IDPs, and children and young people with disabilities.
2. Vulnerable young people, especially girls, in underserved areas benefit from safe and equitable access to a comprehensive package of services and opportunities that enable them to make decisions about their life and educational opportunities, secure future work and contribute to society.

The project will reach over 12,000 young people and, indirectly, over 300,000 individuals. Beneficiary numbers (including young children) will increase after selecting target areas and community-based initiatives. The project pays particular attention to life skills for young people.[42] Attention is also given to vocational training and entrepreneurship programs,

42 Life skills training includes topics such as leadership, planning, teamwork, problem solving, community engagement and communication, career planning, resume writing, preparing for an interview, healthy lifestyles, psychosocial care, gender equality, protection, SGBV, SRHR, financial literacy, and negotiation skills.

especially for adolescent girls, female youth, and those with disabilities. Vulnerable adolescents and youth receive employment and vocational skills training based on the results of a market assessment. They are provided with apprenticeship opportunities that allow recent graduates to apply and fine-tune their skills and receive on-the-job training and mentorship support.

Linked Interventions for Emergencies and Economic Stability (LIFE). Caritas implements the LIFE project, which has the overall objective of contributing to the protection, improved living conditions and strengthening the resilience of conflict-affected communities in Syria in the short and longer term. Four sector-specific outcomes are pursued:

1. Basic Needs: Vulnerable, crisis-affected communities have improved their ability to cover their basic needs, reducing the adoption of harmful coping strategies.
2. Education in Emergencies and Child Protection: Vulnerable, conflict-affected out-of-school girls and boys and struggling learners across different age groups (5-17 years) benefit from quality education and protection services in their community, increasing enrolment and retention in public schools.
3. Livelihoods: The resilience of affected communities is enhanced through sustainable livelihood support and socio-economic empowerment.
4. Capacity Building: The capacity of local partners to serve as active "agents of change" and to lead the process of relief and recovery together with crisis-affected communities and local duty bearers is enhanced.

Under the livelihood outcomes, the LIFE project highlights the relevance of business and vocational skills in promoting income generation for vulnerable groups in humanitarian contexts. The project encourages people who have business ideas and the potential to become entrepreneurs and business owners. Beneficiaries access tailored courses such as combined life skills and business development training, and vocational training. Practical and vocational skills are delivered by business owners who can provide practical training in the field or qualified vocational training centres.

LIFE project: Examples of training offered
Mobile maintenance. Trainees were introduced to the mobile phone, its main sections or parts, its malfunctions, how to maintain it, what the most prominent faults are, and how they are detected. The practical application started from the charging port and ended with the disassembly and installation of the screen and everything in between.
Plumbing. Theoretical instruction through drawing the shape of the pipes and how to apply them, and later practically applied by laying pipes for salty water and sweet water and identifying what are the faults and how they are maintained.
Electronics maintenance. The mechanism of operation within everything considered an electrical device in theory and the application of maintenance practically, such as the fan, hair dryer, charger, oven, and electrical regulator.
Electricity maintenance. The theoretical explanation was done through drawing how the electric current passes and all the steps and arrangements for that profession were defined. The circuit was applied on wooden boards to clarify what was explained in the theoretical section, and then the practical application on the walls was done.

Building Resilient Communities in Rural Damascus through WASH and Emergency Food Security and Livelihood (EFSL) Interventions. This Oxfam-run project aims to make targeted populations in rural Damascus less vulnerable to food insecurity, water scarcity, waterborne diseases, water-related conflict, and water-related mismanagement. It has two outcomes:

1. WASH: Increased access of conflict-affected men, women, boys and girls to safe drinking water, sanitation, solid waste management and application of hygiene practices as per minimum standards. Target: 61,500 beneficiaries (~30% of budget).

2. Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL): Improved capacities of men, women, boys and girls to access food, income and livelihoods through their market system(s). Target: 50'000 beneficiaries (~70% of budget).

Field-Oriented Multi-Sector Approach. This project is run by Première Urgence Internationale. Now in its second phase, this project aims to contribute "to enhance self-sufficiency, social cohesion and dignified access to basic services for conflict-affected populations through an integrated field-oriented approach" while enhancing resilience, in line with the humanitarian imperatives. In Phase 2, particular attention is given to skills development and community empowerment through providing life and "professional" skills. In Phase 3, attention will be turned towards "private sector insertion and community engagement" so that those who benefitted from the professional skills training will be supported through professional insertion initiatives – utilising skills obtained in training – through cash-for-work and community-led initiatives. This will include apprenticeships and small business projects.

Provision of improved access to education services and livelihood opportunities for the most vulnerable population in northern Syria. This project is implemented by People in Need (PIN). It has the following overall objective: Conflict-affected and vulnerable children and youth have enhanced educational potential, and young people and vulnerable families have enhanced resilience in northern Syria. Two outcomes are pursued:

1. Vulnerable conflict-affected boys and girls have improved and equal access to safe and quality formal and non-formal education.

2. Vulnerable conflict-affected boys and girls have equal access to a safe environment and improved well-being.

The project provides training in life skills, as well as technical and vocational training. Particular attention is given to women and people living with disabilities. Training courses are typically four months long, using accredited curriculum and training, and with the project issuing certificates to graduates. Where possible, training is also provided in the workplace through an apprenticeship model.

Provision of Integrated Protection (Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection) and Empowerment Services in NWS and NES. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) runs this project, which aims to improve the well-being of women and girls, ensuring they are safe in their communities. The project has four outcomes:

1. Women and girls are protected from, and treated for, the mental, and social consequences of GBV.
2. Community members are better prepared and equipped to deal with GBV in their communities by preventing their occurrence and/or by mitigating the consequences following their occurrence.
3. Women and girls achieve their sexual and reproductive health rights.
4. Children and adolescents are protected from abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation in their homes and communities and receive support when they experience harm.

The only VSD element of this project is within Outcome 2. Output 2.3 is that women and girls receive awareness sessions on financial literacy and vocational training (NWS only) and participate in skill-building and empowerment activities (NES only).

3 Country case methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC's support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while field missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania), and one country study (i.e., Burkina Faso) was conducted as a hybrid involving a desk-reviews, online consultations, and the commissioning of a local consultant to undertake field research.

The Syria case study was prepared as a desk study, which involved reviewing the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), detailed reviews of project credit proposals, project documents, mid-term review reports, evaluation reports, and other available reports and literature. A list of the documents reviewed is presented at the end of this study.

4 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The VSD portfolio has been designed based on a clear assessment and understanding or the economic, social and political context. There is evidence that the projects in the portfolio focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups, but this approach is more concerned with increasing resilience and promoting livelihoods than with integrating marginalised groups into national systems.

