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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Foundations and Quality Division

Cooperation Programme Evaluation Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26

Specialist Service Evaluation and Controlling - SDC



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Annexes (volume 2, separate document)

Bern, July 2025



Management Response to the Evaluation of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26

1) Introduction

Cooperation programme evaluations analyse the cooperation programmes which define the Swiss engagement in a country or region. Their objective is to assess the performance of Swiss international cooperation and its alignment with national development priorities and the Federal Council Dispatch. They help guide the management of the cooperation programme in strategic and operational steering, thereby contributing to development effectiveness.

A recent review of the evaluation concept was undertaken to render the instrument more practical, and to add elements of accountability on the institutional level. Evaluation questions have been standardized for better aggregation over time. While all the six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria are addressed, current evaluations prioritise relevance, coherence and effectiveness as these are most aligned with the purpose of learning and steering. Evaluations are based on a hybrid approach, which applies elements of external and internal (peer-) evaluation. The present evaluation report incorporates contribution analyses for six projects across four intervention lines within a structured theory-based approach. The evaluation team combined remote elements with field observations in both countries.

The Management Response (MR) states the position of the SDC on the recommendations of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26. The MR provides a solid basis for strategic decision-making. The relevant stakeholders were consulted.

2) Appreciation of Report and Evaluation Process

The Eastern and Southern Africa Section (ESA) and the Swiss Embassy in Zimbabwe thank the evaluation team for the professional engagement, the rich discussions and the stimulating outcome of this evaluation. The exercise was conducted by JaLogisch Consulting GmbH in accordance with international standards, with close involvement of the SDC's reference group comprising SDC Peers and local consultants.

In short, the main objectives of this evaluation, namely to inform the Swiss internal mid-term review of the cooperation programme and to offer suggestions for the future strategic direction of the programme, have been met.

The evaluation of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26 provides a comprehensive analysis of the programme's relevance, impact and sustainability. The report highlights that the programme is well-aligned with the needs of the target groups, local governments, and Swiss international cooperation policies. It underscores the importance of supporting local reform actors who have demonstrated a genuine interest and capacity to address urgent development challenges. The evaluation also emphasizes the need for a programmatic approach that combines development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions to address bottlenecks and scale positive project results.

Based on a sample of projects, the report overall confirms that the Programme portfolio successfully delivers results through several promising or successful interventions, such as the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) and the Markets and Seeds Access Project (MASAP), which have contributed to improved food security and income for smallholder farmers. The Zvandiri Programme has effectively supported children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV, while the Strengthening Social Protection (SSP) project in Zambia has enhanced the shock-responsiveness of the social cash transfer system. However, the evaluation also points out areas for improvement, such as the need for greater political engagement and better integration of projects to maximize complementarities and synergies.

The epilogue of the evaluation offers a thoughtful reflection on the management of the Swiss Cooperation Programme, particularly in Zimbabwe, and highlights the embassy's proactive and strategic approach. It commends the use of internal strategic processes, and it recognizes the strong collaboration between the diplomatic and development sections. The epilogue also encourages the embassy to be bold in its decision-making, to align its operational model with evolving development dynamics, and to ensure that future programming is both agile and strategically coherent. These management insights are particularly timely given the shifting donor landscape and the need for Switzerland to maximize its value-added in a complex and changing environment.

Overall, the evaluation provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations for the future strategic direction of the Swiss Cooperation Programme.

3) Recommendations

The SDC agrees to seize this opportunity to improve its results by taking specific measures in line with the recommendation.

Recommendations to the Swiss Embassy in Zimbabwe and the Eastern and Southern Africa Section		
1. Double-down on, and seek to scale, the positive project results within the current portfolio.		
2. Combine development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions in a programmatic approach to address bottlenecks and bring the project results to scale.		
3. Adopt some of PHRD's approaches to political engagement in supporting local development processes.		
4. Pilot the use of state systems in the delivery of development cooperation in Zimbabwe.		
5. Return to conducting the partner risk assessments for local partners in-house.		
6. Reduce the lines of intervention to four (or even less).		
Recommendations to SDC Africa Division Management		
7. Provide or reiterate the Swiss cooperation offices' mandate to engage politically (of course under the tutelage and in close cooperation with the ambassador).		
8. Authorize the inclusion in the cooperation programme of a discretionary budget of about CHF 300-400k per year to support emerging and promising (political) development processes.		
9. Pilot a peer exchange mechanism between PHRD and the SDC.		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

Recommendation 1		
Double-down on, and seek to scale, the positive project results within the current portfolio. Many of the Swiss supported interventions work and reflect local reform agendas. The remaining challenge, as aspired to, is to bring them to scale.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>We fully agree with the recommendation to double-down on and seek to scale the positive project results within the current portfolio. Many of the Swiss-supported interventions - such as those in agroecology, social protection, and peer-led health support - have demonstrated strong alignment with local reform agendas and have yielded tangible, meaningful outcomes. Scaling-up and -out these results is a logical and desirable next step to deepen impact and enhance sustainability. However, this ambition must be pursued with a long-term perspective, recognizing that the cooperation programme is currently undergoing significant transitions, including the shift from a regional to a bilateral approach and the planned phase-out from Zambia by 2028. Given these structural changes, our immediate focus must remain on consolidating our bilateral vision (which include the exploration of new sectors such as governance), ensuring continuity, and managing transitions responsibly. As such, we view the scaling of successful interventions not primarily as a short-term deliverable (though the Zambia phase-out may also liberate some financial headroom that can be impactfully invested in scaling existing projects), but as a strategic direction that will guide the evolution of our cooperation in Zimbabwe and inform the design of future programming beyond the current cycle. We also seek to balance scaling of successful models with trying out new approaches to drive innovation and learning.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
a) In the lead up to the new cooperation programme, identify and capitalise successful projects and areas of engagement with the embassy team and draw recommendations for next CP.	HoC	Dec 2025
b) New projects explicitly assess the potential to bring previously achieved results to scale as part of the transition from regional to bilateral cooperation.	IC Team	2025-2028
c) Continue/enhance outreach to other development partners in Zimbabwe and Zambia to share successful approaches.	HoC IC Team	2025-2028

Recommendation 2
Combine development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions in a programmatic approach to address bottlenecks and bring the project results to scale. Development is an emerging evolutionary process that can neither be planned, nor achieved within single projects. Instead, it requires accompaniment by a coherent set of different interventions: political, policy, technical, and process-wise.

Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>We fully agree with the recommendation to combine development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions in a programmatic approach. This integrated method is essential to addressing systemic bottlenecks and achieving sustainable, scalable results. We recognize that development is not a linear process, and that lasting change often emerges from the interplay of political, technical, and social dynamics. In this spirit, we have already been working to align our interventions more closely, leveraging Switzerland's comparative advantage as a trusted, neutral partner to engage in policy dialogue and development diplomacy alongside our project work.</p> <p>That said, we acknowledge that there is room to enhance this approach further. As the cooperation programme continues to transition from a regional to a bilateral model and prepares for the phase-out in Zambia, we are actively exploring ways to deepen synergies across our portfolio. This includes identifying opportunities where small actions and diplomatic engagement can strategically complement larger project investments, and where policy dialogue can help unlock barriers to scaling. We are committed to strengthening this programmatic orientation in the coming years, ensuring that our interventions are not only coherent but also mutually reinforcing. In doing this, we are cognisant that such an approach requires a shift in mindset, approaches and human resources beyond traditional PCM towards more stakeholder engagement, and adjustments to lighten administrative burdens on portfolio management. Finally, as development diplomacy requires combining diplomatic and cooperation entry points, the Embassy strives to become more intentional in the way it identifies and engages in these opportunities.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
a) Stronger and intentional focus on coordination and policy influencing as well as synergies with other projects in newly developed projects / project phases	IC Team	2025-2028
b) Policy engagement and coordination integrated in MbO of all IC Team	IC Team	2025-2028
c) Programme teams to identify and follow up on selected policy influencing issues together with relevant partners.	IC Team	2025
d) Strategic use of small action portfolio to support broader programmatic objectives and to facilitate synergies within the portfolio, if it cannot be covered by a specific project. Next small action credit proposal specifically mentions this possibility.	HoC IC Team	2025-2028 CP: June 2026

Recommendation 3
<p>Adopt some of PHRD's approaches to political engagement in supporting local development processes. Networking, outreach, engagement, and dialogue with the political, economic, civil society leadership and reform actors of the country (the movers, the shakers, the veto players), and providing punctual and discretionary support to domestic reform processes are the sine qua non for the effective accompaniment and acceleration of such processes. It is also the epitome of the 'localization' of development cooperation and a comparative advantage of Switzerland (as a 'non-threatening partner').</p>

Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>We agree in principle with the recommendation to adopt selected elements of PHRD's approach to policy engagement in support of local development processes in which SDC is engaged. We recognize the value of proactive networking, outreach, and dialogue with key political, economic, and civil society actors, and we share the view that such engagement is essential to fostering locally owned reform. Switzerland's reputation as a neutral and trusted partner positions us well to play this role. That said, political and policy engagement in Zimbabwe can be particularly challenging. SDC will need to exercise heightened caution in selecting both, the issues it engages with and the approaches it adopts.</p> <p>In addition, we must underline that replicating the PHRD model is neither feasible with SDC's current human resources, nor needed to implement SDC's mandate, which is different than PHRD's. PHRD approach requires a specific skill set, substantive time for networking and stakeholder engagement that are not readily available to our team, especially given our significant project cycle management responsibilities nor necessary to implement SDC's less granular engagement with political actors. Nonetheless, we are committed to enhancing our political / policy engagement capacities in support of our projects and are open to facilitating cross-fertilization with PHRD, including through peer learning and on-the-job exchanges. We see this as a pragmatic way to strengthen the programmatic impact while remaining realistic about institutional constraints.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
a) Organize a policy engagement training with former PHRD colleague and IC Team	HoC	Summer/ Winter 2025
b) Integrate policy dimension & engagement more intentionally in all CPs and EPs.	IC Team	2025-2026
c) Pilot use of small action to directly support policy reform process, capitalize learnings. Next small action credit proposal specifically mentions this possibility.	IC Team	2025-2028 CP: June 2026

Recommendation 4		
<p>Pilot the use of state systems in the delivery of development cooperation in Zimbabwe. There is formidable capacity within government and the use of country systems would further strengthen the sustainability of interventions. Switzerland has the position as a trusted partner and risks can be managed.</p>		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>We fully agree with the recommendation to pilot the use of state systems in the delivery of development cooperation in Zimbabwe, but also want to tone down the appreciation of a "formidable" capacity. We propose to frame it rather as an "untapped" capacity. We recognize the technical capacity and (possible) commitment that exists within parts of the public administration and believe that working more directly with government institutions is essential to enhancing the sustainability and ownership of our interventions. We also recognize that the currently preeminent model (notably in Zimbabwe) of delivering aid and services through non-state actors in most cases is not sustainable, with some notable exceptions where third parties effectively provide technical support to governments for system strengthening (see work on social protection via UNICEF and WB). While a direct donor-government collaboration would represent a significant shift—and a first for Switzerland in Zimbabwe, and indeed for most bilateral partners—we are actively</p>		

exploring opportunities to initiate such a direct partnership. Our position as a trusted and neutral actor gives us a unique entry point to test this approach in a careful and constructive manner.

We are aware that this shift will require careful risk management and a step-by-step, well-considered rollout. Before pursuing approaches like sectoral budget support or regular project implementation through government counterparts, we propose to approach this through (a) developing new projects that, even if implemented by trusted partners, focus on strengthening government systems, and (b) considering small actions for direct, targeted support to government entities to test the waters, accompanying SDC into gradually learning how to manage this kind of fiduciary risks.

Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
a) Identify and support pilot project or small action for direct government collaboration.	IC Team	2025-2028
b) Engage in future-looking discussions with GoZ partners on how Swiss programme could evolve towards enhanced use of country systems. Discussing it will make it thinkable and, eventually, possible.	HoC IC Team	2025-2028

Recommendation 5

Return to conducting the partner risk assessments for local partners in-house.

Within Zimbabwe's repressive regime, one should not ask local partners to open their books to domestic consultancy firms.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
We fully agree with the recommendation to return to conducting partner risk assessments (PRAs) in-house. In-house PRAs have been the standard practice in the programme for both local and international partners, with few exceptions due to internal capacity constraints. With the addition of a new finance colleague, we have now fully resumed in-house PRAs, ensuring greater trust, contextual sensitivity, and alignment with our commitment to localization. That said, in cases where we assess the context to be non-sensitive, internal capacities are strained and engagement is expected to be very in-depth (e.g. for new and weak partners), we may still consider externalizing unproblematic PRAs, as permitted by the PRA guidance.		
Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
a) Develop a plan to deal with all outstanding and future PRA, to be conducted in-house unless clearly justified and non-sensitive	IC and Finance Team	2025

Recommendation 6

Reduce the lines of intervention to four (or even less). Reason: to create the space (time and resources) for recommendations one to five.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
We partially agree with the recommendation to reduce the number of lines of intervention, acknowledging the strategic value of a more focused portfolio. A streamlined approach would enable more effective allocation of time and resources, allowing us to scale our efforts and amplify the overall impact of our interventions.		

The current structure - three portfolio outcomes broken down into six lines of intervention, as presented in the evaluation—results in a strategic framework that appears overly broad. We agree that the strategic framing of the cooperation programme could benefit from simplification, leading to a more coherent and focused project portfolio. For example, the next cooperation programme could prioritize food systems as a central theme, with the economic and market systems approach serving as a modality rather than a standalone outcome. The office is confident that in the next programme cycle, we will be able to concentrate on three to four core issues where the embassy can deploy its full range of instruments (recommendations 1–3).

At the same time, we emphasize that the current breadth of our strategic and programmatic engagement reflects the transitional nature of the 2023–2026 period—from a regional to a bilateral cooperation model. This phase is critical for exploring and identifying areas where Switzerland can make a meaningful and strategic bilateral contribution. Therefore, some degree of strategic breadth had to be retained. We plan to retain some “strategic flexibility” in the next cooperation programme as we explore how to navigate a very volatile political environment (see review’s recommendation to better speak to the main party agenda) and will try to adapt our programme to the drastically and rapidly evolving aid landscape.