The evaluation has found strong evidence that SDC's VSD support in Syria is tailored to Syria's demographic, economic, social and political contexts. All projects display a high level of contextualisation, with careful analysis and project justifications.

There is little evidence that the VSD typologies have been applied in project design. Indeed, the typologies do not appear to specifically identify "prototypical approaches" that include the contextual characteristics displayed in Syria. While issues of access and inclusion into vocational education and training are the most likely fit of the suite of VSD projects within the four VSD Typologies, the political constraints to humanitarian support in Syria limit the extent to which VSD projects can support government VSD systems.

Good governance within Syria's economic, social and political contexts is cited as a crosscutting issue in many projects (e.g., the Building Resilient Communities project aims to strengthen the local management and governance structures to be able to independently maintain their local services and reduce the need for external input).

Despite the significant presence of internally displaced people (IDP) in a conflict-ridden country such as Syria, little attention is explicitly given to these groups. While all projects contain a comment on strategic position indicating alignment with Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024 and its human development objective and contribution to the Swiss Cooperation Programme Middle East 2019-24 and its Protection and Migration domain, very few are specifically concerned with migration or IDPs. Only the Tamkeen Project identifies IDPs as a focus. The LIFE project indicates that attention will be given to balancing members from the IDP and returnee communities, recruiting staff and including project participants from IDP and host communities to mitigate potential conflict.

Returnees are a very political topic in Syria, with neighbouring countries seeking to return Syrian refugees. Thus, there is a lot of sensitivity regarding data on refugees and concerns with how the data is used. As a result, there is very little access to data on migration and refugees. Projects such as the LIFE project target children and their parents from IDP families, but this does not feature strongly in the documentation.

There is substantial evidence indicating that SDC projects were designed to respond to private sector needs and opportunities. However, the nature of these projects varies dramatically from that of VSD projects in other countries. In Syria, with a fragmented private sector and struggling economy due to protracted conflict, the demand for employment is limited. Thus, responding to private sector needs and opportunities is more focused on how project participants, most of whom are unemployed, underemployed or from communities with few formal employment opportunities, is typically oriented to developing skills related to entrepreneurship and self-employment or local economic opportunities.

There is little evidence to suggest that SDC projects explicitly identify climate change as a challenge influencing its design. One exception to this is the Improving Access to Education Services and Livelihood Opportunities project, which highlights the mainstreaming of climate resilience throughout the design and implementation of the proposed activities (e.g., adopting a sustainable solution for electricity by using solar panels in all the established schools, centres, and facilities, depending on the availability of funds and exploring local market solutions and procurement sources to reduce its carbon footprint.

All projects clearly identify beneficiaries and describe their specific needs and challenges. There is strong evidence that SDC VSD projects are based on an assessment of marginalised groups (e.g., women, the poor, migrants, internally displaced groups, and others). Typically, independent assessments or earlier phases inform project design.

The reviewed portfolio of VSD projects exhibits a high awareness of conflict drivers. All projects seek integration and resilience.

All projects show specific attempts to address gender-based disadvantages and to empower girls and women. However, there is little evidence in the project documents that VSD projects in Syria have attempted to influence gender traditions.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The SDC support for VSD projects in Syria is broadly consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, and other Swiss agencies. The portfolio of VSD projects in Syria are largely consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in the country. However, the conditions for donor coordination are generally poor.

There is some evidence that SDC has intentionally designed VSD projects to support or complement private sector development (PSD), but this is more focused on income generation. Indeed, for reasons presented further below, SDC does not support formal private sector organisations or representative bodies due to the nature of the conflict. Instead, support for business is for income generation and micro-enterprises (e.g., bakers, hairdressing, mobile phone repair).

There are projects with a specific focus on supporting or complementing basic education. The most prominent being the Improving Access to Education Services and Livelihood Opportunities for the Most Vulnerable Population in Northern Syria project. This project targets four conflict-affected groups in NWS and NES, including vulnerable school-aged children and youth who experience particular barriers to education; parents or caregivers with out-of-school children (OOSC) or children at risk of dropout for whom economic concerns are the key reasons for not sending their children to school; teachers and education personnel and vulnerable individuals, particularly, vulnerable caregivers with OOSC's or children at risk of drop-out, to strengthen their economic resilience.

There is good evidence that VSD is integrated within SDC humanitarian responses and emergency contexts. Indeed, SDC programming in Syria is entirely humanitarian, and VSD is seen as a valuable tool for improving individual and community resilience in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The portfolio of projects across the country displays a range of interventions with different partners. While these do not necessarily link up with one another (i.e., they may not all be equally consistent and complementary), they reflect different focus and regional variations.

There is no specific donor coordination uniquely dedicated to VSD in Syria. However, there are several platforms where VSD is discussed at times. These include the Education Dialogue Forum on Education in Syria, Development Partner Group, Northwest Syria: Education Cluster, Northeast Syria: Education Working Group, Government Controlled Area of Syria Education Sector, and the Whole of Syria Education Cluster. Donor engagement is very complicated, particularly because donor and development agencies are mostly based in different locations outside of the country, making coordination meetings difficult. There are some areas or regions that are off limited to donor agencies. Thus, there is a mixed picture of what is going on.

There is evidence of cooperation with other donors and development partners within the portfolio. Many projects are based on joint funding arrangements with other partners.

It is very difficult to determine the extent to which existing Syrian systems and structures are used to implement VSD activities in a situation where alignment with the government is extremely restricted. However, some projects attempt to align and apply national curricula and standards. This is particularly difficult with no national curricula or standards (e.g., no school leavers certificates). There is variation across the country; where it exists, curricula and certificates are rarely recognised outside of Syria.

Project case study: Tamkeen Project

The overall goal of the project, which is implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), is: Conflict-affected and vulnerable children and young people (aged 3-24), especially vulnerable girls, IDPs, and children and young people with disabilities, (re) engage in safe and quality learning and development through non-formal, community-based settings in select districts of Hama, Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, and Homs governorates.

To achieve this, the project works towards two interlinked outcomes:

1. Strengthened the capacity of local partners and communities to design, deliver and advocate for community-based, non-formal education initiatives in underserved areas, especially for girls, IDPs, and children and young people with disabilities.
2. Vulnerable young people, especially girls, in underserved areas benefit from safe and equitable access to a comprehensive package of services and opportunities that enable them to make decisions about their life and educational opportunities, secure future work and contribute to society.

The project will reach over 12,000 young people and, indirectly, over 300,000 individuals. Beneficiary numbers (including young children) will increase after selecting target areas and community-based initiatives. The project pays particular attention to life skills for young people.43 Attention is also given to vocational training and entrepreneurship programs, especially for adolescent girls, female youth, and those with disabilities. Vulnerable adolescents and youth receive employment and vocational skills training based on the results of a market assessment. They are provided with apprenticeship opportunities that allow recent graduates to apply and fine-tune their skills and receive on-the-job training and mentorship support.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Very few VSD projects have been independently evaluated. This is largely because the dynamic, fragile and conflict-affected nature of the country make evaluation difficult. The outputs of most projects are well documented and there are lessons identified from project experiences. The political situation prevents collaboration with the private sector as many large employers are intertwined with the government. SDC VSD projects are not designed to support the transformation of national systems for VSD given the political and economic constraints and protracted conflict.

There is little evidence of any independent evaluation of VSD projects (2017-2023). Narrative reports provide details on outputs and identify lessons learned while considering value for money. Third-party monitoring is new; just signing for the next 3-4 years to check if partners do what they claim to do. It is less about evaluation and more about checking that partners have done what they claim and getting some helpful beneficiary perspectives.

Narrative reports suggest that most active projects are on track to achieve their intended outputs and outcomes.

Due to the political constraints that SDC and other donors face in Syria, VSD projects do not typically seek to engage with all relevant system actors (e.g., government, schools, training centres, and employers).

The political situation prevents collaboration with the private sector as many large employers are intertwined with the government.

Given the circumstances, the SDC project has done reasonably well in its efforts to engage with the small business sector in VSD projects. However, the extent to which this can inform policy dialogue with the government is limited. There is no formal or structured mechanism for policy dialogue with the government on VSD.

The fragile and conflict-affected nature of the environment in Syria makes it difficult to attempt to measure changes in business productivity and profitability stemming from VSD support. The LIFE project provides training and grants to business start-ups, but the productivity and profitability of these ventures are not monitored.

43 Life skills training includes topics such as leadership, planning, teamwork, problem solving, community engagement and communication, career planning, resume writing, preparing for an interview, healthy lifestyles, psychosocial care, gender equality, protection, SGBV, SRHR, financial literacy, and negotiation skills.

Again, the local circumstances influence the evidence that VSD projects in Syria address the needs of stakeholders. The fragile and conflict-affected context requires a localised strategy and deliberate avoidance of support for the Syrian government and many other conventional stakeholders.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
Given the difficult circumstances, VSD programming in Syria is not as efficient as other countries. However, project efficiency is monitored via narrative and financial reports and there is evidence that project partnerships and modalities have been designed based on lessons learned and good practice.

The VSD project portfolio has been developed through collaboration and coordination across HQ and country offices. The principal mechanism for this is through the Thematic Adviser and provides advice to country offices, and the technical expertise to support project design is valuable. Webinars and workshops help to disburse technical information. Many SDC staff are located elsewhere in the region rather than in Syria.

While all narrative reports refer to value for many metrics, project management in Syria is difficult and costly. No independent value-for-money assessments have been conducted.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The political context is a major constraint to measuring the impact of VSD projects on higher level effects at macro, meso and micro levels, at least in terms of how VSD is typically considered. VSD in Syria form part of a range of interventions designed to promote resilience and, in some cases, support income generation. These are mostly micro-level effects.

The lack of independent evaluation evidence, based largely on the difficulties of the situation, makes it difficult to determine any higher-level effects (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of VSD programmes on beneficiaries or partners. Moreover, for the above reasons, VSD projects have not been designed to contribute to Syria's systems reform or integrate beneficiaries into government systems.

The concept notes, credit proposals, and project documents indicate an ambition to reach a significant number of beneficiaries, and the narrative reports suggest a high level of achievement in this regard. However, it is difficult to verify these figures.

The impact of VSD programming in Syria is primarily focused on increased resilience and income generation. VSD is an important but relatively small proportion of the interventions supported by these projects.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While there is some evidence that outcomes have continued, or are likely to continue, after project closure, many projects continue in earlier phases or describe future phases. However, there is little evidence that interventions are embedded in local systems.

The overall context in Syria creates enormous obstacles to sustainability. Moreover, the conflict is protracted, and the situation is worsening.

Despite this, all projects typically contain an "exit strategy" in their project documents. However, these appear very optimistic given the conflict-affected circumstances.

There is little evidence that SDC projects create local expertise (i.e., build local capacities) and address the threats to sustainability (e.g., high turnover of local staff). These issues appear dwarfed by broader conflict challenges.

There is some evidence that outcomes have continued, or are likely to continue, after project closure. Many projects continue in earlier phases or describe future phases. However, there is little evidence that interventions are embedded in local systems.

Some evidence was found that organisational and financial sustainability was an element of the SDC VSD projects. These features appear in project documents. However, the bigger challenges to sustainability in the FCAS appear to dominate.

SDC does appear to be learning from past programming experience in this difficult context. VSD is a component of a broader set of interventions where the situation does not allow for standalone VSD programming.

5 Lessons learned

In conflict situations, VSD must be a component of a broader set of interventions where the situation does not allow for standalone VSD programming.

Significant attention is given to the role of VSD in building resilience within the context of a fragile and conflict-affected situation. Skills development is closely connected to humanitarian work through efforts that aim to build community and individual resilience. Examples include training in community development interventions, cash-for-work initiatives, small business and livelihood development activities, and project interventions to rehabilitate bakeries (i.e., connecting food security with business development).

High demand for and appreciation of life skills, business skills and practical, vocational skills that are connected to livelihood and micro and small business opportunities.

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Annex 6.9. Tanzania Case Study

1 Introduction and context

Tanzania has sustained relatively high economic growth over the last 15 years. However, while its poverty rate has declined, the absolute number of poor has not because of its high population growth rate. The World Bank Group (2024) reports that Tanzania has managed to sustain its growth momentum despite the intensifying effects of climate change. Tanzania's real GDP growth rate rose from 4.6 per cent in 2022 to 5.2 per cent in 2023, as a stronger business climate and improved trade balances boosted aggregate demand.

The country's population is about 69 million, with around 38 per cent based in urban areas. The mean age is 17. With a three per cent annual population growth rate, the population of Tanzania is estimated to double every 23 years. The total school-age population is projected to rise to 44.3 million (low fertility scenario) in 2061 in contrast to 65.5 million (high fertility scenario), nearly 50 per cent higher, with the cost of public education increasing from the current 3.3 per cent of GDP to 4.1 per cent under (the high fertility scenario) but dropping to 2.9 per cent (low fertility scenario) in 2061.