The gradual phase-out of our engagement in Zambia will help address the long-standing imbalance in human resources. With staffing levels comparable to—or even below—those of other offices in the region, we have been stretched thin across two countries. As we transition to a single-country focus, our geographic scope will align more closely with that of other offices, enabling us to deepen our engagement and investment in Zimbabwe.

Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
a) Discuss thematic breadth of ongoing Cooperation Programme and portfolio and identify opportunities to sharpen focus as we work on the new Cooperation Programme.	IC Team	June 2026
b) Present a decision note for the CP 27-30 that implements this more focused approach.	HoC	Sept. 2026

Recommendation 7

Provide or reiterate the Swiss cooperation offices’ mandate to engage politically.
Reason: This makes explicit that (i) development (cooperation) is political, and (ii) the cooperation office, like PHRD, can engage with the political leadership of the country (as well as the economic and civil society leadership and reform actors of the country).

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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Switzerland’s international cooperation Strategy is one of the foreign policy instruments and aims to reduce poverty and sustainable development in priority countries. This also includes bilateral engagements on defined strategic, often sensitive, development objectives with state and non-state development actors on national and sub-national levels. Development cooperation thus operates in a political environment and is involved at both the technical and political levels in order to achieve its development goals.

The implementation of the current Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-2026 (CP) uses all necessary bilateral development cooperation instruments to achieve the programme objectives. This also includes a proactive, bilateral engagement and targeted policy dialogue with relevant stakeholders in priority development areas.

To address all levels of interventions adequately, including diplomatic and political levels, Switzerland practices a well-established *Whole-of-Government approach* to ensure coherent collaboration within FDFA and other Federal Departments. Mandates,

responsibilities and competencies are complementary. This approach is also applied at Embassy level. Close collaboration between the Head of Mission and the IC team and the clarification of the level of engagement in strategic policy areas is of utmost importance to ensure a coordinated dialogue with Zimbabwean actors at the appropriate level (who is talking to whom, at what level and about what topic). As stated under Recommendation 3, replicating PHRD's approach is neither indented nor feasible or necessary to implement the SDC's mandate. The Africa division considers it not necessary to define additional measures to define the SCO's mandate to engage politically.

Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

Recommendation 8

Authorize the inclusion in the cooperation programme of a discretionary budget of about CHF 300-400k per year to support emerging and promising (political) development processes.

Reason: This recognizes that development cannot be planned in four-year cycles or confined to project interventions. Instead, it requires agility: an ability to respond to developments and opportunities. The proposed budget is a gut suggestion based on the fact that PHRD Zimbabwe had an operational budget of CHF 500-600k per year. The latter, however, was also partly tied to 'micro-projects'.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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The Africa Division recognizes the need to be able to develop its cooperation programme flexibly and at shorter notice, alongside its established medium-term projects. For this reason, the SDC already has the instrument of *small project credits* at its disposal that can be used to support one-off actions that are in line with the objectives of the cooperation programme through a simplified administrative procedure. There is thus no need to introduce a new instrument or, consequently, to define appropriate measures.

Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

Recommendation 9

Pilot a peer exchange mechanism between PHRD and the SDC.

Reason: this enables SDC's heads of cooperation that (want to) work politically but have no human security advisor within their embassy to exchange experiences, solicit best practices, and cross-check ideas with experienced political operators within PHRD.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
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FDFA / PHRD and SDC work closely together and coordinate their activities to provide a coherent multi-layered, and complementary response (WoGA) to the challenges facing sustainable development and peace in Switzerland's priority countries. SDC and PHRD have established communication and collaboration channels that can be used for various types of exchanges at Embassy or Head Office level, as needed.

Various work streams were pursued institutionally to increase a common understanding and to mainstream peace in development cooperation programmes, including the Learning Journey *Triple Nexus* (Humanitarian, Development, Peace (HDP)) and a HDP Training. Further development-relevant training courses are available within FDFA and

externally. Exchanging of experiences on specific issues or staff trainings, e.g. *Conflict Sensitive Programme Management* (CSPM), can be directly organised by the Embassy. As there are already existing mechanisms in place, there is no need to formalise another exchange mechanism nor to define measures.

Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

Bern,

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II. Evaluators' Final Report

The Evaluation of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26 has been elaborated in collaboration between the Specialist Service Evaluation and Controlling of SDC and a consultancy team constituted by JaLogisch Consulting GmbH as well as one peer from SDC.

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Acronyms

CHF	Swiss franc
CSO	Civil society organizations
EGS	Early generation seeds
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GNAFC	Global Network against Food Crises
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus, a retrovirus which causes AIDS
MERV	Monitoring system for development-relevant changes, SDC internal document
MSD	Market system development
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PHRD	Peace and Human Rights Division, FDFA, Switzerland
SCO	Swiss cooperation office
SCT	Social Cash Transfers
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Cooperation
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front

Sample projects and acronyms

Zimbabwe

Project	Full name	Description
SKI	Seed and Knowledge Initiative	This is a regional project, initiated by the SDC in 2014, covering Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It builds on traditional knowledge and farmer-led research and seed production to expand the cultivation of drought resilient crops (e.g., millet, sorghum, and groundnuts) and the use of good agroecological practices (e.g., organic manure, agro-forestry, water conservation, and minimum tilling) by smallholder farmers. Its aim is to improve food sovereignty and secure biodiversity.
Zvandiri	Zvandiri Programme	Zvandiri is a Zimbabwean non-governmental organization, set up in 2004, to support children, adolescents, and young adults living with HIV to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to cope with their HIV status, access antiretroviral treatment and live fulfilling lives. It organizes peer-led support groups and outreach that are integrated in and managed by (specialized nurses in) primary health care facilities (which are organized and trained for the purpose).
PHRD (<2024) DP4P (>2024)	Development Pathways for Good Governance (DP4P)	This programme builds on the cooperation, between 2015 and 2023, of the Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) with five Zimbabwean civil society organizations. Each of these organizations promotes, in their own way, more democratic governance in the country through research, dialogue, and engagement. It reaches out to political parties, traditional chiefs, youth, women, and minority groups.

Zambia

Project	Full name	Description
MASAP	Markets and Seeds Agricultural Project	This project was initiated by the SDC in 2021 in close cooperation with the ministries of agriculture in Zimbabwe and Zambia. It seeks to expand the cultivation of drought tolerant small grains and legumes by strengthening their value-chains from early generation seed production to agri-processing. It applies the market system development concept and works with agricultural research institutes, government extension services, farmer groups, and private sector agri-business.
SHIELD	Health Systems Strengthening	This is a new project. At the time of the evaluation, the project was in its inception phase. The project marks a strategic shift away from addressing specific diseases and health issues (e.g., HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights) towards strengthening the primary health care system by (i) strengthening human resource capacity, (ii) introducing integrated health service packages, and (iii) improving public financial management. A similar project is intended for Zimbabwe.
SSP	Strengthening Social Protection	The government of Zambia introduced a social cash transfer (SCT) system in 2004. At present, it pays ZMW 400 (CHF 13) per month to poor female- and children-led households, widows, orphans, households with children under 2 years of age or with disabled children, and people above 60 years old. It consists of a standard and an emergency social cash transfer. The emergency SCT (ZMW 200) is paid for one year in response to the 2024 drought. The SCT system is supported with technical and financial assistance from the World Bank, UNICEF, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, and since 2022 Switzerland.