The UNDP (2023) indicates that labour market indicators suggest that Tanzania's incomplete structural transformation path is reaching its limits, and successful and inclusive economic transformation will remain elusive without enabling reforms. The proportion of workers in waged employment has remained constant since 2014 at just 14 per cent while the proportion of workers employed in the formal sector dropped from 12 to ten per cent. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the economy to create enough formal jobs to absorb the 800,000 new workers that enter the labour force every year, leaving the low-productivity, vulnerable informal sector to bear the country's sizable employment burden. Moreover, the acceleration of informality with the proliferation of petty traders ('machingas') indicates falling productivity levels in the urban sector. "Petty trading is popular with youth and women because they typically lack the resources and formal skills and qualifications needed for formal employment. By contrast, the sector's low barriers to entry in terms of capital, operating costs, legal eligibility, and educational requirements provide a means of subsistence employment for the millions of disadvantaged people within these groups. However, employment in the sector is notoriously vulnerable and risky – especially for women – and creates additional constraints on already-stretched urban infrastructure."

In addition, limited access to skilled labour is a key constraint on developing the formal sector due to Tanzania's low educational attainment and foundational learning levels for those who manage to go to school. High enrolment rates at the primary school level, the UNDP (2023) argues, belie the country's low and declining learning outcomes, with just 5.2 per cent of Standard 2 and 3 students currently able to read proficiently and only 20 per cent reaching benchmark levels in numeracy. Enrolment in secondary and tertiary education significantly lag those of peers.

In 2023, the Government of Tanzania adopted a new Education and Training Policy that emphasises developing skills relevant to the changing job market, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and digital literacy.

The National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NACTVET) was established under the NACTVET Act, Cap. 129, to coordinate and regulate the provision of technical and vocational education and training. NACTVET regulates the national qualifications system to ensure that products from technical and vocational institutions are of a high quality and respond to changing needs and technological innovations. In this context, technical and vocational education and training is defined as "Education and training undertaken by students to equip them to play roles requiring higher levels of skills, knowledge and understanding and in which they take responsibility for their areas of specialisation".

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) strengthens links between training institutions and industries to ensure job-ready graduates. Drawing on this strategy, the Government of Tanzania has prepared a second Technical Vocational Education and Training Development Plan (TVETDP) 2021/22 – 2025/26, which aims to build the human capital needed to drive the NSDS.

There is a national network of government-run vocational training centres. In addition, there is a network of Folk Development Colleges (FDCs), which were established in 1975 to meet the needs and challenges of post-literacy continuing education by providing residential educational opportunities, both general and vocational, for rural development. Traditional FDC courses included agriculture, woodwork, tailoring, motor mechanics, masonry and brickwork.

The 2023 TVET Conference, which had some 200 delegates, was held in Arusha in May. The conference objectives were to foster knowledge exchange, encourage collaboration, and ignite innovation, all with a singular focus on elevating the quality and relevance of TVET programs and aligning them with the ever-evolving demands of a skilled workforce.

In May 2022, the ministries responsible for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) from Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania signed a declaration adopting a Regional Qualifications Framework for TVET. This framework references the National Qualifications Frameworks of the three countries. With this adoption of the Regional Qualifications Framework, it has become possible to compare and value TVET qualifications across the region. The purposes of this are:

- To enable easier movement of learners and workers across the region and internationally through the regional recognition of diplomas and certificates in TVET.
- Compare levels and qualifications across member countries.
- Promote trust between member countries regarding the quality of their education systems and the qualifications of the graduates.

The framework is a tool for the Recognition of Prior Learning, learning that took place in non-formal situations (on the job, life experience, etc.).

2 Development cooperation

The Government of Switzerland has been active in Tanzania since the early 1960s. Its physical presence was strengthened in 1981 with the opening of a cooperation office, now an integral part of the Swiss Embassy. SDC support to Tanzania is guided by the Swiss Cooperation Programme Tanzania 2021 – 2024 (extended from one year to 2025). This programme pursues key objectives in the areas of economic development, the environment, human development, peacebuilding, and governance. Swiss cooperation is aligned with Tanzania's development goals, as stipulated in its medium-term plans and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025.

The Country Programme describes how Switzerland will maintain its visibility and accelerate impact by shifting "from a domain to a cross-sectoral approach to policy dialogue, planning, programming, and implementation." The programme will cover areas where needs are greatest and where Switzerland adds value to the efforts of national and international development partners to achieve systemic change. The programme describes VSD's role in youth employment as follows: "Swiss cooperation will enhance its focus on youth below 25 as beneficiaries, partners and agents of change." Thus, Swiss support aims to ensure young women and men have opportunities to learn "market-relevant vocation skills in formal education and alternative pathways. Moreover, VSD will "explore possibilities to increase its engagement in soft/life skills and to expand ICT skills development and will include basic education components for illiterate and low-skilled participants."

There were two main VSD projects reviewed for the evaluation in Tanzania operating in the evaluation period (i.e., 2017-2023).

Figure 1. List of VSD projects in Tanzania reviewed

Project Name	Period	Partners	TA Provider	Budget (CHF)
Skills for Employment Tanzania (SET) 7F-09765	Phase 1: 2018-2022 Phase 2: 2022-2026	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology – Department of TVET	Swiss Contact	7 million (Phase 1)
Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) 7F-09348	Phase 1: Phase 2: March 2020 to February 2023	President's Office Local Governments	SNV	10.2 million [3.66 million]

The VSD projects are summarised below.

Skills for Employment Tanzania Project

The Skills for Employment Tanzania Project was conceived as a 12-year project of three phases. The second phase started on 1 June 2022 after four years of implementation of Phase 1. The overall project goal for SET for all three phases is: "Improve the prospects of gainful youth (self-) employment through a contribution to improved access, relevance, and quality of Vocational Skills Development".

In Phase 1 (2018-2022), the project focused on partnership building, testing approaches and finding the right model to apply in order to reach target groups. Based on experiences and lessons learned during phase 1, the SET II outcomes and interventions have been redesigned with a focus on non-formal vocational skills. Furthermore, the involvement of non-government stakeholders including the private sector has been strengthened.

There were three project outcomes for the second phase:

Outcome 1 (Relevance): Improved collection and analysis of labour market and skills needs involving the private sector, workplace practitioners and other labour market stakeholders, leading to improved, relevant and flexible VSD curricula.

Outcome 2 (Quality): Improved motivation, adaptive teaching techniques, and teaching environments allow for improved delivery of non-formal and formal programs and training throughout the network of Folk Development Colleges (FDCs).

Outcome 3 (Access): Increased access of youth and young mothers to relevant non-formal VSD.

The primary target group are youth (15-24 years), particularly those who cannot access the formal VSD system, especially young women, including young mothers. Support is also given to training providers – both public and private – as well as key government institutions like the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology – Department of TVET (MoEST-DTVET), particularly its units FDCs, VETA, and NACTVET.

Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE)

In May 2021, the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) in Tanzania launched the second phase of the OYE project, which is co-financed by SDC and the Embassy of Denmark. In a first three-year phase that came to an end in 2019, over 20,000 Tanzanian youth had been reached and increased their income and social standing. While the first phase focused on quantitative results, the analysis at the end of the project showed that the project should focus more on quality (e.g., with regard to gender) and more systemic interventions.

The project focuses on youth between 18 and 30 years who are disadvantaged (i.e., have a low level of economic engagement and income), lack formal training, have limited employment prospects, and are unemployed or underemployed. The overall objective of Phase 2 is to improve the livelihoods of rural and peri-urban out-of-school youth by increasing their employability. Through technical, vocational and life skills training, and post-training support such as access to finances, youth are prepared for self-employment and microenterprise opportunities. Market opportunities for employment and enterprise development are conducted in promising sectors identified in the project regions. Singida and Morogoro regions have been selected for Phase 2 based on successful piloting interventions conducted in Phase 1 in Singida and a promising outlook regarding (self-)employment opportunities for youth in Morogoro.

The goal of OYE Is to Improve the livelihoods of 4,250 rural (3,200) and peri-urban (1,050) out-of-school youth by improving their employability to enter (self-)employment. The project has three outcomes:

1. Improved youth employability and youth accessed (self-) employment.
2. Youth-inclusive market systems in two geographical clusters are improved and effective in promoting and improving youth employability and self-employment in a systemic manner.
3. Local government authorities can implement their mandate effectively, driven by learning and regional knowledge development and supported by evidence-based documentation.

3 Country case methodology

This case study has been prepared to contribute to the global evaluation of SDC's support for VSD from 2017 to 2023. It serves as a unit of analysis in the evaluation, which included nine country case studies. Four country case studies were conducted as desk-based studies (i.e., Albania, Bangladesh, Niger, and Syria), while field missions were conducted in another four countries (i.e., Egypt, Nepal, Serbia, and Tanzania), and one country study (i.e., Burkina Faso) was conducted as a hybrid involving a desk-reviews, online consultations, and the commissioning of a local consultant to undertake field research.

The Tanzania case study was prepared through a field mission to Tanzania in April 2024, which included consultations with key informants in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Dodoma. The study also involved a review of the VSD portfolio (2017-2023), detailed reviews of project credit proposals, project documents, mid-term review reports, evaluation reports, and other available reports and literature. A list of the documents reviewed is presented at the end of this study.

4 Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the country evaluation according to the ten evaluation questions that frame the overall evaluations of the SDC VSD portfolio from 2017 to 2023. A series of sub-questions or judgement criteria have been assessed to answer the evaluation questions.

4.1 Relevance

Relevance: Evaluation Questions
EQ1. To what degree do SDC's VSD projects and programmes systematically consider the economic, social and political context of partner countries? **EQ2. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes designed and managed to achieve social inclusion and influence gender traditions?**

Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's support for VSD in Tanzania has been based on a careful and regular assessment of the economic, social and political context and is aligned with Swiss and Tanzanian national development strategies. Particular attention has been given to the inclusion of poor and marginalised groups, such as young people and young mothers who are outside of the school system. However, not all projects seek to mainstream or integrate beneficiaries into education and training systems. Instead, they have supported beneficiaries in starting a new small business (i.e., self-employment). There is some evidence of influence on gender traditions as young women are broadly recognised as a group who should be included in the labour market.

There is good evidence to show that SDC VSD support is tailored to national demographic, economic, social and political contexts. The SDC VSD projects have been designed and implemented in response to local needs and contexts.

It has proved difficult to categorise the Tanzania projects neatly into one or more of the four VSD typologies. While all typologies can be considered relevant to the national context, SDC's support for VSD in Tanzania has been mostly focused on the social integration of the most marginalised. However, this is mostly done through informal training that is not always aligned with or accredited in the national qualifications framework. Most of this training is informal and focused on self-employment or micro-business development. Thus, rather than integrating young people into the formal system, the projects support the development of skills in the informal economy.

SDC programme projects support good governance within national economic, social and political contexts. While this is not an explicit focus, VSD projects have encouraged and supported the production and sharing of data on education and training outcomes, which supports accountability and good governance.

Little attention has explicitly been given to the challenge of migration. Migration is not a specific concern in Tanzania. There is not much movement of people out of Tanzania unless they are professionals. There are some issues with migrants coming from elsewhere in the East Africa Region (e.g., Burundi and DRC). These migrants are more drawn to the stability of Tanzania than economic and employment opportunities. Swahili is a common language for immigrants from the region. In contrast to this prevailing view, there were respondents who spoke strongly of the need for regional and international accreditation. SDC has support initiatives for regional labour market integration, but the challenge is broader.

SDC has made clear attempts to respond to private sector needs and opportunities. It has funded national labour market analysis. However, this is not always focused on the employment and skills demanded by private employers. It is often a problem because of the high levels of informality.

Very little evidence was found to show that SDC projects explicitly identify climate change as a challenge influencing its design (e.g., green skills and climate adaptation challenges). While there is evidence of growing attention to climate change and the role of VSD, this is relatively recent. Climate change is not featured in the VSD project portfolio. However, the SET project has supported a training provider in the design and delivery of sustainable farming skills, and the OYE project has supported young people in creating businesses based on climate-adaptative models, such as efficient stoves. Thus, there are signs of projects adapting to these issues including climate and environmental concerns.

There is strong evidence that SDC project interventions are tailored to the needs of defined target groups. Considerable attention has been given to the needs of young people, including young mothers. Indeed, SDC has invested in assessments of marginalised groups. Similarly, there is strong evidence that projects have been explicitly designed for social inclusion through mainstreaming. Considerable attention has been given to the needs of young people, including young mothers. Projects have deliverables that seek to reach out to marginalised groups and people who have dropped out of the education and training system. However, not all projects seek to mainstream or integrate beneficiaries into education and training systems. Instead, they have supported beneficiaries in starting a new small business (i.e., self-employment).

Much attention has been paid to supporting young women and, in many cases, young mothers. However, it is unclear to what extent this has influenced changes to gender norms and traditions.

4.2 Coherence

Coherence: Evaluation Questions
EQ3. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans, as well as with the work of other Swiss agencies? **EQ4. To what extent are SDC's VSD interventions consistent and complementary with other donor and development partners operating in partner countries?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
SDC's VSD interventions in Tanzania have shown to be consistent and complementary with other SDC policies, strategies and plans. The Country Office has worked across divisions in project design, implementation and monitoring and relied on advice from the regional thematic coordinator. However, there are concerns that the regional coordination post has been abolished and more broader concerns there is little understanding in headquarters of the realities on the ground. There is substantial evidence that SDC VSD interventions interact with or complement other donor-supported projects and programmes. SDC is a founding and active member of the TVET Sub-Group (which falls under the Education Sector Donor Group). Other donors describe SDC as an engaged partner in VSD in Tanzania.