Executive summary

This independent evaluation and peer review inquired into the development effectiveness of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26. The primary purpose was to inform the Swiss internal mid-term review of the cooperation programme. It was to offer suggestions for (i) the future strategic direction of the programme, and (ii) the key management issues for the next two years. The primary intended users of the evaluation were the Swiss embassy in Harare and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) Africa division.

The cooperation programme budget is for 96% consumed by 23 project interventions. These projects cover six lines of interventions: agriculture and food security, employment and income, health, social protection, and the supply and demand side of governance. All projects fall under the custody of the SDC. Until 2023, a human security advisor of Switzerland's Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) worked in Zimbabwe on conflict prevention. All projects but one are contributions to local or international development partners.

The evaluation used six projects, covering four lines of intervention, as a window to studying the development effectiveness of the programme. For its inquiry and analysis, it took the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the programme's results framework, and the theories of change of the four lines of intervention as its reference point. The data stem from key informant interviews, the Swiss embassy's annual reports, and a document review. The evaluation was conducted by an international evaluation specialist and two senior SDC employees, who acted as 'peers' to the evaluator, the Swiss embassy, and the SDC Africa division. The team was supported by a local academic development expert from Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively.

The cooperation programme is relevant, effective, and impactful, with sustainable results ... at the project level. The reason is two-fold. First, the individual projects support local reform actors with the interest, incentive, capacity, power, and tenacity to address urgent development challenges and who had already taken initial steps in this direction. Second, the projects introduced and/or extended workable solutions, e.g., smallholder farmer and contract farming based production of early generation seeds of drought tolerant crops, the introduction of shock-responsive social cash transfers, peer-to-peer support to children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV, and dialogue and engagement to attain political compromise.

The room and need for improvement lies in doubling down on the positive project-level development results and bringing these results to scale. This requires, first-and-foremost, a programmatic approach where a combination of development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions - purposefully and coherently - address bottlenecks to scaling the results. Second, it requires the SDC to adopt some of PHRD's work methods: reach out, engage, and exchange with local actors, and provide punctual and discretionary support to emerging reform momentum and processes. Third, it asks for focus, selectivity, and a modest discretionary budget. This combination of measures will give the SDC the time, resources, and the approach to be politically attuned, process-oriented, and more impactful.

The Swiss embassy in Harare knows (and knew) the above and are (almost) ready to act on it. They want to expand the work with local actors, including the government of Zimbabwe, and are prepared to take some calculated, albeit manageable, (fiduciary) risks to this end. Still, they are hamstrung by the SDC's traditional project logic and urge to fill the financial headroom with new projects. The SDC Africa division can best nudge the Swiss embassy to be bold in its decisions and selective in its interventions, as well as facilitate its political engagement by supporting it in this mandate and making available a small but meaningful discretionary budget to support emerging development momentum and processes.

Finally, in January 2025, at the end of our field work, the SDC directorate announced that (i) the SDC would phase out of Zambia by 2028, and (ii) the cooperation programme budget for 2025 would be reduced by 15%. The phase-out can be managed through the natural project attrition. The budget reduction makes the above recommendations even more pertinent.

Assessment on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

Relevance: The programme is relevant. It supports local reform actors in their development endeavours. In Zimbabwe, development interventions need to fit the narrative of the ruling party to stand a chance. Switzerland is well-positioned as a non-threatening partner to facilitate difficult development conversations/processes. Switzerland can define its own interests better.

Coherence: The Swiss project portfolio consists mostly of standalone projects that are coherent in concept, but have little operational connectivity, thereby foregoing potential complementarities and synergies.

Effectiveness and impact: Switzerland is likely to attain, and is contributing to, the envisaged outcomes and impacts ... at the level of individual projects. There is both a need and the ambition from the boundary partners and Switzerland to go beyond these project level results and achieve outcomes and impacts at a greater scale. The applied approaches are effective. There is potential to replicate and bring to scale most interventions.

Efficiency: The programme is effective across its lines of interventions. The question is if the programme could achieve results at a larger scale and increase its development efficiency within individual lines of intervention if it would work on fewer lines of intervention.

Sustainability: The project-level outcomes and impacts are likely to be sustainable as Switzerland's boundary partners have the interest, incentive, and tenacity, as well as - for the most part - sufficient capacity, power, and resources to continue the work/practices (at the project level) without Switzerland's further support.

Institutional lessons

- The textbook Market System Development intervention of the MASAP project on the production of early generation seeds (of drought tolerant crops) is likely to foster development impact at a larger scale than supporting individual agri-processing businesses as is often practiced under the Market System Development approach banner.
- PHRD's political engagement showcases that development is an emerging, evolutionary, process that can be triggered and accompanied, but not planned. It calls to mind SDC's political engagement in Nepal (on conflict resolution, constitutionalism, and federalization) and Ukraine (on decentralization and e-governance).
- The Swiss embassy in Harare's strategy notes offer an approach/blueprint for making the annual reporting on cooperation programmes more evaluative and strategic.

Recommendations

Target audience: the Swiss embassy in Harare and the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section

1. Double-down on and seek to scale the positive project results within the current portfolio.
2. Combine development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions in a programmatic approach to address bottlenecks and bring the project results to scale.
3. Adopt some of PHRD's approaches to political engagement in supporting local development processes.
4. Pilot the use of state systems in the delivery of development cooperation in Zimbabwe.
5. To indeed return to conducting the partner risk assessments for local partners in-house.
6. Reduce the lines of intervention to four (or less).

Target audience: the SDC Africa division

1. Provide or reiterate the Swiss cooperation office's mandate to engage politically (of course under the tutelage and in close cooperation with the ambassador).
2. Authorize the inclusion in the cooperation programme of a discretionary budget of CHF 300-400k per year to support emerging and promising (political) development processes.
3. Pilot a peer exchange mechanism between PHRD senior human security advisors and the SDC's heads of cooperation on political engagement.

1 Introduction

This report documents the evaluation of the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26.¹ The evaluation was commissioned by the Evaluation and Controlling specialist service of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This opening chapter introduces the purpose and intended use of the evaluation, the main evaluation questions, the cooperation programme, the evaluation methodology, and the evaluation's limitations. The chapter concludes with a reading guide to the rest of the report.

1.1. Purpose and intended use

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to inform the mid-term review of the Swiss cooperation programme by the Swiss embassy² and the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section. The mid-term review was to set the future strategic orientation of Switzerland's international cooperation with Zimbabwe and Zambia (see also Textbox 1).

Textbox 1 Switzerland phases out its international cooperation with Zambia by 2028

On 29 January 2025, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) announced that it would phase out its international cooperation with Albania, Bangladesh, and Zambia by 2028 (FDFA, 2025a). This followed the Swiss parliament's decision in December 2024 to reduce the prospective budget envelop for the implementation of the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28 by CHF 151 million, with an expected further reduction of CHF 321 million later on. The actual 2025 budget for international cooperation was cut by CHF 110 million (SDC, 2025).

Whilst the evaluation team, the Swiss embassy, and the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section had discussed the possibility of an end to Switzerland's international cooperation with Zambia, the evaluation team was asked not to preclude such a decision and work under the assumption that the cooperation with Zimbabwe and Zambia would continue for the foreseeable future. Above announcement by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs was made on the one but last day of the evaluation's field mission in Zimbabwe and Zambia. At that time, the evaluation also learned that the 2025 budget for the cooperation programme was reduced by 15%.

The timing of the announcement meant that the evaluation did not inquire during its field work into how best to accommodate a pullout out of Zambia. This evaluation report, therefore, offers a regular evaluative analysis of the past implementation of the cooperation programme. Of course, in formulating the recommendations for the future strategic orientation of Switzerland in Zimbabwe and Zambia, the report takes the Swiss phase-out of Zambia and the budget cuts into account. It also offers its two cents on a responsible phase-out.

The secondary purpose of the evaluation was to assist the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service in capturing Switzerland's development results³ and drawing lessons on Switzerland development effectiveness. These results and insights flow into its bi-annual synthesis report to the SDC directorate on the main outcomes of the cooperation programme evaluations, and its four-yearly accountability report to the Swiss parliament. In addition, the management of the SDC Africa division asked, late in the evaluation process, for insights on the key issues to engage on with the Swiss embassy over the next one to two years.

The primary intended use of the evaluation was therefore strategic reflection and decision-making; its secondary intended use was accountability, learning and guiding management. The intended users were the Swiss embassy, the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section, the SDC Africa division management, and the Evaluation and Controlling specialist service.

¹ Depending on the context, the cooperation programme is referred to as the programme, the cooperation programme, or the Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26.

² In this report, the Swiss embassy always refers to the Swiss Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe, which is responsible for the implementation of the cooperation programme in both Zimbabwe and Zambia.

³ A quantitative account of the SDC development results is given by the SDC's results data management system. Cooperation programme evaluations are to offer additional qualitative insights, and draw out lessons, on 'what works, what doesn't and why' in the Swiss development cooperation.

1.2. Evaluation questions

The evaluation was guided by the following overarching question:

What do the past experience, current opportunities, institutional constraints⁴, and the strategic deliberations⁵ of the Swiss embassy suggest for the future strategic orientation of Switzerland in Zimbabwe and Zambia?

The Swiss embassy and the head of the SDC Africa division were particularly interested in:

- the issues that national actors want to work on, i.e., the local reform actors and agenda,
- the possibilities to, increasingly, work with and through ‘country systems’,
- how to strengthen the ‘program logic’ of the cooperation programme,
- how to build on the project results and foster/contribute to impact at scale,
- what could possibly be done in addition (are there other opportunities?),
- suggestions for a responsible exit from Zambia,
- a reflection on the geographic/thematic focus and management of the programme, and
- the positioning of Switzerland in the government-donor landscape.

In addition, the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service has defined six standard evaluation questions for cooperation programme evaluations to answer (SDC, 2024a). These questions mirror the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. They are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and standard evaluation questions

Criteria	Standard questions
Relevance	1. To what extent do the cooperation programme’s objectives and design respond to the recipient countries, target groups, and the Swiss government needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change?
Coherence	2. To what extent is the programme internally and externally coherent?
Effectiveness	3. To what extent is the cooperation programme likely to achieve its Swiss portfolio outcomes ⁶ , what are the contributing and hindering factors, what lessons can be drawn, and does the programme have (innovative) approaches which should be scaled in-country or replicated elsewhere?
Impact	4. To what extent is the programme likely to contribute to its overall goal?
Efficiency	5. Could better results be achieved through a different allocation of resources?
Sustainability	6. To what extent are the net benefits of the cooperation programme likely to continue without further Swiss support?

1.3. The programme

In transition. Between 2005 and 2022, Switzerland implemented a ‘regional’ cooperation programme in Southern Africa, covering Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and, in the early days, South Africa. As of 2023, this regional programme has been replaced by the ‘two-country’ cooperation programme with Zimbabwe and Zambia. The current programme, however, has ‘legacy’ regional projects, which Switzerland is phasing out from. In other words, Switzerland is still transitioning from the previous regional to its current bilateral engagement.

⁴ These are, amongst others, the previously mentioned budget cuts (see Textbox 1), the absence of a field presence in Zambia, and the absence of the Swiss Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

⁵ The Swiss embassy has written seven ‘strategy notes’ to shape their thinking on where the programme is and where it could evolve to. These notes cover (i) Switzerland’s work in Zambia without an on-the-ground presence, (ii) the humanitarian aid and development nexus, (iii) the peace and development nexus, (iv) localization of development cooperation, (v) youth, (vi) private sector engagement, and (vii) climate change.

⁶ This evaluation question has consciously been adapted to focus on the ‘likely’ achievement. The bilateral cooperation with Zimbabwe and Zambia was new and at the mid-point of the programme period (see Section 1.3).

Goal. The objective of the cooperation programme is ‘to support efforts to increase the well-being of the populations of Zambia and Zimbabwe and to reduce their vulnerability to climate change and other shocks’ (SDC, 2023a). The Swiss embassy seeks to contribute to this goal through six lines of intervention⁷, which are to strengthen, respectively:

1. the agricultural production and value chains of drought resilient and nutritious crops,
2. people’s technical, financial, and entrepreneurial skills, especially of women and youth, and matching them to employment opportunities
3. the primary health care system, especially in rural areas,
4. the government’s cash transfer and climate insurance systems,
5. local governments in the accountable delivery of public services, and
6. civil society’s engagement and work on peace promotion, social cohesion, reconciliation, good governance, and youth empowerment.⁸

Instruments. The Swiss embassy works with local stakeholders and (inter-)national partners to implement the lines of intervention and contribute to the overall goal. It uses development diplomacy⁹, policy dialogue¹⁰, project support¹¹, and small actions¹² to that end.

Organization. The cooperation programme is implemented by the Swiss cooperation office, which is integrated in the Swiss embassy and works closely with the Swiss ambassador. The Swiss cooperation office is staffed by three Swiss expats, five programme managers, and one administrative assistant. The office was supported by two financial officers (for 0.9 FTE). Between 2015 and 2023, a human security advisor from PHRD, working on conflict prevention and reconciliation, was also positioned in the Swiss Embassy.

Project portfolio. The programme consisted at the time of the evaluation of 23 development projects (excluding small actions, a one-time humanitarian aid response, and closed projects with nominal expenditures in 2023-24). See Appendix A for a full overview.

Budget and timeline. The total budget of the cooperation programme for 2023-26 (as of November 2024) was CHF 106 million (or, on average, CHF 26,5 million per year). This excludes (i) an additional CHF 2 million of humanitarian aid in response to the drought in 2024, and (ii) the 15% budget cut for 2025 (see Textbox 1).

⁷ During the inception phase of the evaluation, the evaluation team, the Swiss embassy, the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section, and the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service agreed that the programme’s objective statement, three Swiss Portfolio Outcomes, and results framework did not provide a meaning-and useful framework for evaluating the cooperation programme (nor for the program steering and accountability by the Swiss cooperation offices).. This conclusion was not unique to the Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26. Similar findings were made for the cooperation programmes of Chad, Nepal, the South Caucasus, and Tanzania. The evaluation team has developed a proposal for making the Swiss Portfolio Outcomes and the results framework more meaning- and useful to the Swiss cooperation offices for program steering, accountability, and evaluation to be shared SDC-internally by the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service.