SDC has worked across divisions in project design, implementation and monitoring. Regional coordination in the form of comments on draft documents has been well received. However, there are concerns that the regional coordination post has been abolished. There are concerns that HQ has little knowledge of what is happening on the ground. HQ often promote overly ambitious and lofty development objectives (e.g., contributing to national VSD systems), without sound knowledge of the local context. It is rare for any project proposals to be refused, which is seen as illustrative of a lack of quality assurance and strategic oversight.

There is some evidence that SDC's VSD work complements PSD. However, this seems strongly focused on microenterprise development in agriculture value chains. Skills may improve productivity in agriculture and agribusinesses to some extent, but it is unclear how effective this is in supporting PSD or broader economic development outcomes. OYE employs a market systems development approach, which does not appear to be based on a clear market diagnosis.

There is some evidence that SDC has intentionally designed VSD projects to support or complement basic education through work with the Ministry of Education.

There is little evidence that SDC's VSD interventions have been explicitly designed through engagement with the International Vocational and Professional Education Coordination Group (IC-VPET).

VSD is consistent and complementary with other Swiss programming, but no evidence exists that specific synergies have been designed. SET has pursued synergies with OYE project and the Youth Employment through Skills Enhancement YES (Helvetas) project. Possibly, synergies were sought with the Safeguard Young People (SYP) project co-funded by Switzerland. The SYP also works with the FDCs for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights education purposes. At the regional level, cross-learning is expected, along with other projects implemented by Swisscontact, such as Promoting Market-Oriented Skills Training and Employment Creation in the Great Lakes (Promost) and Skills 4 Life (S4L).

There is substantial evidence that SDC VSD interventions interact with or complement other donor-supported projects and programmes. SDC is a founding and active member of the TVET Sub-Group (which falls under the Education Sector Donor Group). Previously, the chair of the sub-group, SDC, and other members share information and provided comments on concept notes and design documents. The group meets bi-monthly, and some members suggested it would be useful to meet more regularly. SDC participates in some co-financing arrangements with other donors, but these are not prominent projects.

While SDC shows a determination to align with and support national VSD systems, many project interventions are focused on informal VSD, with little direct articulation to formal national systems. All projects involve partnerships with relevant national, regional and local actors.

SDC supports VSD coordination at the national level through interactions with the NACTVET (the government regulator) and through donor coordination mechanisms described above. There is some frustration with government coordination. The PMO is responsible for youth development (as well as gender and disability inclusion), while the Ministry of Education is responsible for basic education and TVET.

Other donors describe SDC as an engaged partner in VSD in Tanzania. Some spoke of the support it provides to VSD for young people, particularly business development skills and start-up kits (i.e., funds for microenterprise establishment). SDC's interest in and support for dual apprenticeship schemes was also cited.

4.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions
EQ5. To what extent did SDC's VSD interventions achieve their intended objectives? **EQ6. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes engage the private sector and foster demand-driven skills development?** **EQ7. To what extent do SDC VSD projects and programmes support the transformation of national systems for VSD?**
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
There is strong evidence that completed SDC VSD projects achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. VSD projects are well managed, with reports highlighting outputs and outcomes, which have largely met targets. This is also true of intended outputs and outcomes. Considerable attention has been given to lesson learning, particularly in transitioning from one project phase to another. There is limited evidence of successful private sector collaboration – as shown by results achieved and private sector perspectives. There have been entrepreneurship and skills development interventions in sectors with lead firms (e.g., poultry). SDC projects have sought to engage with SMEs and business development is a major feature in project interventions. However, these are mostly in the informal and agricultural sectors. There is no evidence to suggest that SDC's support for VSD has increased the productivity and profitability of the private enterprises that benefit from it. While there have been some attempts to strengthen the national VSD institutional framework or system through VSD projects, there is little evidence that SDC's VSD projects in Tanzania address the needs of national stakeholders. While national institutions have been involved, SDC's project is small and not designed to address the broader needs of these stakeholders.

Strong evidence is that completed SDC VSD projects achieved their intended outputs and outcomes. VSD projects are well managed, with reports highlighting outputs and outcomes that have largely met targets. This is also true of intended outputs and outcomes. Considerable attention has been given to lesson learning, particularly in transitioning from one project phase to another.

It has been difficult to assess the extent to which projects respond to unintended outcomes. However, the transition from one phase to another has allowed for project design and management revisions. There is strong evidence that SDC has identified good practices that promote social inclusion in the VSD portfolio. VSD projects have revised and improved their approaches to supporting young people and young mothers.

Strong evidence exists that SDC VSD projects engage with all relevant system actors. Across the VSD country portfolio, SDC engages with key actors. However, there is limited evidence of successful private-sector collaboration. There have been entrepreneurship and skills development interventions in sectors with lead firms (e.g., poultry). SDC projects have sought to engage with SMEs, and business development is a major feature of project interventions. However, these are mostly in the informal and agricultural sectors. The VSD projects operate in areas dominated by microenterprises and SMEs. Projects have reached out to SMEs but often struggled to find ways for them to be fully engaged.

The SCO highlights the importance of understanding the capacity for private sector engagement in underdeveloped regions, such as the rural Singida Region. Here, project beneficiaries learn honey making, soap production, goat husbandry, etc. Hence, it is not realistic to expect too much from the private sector in these contexts, where the economy is largely informal and dominated by micro and small businesses.

There is no evidence to suggest that SDC's support for VSD has increased the productivity and profitability of the private enterprises that benefit from it. Very little attention has been given to VSD's impact on business productivity and profitability. However, the OYE project reported improved incomes and livelihoods.

There is little evidence that SDC's VSD projects in Tanzania address the needs of national stakeholders. While national institutions have been involved (e.g., the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Education), SDC's projects are small and not designed to address the broader needs of these stakeholders.

There have been some attempts to strengthen the national VSD institutional framework or system through VSD projects. The SET project is aligned with and has strengthened the national VSD institutional framework. The OYE involves government stakeholders (e.g., the Prime Minister's Office and local government authorities) but does not support strengthening the national VSD institutional framework. Indeed, the OYE operates in parallel to the national framework.

There is strong evidence that SDC has learned lessons from its engagement with the private sector and identified factors that contribute to or inhibit private sector involvement. Divergent views exist on how important the formal job market is for young people who have been excluded from the education system. Thus, while SDC has largely focused on informal VSD and microenterprise development, more could be done to support VSD in the formal sector.

Despite a substantial focus on informal VSD, no evidence exists that VSD projects strengthen the articulation between formal and non-formal VSD, which is not certified in the formal system.