⁸ The first four lines of intervention apply to Zimbabwe and Zambia; the latter two only to Zimbabwe.

⁹ Diplomacy is *‘the profession, activity, or skill of managing international relations, typically by a country’s representatives abroad’* (Definition from Oxford Languages, Google Dictionary). Development diplomacy refers to the use of the Swiss representation to engage politically with the political and economic leadership of a country on their development agenda. It serves to identify the reform space and garner (further) support for development.

¹⁰ Policy dialogue differs from development diplomacy in that it targets specific systemic and/or policy improvements to make an overall development sector work better. A policy dialogue can be undertaken at the political and administrative level. Whilst the two can overlap, development diplomacy is generally broader in scope and more political in nature, whereas policy dialogue tends to be more technical in its approach.

¹¹ Project support entails financial and technical assistance to local development initiatives, either through ‘contributions’ to pre-existing initiatives or by tendering out ‘mandates’ for additional development support. The contributions and mandates can be provided/tendered out to local and/or international development partners.

¹² Small actions are one-time interventions with a value of CHF 200,000 or less. They can be decided upon at the sole discretion of the Swiss embassy and can serve strategic objectives or foster cultural exchange.

1.4. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation concerned a purposeful, structured, theory-based, and qualitative inquiry into the development effectiveness of the cooperation programme. Purposeful, because the evaluation sought to answer the main evaluation questions (see Section 1.2). Structured, as the evaluation was organized around and addressed the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and followed a structured process. Theory-based, because the evaluation took the programme's underlying theory of change as reference point to assess the programme contribution to the observed development results and draw lessons on *'what worked, what didn't and why'*. And, finally, qualitative, as the evaluation relied on the insights and perspectives from interviews and documentation to offer a descriptive analysis and assessment of the programme.

The evaluation was conducted by an external independent evaluation specialist, two local evaluators (for Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively), and two senior SDC employees, who served as 'peer' to the evaluators, the Swiss embassy, and the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section. The evaluation's findings and recommendations stem from a combination of inductive, deductive, and contribution analyses and have been triangulated across data sources, data analysis methods, and evaluators/peers. A second volume to this evaluation report elaborates on the evaluation methodology, sampling strategy, and data sources.

1.5. Limitations

The ubiquitous limiting factor was time, both the overall amount of time available to the evaluators and peers for the evaluation, as well as our time on-the-ground in Zimbabwe and Zambia: one working-week in each country. We dealt with this time factor in three ways:

- purposefully sampling and using six projects as a 'window' to the overall strategy and development effectiveness of the programme (see the front matter for an introduction to the six projects and Volume II for an explanation of our sampling strategy),
- combining field observations with a detailed document review, including the SDC's own monitoring data and analyses, independent project level evaluations, and third-party macro-economic data and country studies, and
- conducting virtual interviews with key informants before the field mission.

1.6. Reading guide

This report is structured along the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. Each chapter can be read standalone, except for the two closing chapters 'Efficiency' (which builds on the contribution analysis in Chapter 4) and 'Conclusions, lessons, and recommendations' (which, obviously, draws on, and brings to a logical 'evaluative' conclusion, the analysis of all previous chapters). An epilogue reflects on the management of the cooperation programme, responding to the SDC Africa division's request. The report includes, as appendices, an overview of the programme's project portfolio, an analysis of, and recommendations on, the programme's results framework and annual reporting practice, and some project maps.

2 Relevance

Evaluation question

To what extent do the cooperation programme's objectives and design respond to the recipient countries, target groups, and the Swiss government needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change?

2.1. Introduction

The above evaluation question encompasses multiple actors and dimensions. First, it differentiates between the recipient countries' governments, the (projects') target groups, and the Swiss government. Second, it distinguishes needs, policies, and priorities, or - in other words - between stated objectives and where action is or urgently needs to be taken.¹³ Third, it compels us to look at the situation at the outset of the cooperation programme and at the time of evaluation (in our case, two years later).

The easiest way to answer this (complex) question is to start from the different actors and review their needs, objectives, actions, and any changes therein over the last two years, and to subsequently link these to the programme's lines of intervention / our sample projects. This is what we will do in the next three subsections. In addition, we will touch upon the Swiss embassy's interests in the prevailing local reform agendas, what could be done additionally, and increasing the use of country systems. The chapter ends with an answer and some ideas.

2.2. Target groups' needs, policies, and priorities

Swiss cooperation programmes are made up of projects.¹⁴ An important window to assessing the cooperation programme is therefore our six sample projects. Each of these projects have a different target group, objective, and theory of change. Table 2 and Table 3 detail the needs and actions of the projects' target groups. The data stems from our document review and interviews. The two tables evidence that there are clear needs, and the target groups are taking action to address the underlying challenges. From a target group perspective, the projects are relevant. From a development perspective, each target group includes genuine local reform actors and agendas.¹⁵

Table 2 Target groups' needs

Project	
SKI / MASAP	– In Zimbabwe, 3,5 million people (circa 25% of the population) face ' <i>high levels of acute food insecurity</i> '; in Zambia the number is 2 million (around 10% of the population). The 2024 drought ostensibly increased these numbers to 5,9 and 6,6 million people respectively. This food insecurity is caused by droughts, changing and unpredictable weather patterns, and (food) price shocks. (GNAFC, 2024a; 2024b; SKI, 2024).
Zvandiri	– In Zimbabwe, there are over 150,000 children, adolescents, and young adults living with HIV that are in need of antiretroviral therapy to suppress the virus and psychological support to overcome societal stigma (Unicef, 2023).

¹³ From a development theory point-of-view, it makes sense to distinguish between stated objectives and lived experience. The latter refers to the extent that development actors 'walk the talk' and, within their means, take action to address and overcome their identified development challenges. This is important as countries, organizations, and people can only develop themselves ('*development is self-development*' (Ackoff, 1999)).

¹⁴ Roughly 96% of the Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26 budget is consumed by project funding. The remaining four percent is spent on small actions and humanitarian aid. See Appendix A.

¹⁵ Local ownership, drive, and action is the *sine qua non* of development (OECD, 2011; Andrews, 2013; Hill, 2013; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019; Dercon, 2022; OECD, 2024b)

SHIELD	– Primary, secondary, and tertiary health facilities lack space, doctors, nurses, medicine, supplies, equipment, ambulances, and ‘airtime’. ¹⁶
DP4P	– Zimbabwe has, to put it mildly, a ‘ <i>democratic deficit</i> ’, with elections neither free nor fair, limited civic space, and arbitrary rule of law. In 2023, it scored 123 out of 142 countries in the Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Report (WJP, 2024) and has historically been labelled ‘ <i>an authoritarian regime</i> ’ in the Democracy Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU, 2024).
SSP	– 64% of the Zambia population live in extreme poverty (international poverty line) (World Bank, 2025) many of which face acute food insecurity (see top-row).

Table 3 Target groups’ actions

Project	
SKI	– The fifteen regional partners have created a ‘ <i>movement</i> ’ amongst smallholders to introduce good agroecological practices (SKI, 2023). To sustain (and expand) the movement beyond the project, they have registered the Seed and Knowledge Initiative in South Africa as a non-profit company.
MASAP	– The Zambian Agricultural Research Institute in Chipata district has embraced MASAP’s proposal to use smallholder farmers to produce early generation seeds of drought resilient crops. The government of Zambia has changed the Plant Breeders Rights Act to allow ZARI to sell these early generation seeds to smallholder farmers for crop production.
Zvandiri	– Zvandiri is a local non-governmental organization (NGO), established in 2004, that offers children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV ‘peer’ support to cope with their HIV status and live fulfilling lives. The Ministry of Health has embraced the peer support model but has difficulties allocating budget for its nation-wide uptake and integration in all health centres.
SHIELD	– The Zambia government has recruited 22,000 health workers in the last three years. With donor support, it also introduced a national community health information system and financial management system. However, 42% of the national health expenditure remain donor funded.
DP4P	– The five local, long-established, civil society organizations have made it their mission (their <i>raison d’être</i>) to enhance the voice of civil society and improve the democratic governance in Zimbabwe (with or without Swiss support) through (inter-party) dialogue, engagement, and data transparency.
SSP	– In 2021, development partners covered 70% of the social cash transfers. In 2023, the government of Zambia met 70% of the costs and intends to raise this to 90% by 2028. The Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare, with the support of development partners, wants to further digitalize the system, insert / expand ‘shock response’ cash transfers, and integrate all social protection programmes into a singular system. In October 2024, the government approved an updated National Social Protection Policy.

World Bank data underscore and expand on the above findings. In Zimbabwe, in 2023, 39.8% of the population lived below the international poverty rate (\$2.15 per day) and 64.5% below the lower middle-income poverty rate (\$3.65 per day) (World Bank, 2024a). For Zambia, the figures are 64.3% and 81% respectively (World Bank, 2024b).

¹⁶ For example, Chipata Central Hospital had a neonatal care unit of approximately 15m³ with eight baby beds and mothers having to sleep in chairs. In addition, the hospital did not have an orthopaedics, urology, and ear, nose and throat section. They also lacked, amongst others, incubators, heaters, oxygen supplies, emergency trolleys, and water boilers. ‘Airtime’ refers to phone credit which doctors and nurses need to contact/follow up with patients.

Both countries have also been hit in 2024 by an El Niño aggravated drought, which several key informants classified as the severest in their lifetime. This has reduced agricultural production by 60-80% (severely increasing food insecurity) and left, in both countries, the water reservoirs of the hydropower plants near empty (leading to power shortages and loadshedding, negatively affecting urban industries). Moreover, economic contraction, currency depreciation, and external price shocks have markedly increased the cost of living in the two countries. (World Bank, 2024a; 2024b; The Economist, 2025; BTI, 2024a; 2024b) These data evidence that the Swiss support to drought resilient crops¹⁷ and social protection, its inclusion of *'crisis modifiers'*¹⁸ in its new projects, as well as its humanitarian aid in response to the 2024 drought are highly relevant.

A recent publication of The Economist adds a further perspective and view. Whilst Africa's economies and most Africans are better off now than in 1960, its GDP per capita (in purchasing power parity) *'is falling ever further behind the rest of the world'* (having been half in 1960 and accounting for only a quarter today). It posits, amongst others, that African countries need *'larger, more dynamic private sectors, more productive farms, and more effective governance ... to expect the sort of productivity gains and economic transformation seen elsewhere in the emerging world'*. It quotes Paul Collier of Oxford University in saying *'small isn't stunning; it's unproductive'*, making a case for *'larger' firms and farms which are 'productivity powerhouses ... bringing together people, ideas, technology, and equipment to make workers more efficient, which makes people richer'*. (The Economist, 2025)

Both the World Bank and The Economist call for a *'structural transformation'* of African economies. This observation does not contradict but complements the current relevance of the Swiss interventions in Zimbabwe and Zambia and offers a window into the future. It emphasizes that, in the long run, for Zimbabwe and Zambia to gain prosperity and sustainable development, the countries will need to move beyond smallholder farming and social protection to a productive economy built around medium-scale, mechanized, commercial farming, and a labour-intensive and high-technology manufacturing and service industry. Both the governments of Zimbabwe and Zambia are well-aware of this fact. Their willingness or ability, however, to initiate such an economic transformation differs starkly. It is to this that we will now turn in the next section.

2.3. Government needs, policies, and priorities

The national development strategies of Zimbabwe and Zambia both refer to the need for *'economic ...[or]... broad-based transformation'*. They spell out the need to facilitate trade, private sector investment and enhanced value-addition in agriculture, mining, tourism, and manufacturing, supported by a stable macro-economic environment and investments in energy, transport, water, information technology, and skills development, amongst others. (GRZ, 2022; GoZ, 2020) The national development strategies are catch-all documents, covering all functions of effective government (like *'Getting to Denmark'* (Fukuyama, 2011)). Statements to undergird the relevance of the Swiss-supported interventions can be easily found. More interesting is how well placed the two governments are to make it happen.

The government of Zambia appears committed to this agenda but is first dealing with the debt crisis, vested interests/endemic corruption, and the 2024 drought/energy crises to create the political space for reform and fiscal space for public investments. Having said that, Zambia is one of the first countries to avail of the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments (Paris Club, 2025) and *'pursues bold fiscal and structural reforms to restore macroeconomic stability'* (World Bank, 2024b). Moreover, over the last three years, the government has made primary

¹⁷ The President of Zambia went as far as calling the drought resilient seeds *'a Godsend'* (The Economist, 2025).

¹⁸ Crisis modifiers are budget reservations (of maximum 5% of the overall budget) which allow a quick response to man-made or natural disasters, e.g., for the procurement of groundwater pumps to provide access to fresh water.

and secondary education tuition free, employed 22,000 additional health workers in the primary, secondary and tertiary health care system, and restarted the fiscal and administrative decentralization process.¹⁹

The story for Zimbabwe is different. For one simple reason. The country is de facto subject to '*one-party rule*' (SDC, 2023a; BTI, 2024a; EIU, 2024). The Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has been in power since 1980, with only a power sharing agreement with the opposition between 2009 and 2013. The key informant interviews made clear that '*the ZANU-PF will do everything in its power to remain in power*'. Whilst the country is at peace, this has been coined a '*negative peace*', as it merely marks the absence of open conflict and violence and is the product of repression (SDC, 2024e).

Apart from the obviously undemocratic nature of the regime and the suppression of human rights, the problem from a developmental perspective is, according to the key informants, two-fold. First, ZANU-PF benefits both from poverty and vulnerability of large swath of the population (if one needs to worry about survival, one cares less about democratic governance) and a small affluent middle-class (which has something to lose from anarchy). Second, developmental progress can only be made where '*it fits the narrative of ZANU-PF*' to ensure its hold on power. Whilst one can argue that the Swiss project interventions are still relevant, the government's limited commitment to growth and development needs to be born in mind when setting foci and/or contemplating how to scale project results.