Very little evidence was found to show that SDC VSD policy dialogue and projects support permeability, flexibility and inclusion between the formal and non-formal VSD systems. While some cases are reported, the overall approach has been through nonformal VSD, leading to self-employment or microenterprise development.

Within the formal economy, there is little evidence that SDC VSD support is private-sector oriented. However, particular attention is given to employment in the informal economy, largely because the formal economy is not growing fast enough to accommodate many young labour market entrants.

There is no evidence that VSD projects or SDC staff contribute to international policy dialogue.

4.4 Efficiency

Efficiency: Evaluation Question
EQ8. How efficiently are SDC's VSD projects and programmes delivered across HQ, regional and country offices?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
While the Country Office is solely responsible for project coordination and results, there is good evidence to show that SDC's VSD projects in Tanzania have been delivered across HQ, regional and country offices. HOWEVER, there are problems with this division. There are concerns that HQ has little understanding of the realities on the ground and that all VSD projects are required to meet HQ demands. While efficiency and value for money have been driving factors in project design and execution, the limited scale of impact negatively affects cost efficiencies. There is evidence that VSD projects were implemented in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and that efforts were made to mitigate delays.

While the Country Office is solely responsible for project coordination and results, there is good evidence to show that SDC's VSD projects in Tanzania have been delivered across headquarters, regional and country offices. The Regional Thematic Advisor has supported coordination across HQ and country offices, but this has been minimal. This position will be abolished, further reducing the capacity for exchange, collaboration and coordination. SECO is not in Tanzania.

While there is a division of labour between headquarters and regional and country offices, there are problems with this division. There are concerns that headquarters has little understanding of the realities on the ground and that all VSD projects are required to meet HQ demands. For example, supporting systems development is included in the SET and OYE projects to varying degrees, yet to do this effectively would be a major task that requires far greater funds and much more time. Despite this, HQ demands that some degree of system transformation be included. Similarly, the ambitions for sustainability are largely driven by headquarters and not based on a realistic understanding of the local context.

Efficiency and value for money have been driving factors in project design and execution. However, the limited scale of impact negatively affects cost efficiencies. The scalability of the interventions provided by SET and OYE is limited because they depend on government expenditure increases.

There is evidence that VSD projects were implemented on time (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and that efforts were made to mitigate delays.

There are concerns about quality assurance measures applied across the design, approval, and monitoring lifecycle. While these are managed within the Country Office, there are concerns that this lacks consistency across the global portfolio in a highly decentralised system. While SDC's current VSD organisational and institutional set-up is conducive to achieving VSD-related objectives under the IC Strategy 2025-28, these arrangements are far from perfect. The Country Office has concerns about the arrangements, which largely place all onus for project design, lesson learning, knowledge management, and quality assurance at the local office.

4.5 Impact

Impact: Evaluation Question
EQ9. To what extent have SDC VSD projects and programmes produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
The evidence is mixed regarding the extent to which SDC VSD projects produced higher level effects at macro (policy), meso (institution) and micro (employers, beneficiaries) levels. While the macro effects have been minimal, there are measurable outcomes at meso and micro levels. The challenge is with the scale of these effects. While projects have applied demonstration and, in some cases, market-systems development approaches to increase the scale of impact, this is ultimately limited by the preparedness of government to invest in VSD and the willingness of the private sector to pay for skills development. In all cases, this is a major challenge. Thus, the scale of possible impact depends on a combination of external factors.

There is strong evidence of higher-level effects (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of VSD programmes on beneficiaries. Direct beneficiaries have enjoyed positive impacts on their lives. However, the number of direct beneficiaries is low, and the scope for increasing the scale of beneficiaries is limited due to the requirement that the government and the private sector need to contribute more financially to skills development.

There is little evidence of higher-level effects of VSD programmes on partners, such as private sector partners. While SDC has encouraged projects to reach out to private sector partners and create a more demand-oriented skills development system, the extent to which this has been possible is limited.

There is some evidence of higher-level effects of VSD programmes on formal education systems. The projects have supported teacher training in some areas and course piloting, but it is unclear how well this has contributed to changes in formal education systems. Indeed, the support for teacher training is unlikely to contribute to high-level effects alone.

There is evidence of higher-level effects of VSD programmes on informal VSD systems. Indeed, SET and OYE have directly supported informal training for marginalised and disadvantaged young people that has combined soft skills (i.e. life and business skills) and hard skills (i.e., technical skills) development. It is unclear at this stage whether this has created lasting systemic change in informal systems.

There is no evidence that SDC’s support for VSD in Tanzania has contributed to higher-level effects in labour market productivity.

While projects have applied demonstration and, in some cases, market-systems development approaches to increase the scale of impact, this is ultimately limited by the preparedness of government (i.e., at national, regional and local levels) to invest in VSD and the willingness of the private sector to pay for skills development. In all cases, this is a major challenge. Thus, the scale of possible impact depends on a combination of external factors.

At the beneficiary and training provider levels, there is evidence that SDC VSD projects have contributed to shifting attitudes and approaches regarding gender equality and inclusiveness. The targeting of young women and young mothers has raised the profile of this marginalised and disadvantaged group, and whilst it is difficult to measure, it is likely this contributed to changes in how the government, employers and the public view young women and young mothers.

SDC programme projects support good governance within national economic, social and political contexts. While not an explicit focus, VSD projects have encouraged and supported the production and sharing of data on education and training outcomes, which supports accountability and good governance.

4.6 Sustainability

Sustainability: Evaluation Question
EQ10. To what extent are SDC's VSD projects and programmes likely to ensure that intervention results will continue or are likely to continue after closure?
Summary of Findings (Answers to the Evaluation Questions)
All VSD projects in Tanzania contain an exit strategy. However, there are concerns that these strategies typically serve an SDC demand for sustainability and are not always realistic. Lessons have been learned regarding the challenges to the sustainability of VSD systems in Tanzania, but the solutions to these are hard to find. There are many political and economic challenges that undermine sustainable change, including the "donor dependence" and the lack of incentives to operate independently of external financial and technical support.

All VSD projects in Tanzania contain an exit strategy. Project exit strategies included organisational and financial sustainability. However, there are concerns that these strategies typically serve an SDC demand for sustainability and are not always realistic. All SDC Credit Proposals are required to contain an exit strategy, yet the assumptions and ambitions associated with sustainability are often not tested.

There is evidence that the capacity of local organisations and staff has been built. However, there are broader factors (beyond the scope of SDC interventions) that threaten sustainability.

There are some signs that the outcomes from previous project phases have continued, or are likely to continue, after project closure, but these are difficult to isolate from current project phases.

Lessons have been learned regarding the challenges to the sustainability of VSD systems in Tanzania, but the solutions to these are hard to find. Many structural (i.e., political and economic) challenges undermine sustainable change.

Many respondents highlighted Tanzania's "donor dependence" and the lack of incentives to operate independently of external financial and technical support. Market indicators are often distorted. Skills development does not always lead to formal employment, a better job or more education and training opportunities.

5 Lessons learned

There is strong evidence that SDC has learned lessons from its engagement with the private sector and identified factors that contribute to or inhibit private sector involvement. Divergent views exist on how important the formal job market is for young people who have been excluded from the education system. Thus, while SDC has largely focused on informal VSD and microenterprise development, more could be done to support VSD in the formal sector.

There is strong evidence that SDC has identified good practices that promote social inclusion in the VSD portfolio. VSD projects have revised and improved their approaches to supporting young people and young mothers.

While the reviewed projects can contribute to national systems reform, such objectives are beyond the scope and reach of these projects. While project-level success can demonstrate new ways of designing and delivering VSD, much more is required to scale this up to other regions and to induce national systems change.

Donor dependence and the lack of incentives to operate independently of external financial and technical support stifle macro-level reform and reduce the prospects for financially sustainable models for skills development.

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Annex 7. Links between evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
F1. Decentralised approach with strong local networks and careful analysis of the partner country's context.	**C1.** Responsive to national economic social and political contexts.	**R1.** To ensure continued relevance, VSD projects should conduct more detailed assessments of the employment opportunities for project target groups (i.e., ways to better match the supply and demand for skills) and identify mechanisms to improve linkages between informal and formal education and labour markets (e.g., through increased attention to the recognition of prior learning and micro-credentials). The approaches used will be context-specific and based on each target group's needs and opportunities. [Informed by C1, C2 and C3]
F2. Many projects have multiple phases, allowing for lessons to be learned and deeper contextual analysis.	**C2.** Bottom-up approaches respond to local VSD experiences and challenges can be complemented with comprehensive analysis of the system and private sector demands.	**R2.** Because guidance documents continue to be of importance for thematic steering, it is recommended that SDC gives more attention to implementing the thematic guidance on (i) skills for the green transition, (ii) the globalisation of the labour markets, (iii) empowerment of private sector to engage in the national dialogue on VSD, and (iv) the demand for digital skills and the digitalisation of VSD systems. [Informed by C4 and C5]
F3. Often, VSD projects promote resilience and provide pathways outside of or parallel to the formal VSD systems.	**C3.** Social inclusion often promotes resilience and provides pathways outside or parallel to the formal system, rather than integrating formal and informal systems.	**R3.** E+E should ensure an adequate budget for knowledge management, including support for sharing best practices and lessons learned to inform project design and policy dialogue among the other development partners. [Informed by C1, C4, C5, and C6]
F4. SDC's interventions are consistent and complementary, and well-aligned with SECO.	**C4.** Several globally emerging themes in VSD deserve greater attention to guide programming.	
F5. The recent fit-for-purpose reorganisation creates a demand-oriented approach to knowledge management in which SCOs request support and may be unaware of available new guidance.	**C5.** While knowledge management is based on SCO demand, it requires investment to promote best practice and respond to contemporary VSD topics and challenges.	
F6. SDC VSD interventions complementing other donor and development partners.	**C6.** SDC is well placed to drive policy dialogue among the development partners.	
F7. SDC often taking a lead and recognised as an authoritative, credible and reliable partner.		

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICENCY

FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
F8. VSD projects are efficiently implemented. **F9.** SDC projects often met or exceeded their targets with direct beneficiaries, including marginalised and vulnerable (e.g., women, young people). Fewer systems change results reported. **F10.** Many projects designed to contribute in part or in full to the transformation of national systems – results vary. **F11.** SDC engages the private sector (i.e., large firms and business representatives) to foster demand-driven skills development, but there are great challenges – especially with high levels of informality.	**C7.** There are challenges with embedding VSD institutional or macro-level changes, which are heavily dependent on factors beyond the influence of the projects. **C8.** National VSD system reform typically requires policy dialogue. SCOs are best placed to lead this dialogue (rather than implementing partners). Key messages have been produced to assist SCOs in this regard, but more can be done to ensure SCOs have the advice and support they require to lead national VSD dialogue. **C9.** Attention has been given to identifying lessons and tracer studies to measure outcomes, but little has been done to assess the broader systems outcomes and impacts of VSD support.	**R4.** E+E should provide technical guidance and advice to SCOs to lead national policy dialogue on VSD, especially in countries where SDC investments support VSD systems development. Where relevant, policy dialogue should be accompanied by high-level, independent Swiss technical advice. [Informed by C7, C8, and C9] **R5.** It is recommended that SDC conducts more frequent impact evaluations that specifically assess the longer-term impacts of VSD project outcomes and impacts (e.g., long-term employment outcomes and effects on private sector profitability, productivity and competitiveness). [Informed by C7 and C9]

IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

FINDINGS	CONCLUSIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS
F12. Micro-level impacts: very good results, but not always scaled or replicated beyond initial piloting. **F13.** Meso-level impacts: considerable results (e.g., building capacity and improving institutional functioning).	**C10.** While there has been some success in piloting and scaling up successful new practices, project designers and managers can pay more attention to the mechanisms for scaling, adopting and embedding new systemic arrangements.	**R6.** SDC should update the guidance material on VSD support for systems development (including the 2019 Typologies note), with particular attention to strategies for scaling up and embedding new VSD practices in national systems' development. [Informed by C10 and C12]

F14. Macro-level impacts: more difficult, particularly in challenging contexts (e.g., fragile and conflict-affected situations). **F15.** Some intervention results will continue after closure there are many factors that influence sustainability. **F16.** All Credit Proposals include an Exit Strategy – many very short and overly optimistic and ambitious. **F17.** In some instances, the SDC support for VSD demands a degree of political, bureaucratic and institutional maturity that is not aligned with current realities.	**C11.** Macro reforms have proved to be more difficult because they are more vulnerable to external factors and require more time. This is particularly challenging in fragile and conflict-affected situations. **C12.** VSD sustainability demands more attention to be given to addressing the institutional capacity and incentives for sustainability and more realistic ambitions and assumptions. **C13.** SDC has helped partner governments understand the importance of a private employer-led approach and has piloted new approaches to PSE in VSD, but with few sustainable models.	**R7.** More realistic exit strategies should be designed at least two years before a project ends. These strategies should include a plan for gradually phasing out technical assistance and transferring financial responsibility to the government. This often requires early agreements to get government buy-in on projects and their long-term sustainability. [Informed by C7, C11 and C13] **R8.** It is recommended that stronger synergies between VSD, PSD and PSE projects, including dual VSD systems, be developed by piloting and building more sustainable models for private sector-led VSD. [Informed by C10, C11 and C13]

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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

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