2.4. Use of country systems

The Swiss embassy has expressed a desire to increase its '*localization*' of development and enhance its use of country actors and systems to promote sustainable development (SDC, 2024d; OECD, 2024b). It, by no means, starts from scratch. SKI, Zvandiri, and DP4P in Zimbabwe are led by local civil society / nongovernmental organizations. Zvandiri's Community Adolescents Treatment Supporters (CATS) work within and are integrated in the country's primary healthcare facilities. In Zambia, the supported shock-responsive social cash transfer system is run and implemented by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare.

Our discussions with national ministries, provincial and district offices, and local (primary and tertiary) health facilities, as well as independent experts, suggested significant capacity to envision, plan, and implement development (projects). Our interlocutors were articulate, knowledgeable, and informed. As one key informant observed '*one can find good people to work with in each ministry*'. Moreover, government can work, looking at for example the quality of the road infrastructure in both countries or the delivery of social cash transfers in Zambia. These (non-representative) observations suggests that the Swiss embassy is right to pursue closer cooperation with the respective governments.

The SDC decision to exit Zambia has effectively put paid to this idea in Zambia. In Zimbabwe, based on above analysis in Section 2.3, it only makes sense in areas where there is a genuine

¹⁹ Several key informants observed that this recent commitment to growth and development is not unique. Previous presidents and governments (although by no means all) showed similar resolve. This has, however, never been quite as consistent and resolute for Zambia to graduate from, what the former World Bank political economist Brian Levy called, '*a competitive clientelist limited access order*', in which an ever-evolving elite coalition around (even changing) presidencies maintain privileged access to power and government resources. Whilst Zambia has recorded reasonable economic growth, such growth was never inclusive. As of now, it remains at best at the '*doorstep*' of a pluralistic liberal democracy (Levy, 2013). General historical analysis shows that Zambia might be able to walk through this door but that there is nothing self-evident or inevitable about it (North, Wallis, & Weingast, 2009; Fukuyama, 2011; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). All international development cooperation can do is engage, through development diplomacy, with the political and economic elite of Zambia and strengthen, through capacity building and empowerment, the '*non-elite pressures*' for sustainable reform (Levy, 2013).

interest and incentive of the government to progress. The evaluation team was too little time on the ground to identify the high potential areas. At face value, the introduction of agroecology (SKI), the replication of Zambia's functioning shock-responsive social cash transfer system (SSP), and the expansion of Zvandiri or strengthening the primary health care system all carry potential. It is for the Swiss embassy to verify, both upfront and probably simply through trial and error, this potential.

One final note on this. At present, there are no bi- or multilateral development partners working through the government of Zimbabwe. There is geopolitical history (with Zimbabwe having been and having itself isolated from the West) and reason (fiduciary risks) for this. The government has started a process of *'reengagement'* with development partners and fiduciary risks can be managed. Switzerland enjoys a unique position within the development partner landscape in Zimbabwe (see next section). This might offer it a chance to act as trailblazer and pilot the use of government systems in its delivery of development cooperation.

2.5. Swiss government's needs, policies, and priorities

It is easy to illustrate the relevance of the cooperation programme at the level of the Swiss international cooperation's foundational documents and strategies:

- The promotion of drought resilient crops (SKI/MASAP) and the support to the shock-responsive social cash transfer and insurance systems (SSP/Africa Risk Capacity) *'assists in the alleviation of need and poverty'*, and the work with local civil society organizations in Zimbabwe (DP4P) *'promotes the respect for human rights and democracy'*, as intended the Swiss constitution's article 54 (Swiss Confederation, 2018).
- Switzerland's humanitarian aid after the 2024 drought is *'an expression of solidarity'*, and the Swiss embassy's intent to work more through country systems is aligned with the principle of local-led development as expressed in the Swiss federal law on international cooperation and humanitarian aid (Swiss Federal Parliament, 2017).
- The programme's lines of intervention cover all four objectives and all but one subobjectives of the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24 (see Volume II).
- The promotion of democratic governance (DP4P), access to health care (SHIELD), private sector engagement (MASAP), and addressing food insecurity (SKI/MASAP/SSP) are aligned with the new Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28 (FDFA, 2025b).

The more interesting question is how the cooperation programme gives hand and feet to the three-pronged decision model that undergirds Switzerland's engagement in a country, namely the interplay between country needs, Swiss value-added, and Swiss interests (FDFA, 2021; 2025b). That the cooperation programme responds to the countries' needs has been elaborated above. To what extent does it also play to Switzerland's value-added and interests?

Figure 2 and Figure 1 list the value-added and interests of Switzerland as gleaned from the cooperation programme and interviews. It scores these items on a zero-to-one scale, signalling their prevalence. The scores are ours, based on feedback during the interviews. It is a subjective score; it is therefore the relative, rather than the absolute, values that are of interest.

Figure 2 Swiss interests

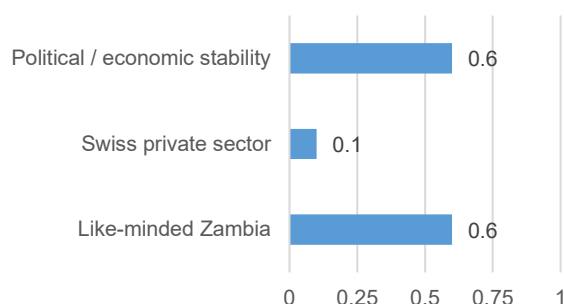


Figure 1 Swiss value-added



The cooperation programme underscores the Swiss interest in regional stability. The key informants did not refute, but downplayed its relevance, given the distance to Switzerland and the historic stability of the two countries. Key informants did see Zambia as a constructive and like-minded partner in multinational fora. The envisaged dialogue and joint initiatives with the Swiss private sector/multinationals have yet to start (hampered thus far by a lack of time and ideas). In short, it appears that the Swiss interests can be further explored and tested.

Switzerland is a well-recognized partner in both Zimbabwe and Zambia. Its perceived neutrality, '*confidential diplomacy*', and pragmatism have made it a '*genuine and non-threatening*' development partner for both government and civil society (OECD, 2024a), and especially in Zimbabwe - where it has an embassy - given it access to the highest political levels. It is further recognized for, amongst others, its long-term project commitments and (contextual) knowledge. Switzerland's well-recognized thematic expertise (e.g., de-verticalizing health care, decentralization, or agroecology) flowed into project design (e.g., SHIELD, LOGO, SKI); whether it was also tapped during implementation, we did not observe.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter asked whether the cooperation programme is aligned with the needs, policies, and priorities of the target groups, the governments, and Switzerland. The answer is that it is. Importantly, from a development perspective, the programme supports local reform actors. Going forward, the Swiss embassy can ensure and enhance the programme's relevance by:

- continuing its support to local reform actors which express a qualified demand for support²⁰,
- continuing to position itself as an honest broker whilst expanding its political engagement to, and embedding the future programme in, a call/strategy for 'economic transformation' wherein, over time, social protection is less needed, some smallholders graduate to medium-holders, and more people find gainful employment in industries or services²¹,
- pilot the use of government systems in Zimbabwe in an area where the ruling party of Zimbabwe is prepared to move forward and fiduciary risks can be managed, and
- define the Swiss interests in international cooperation with Zimbabwe and investigate how realistic a purposeful development partnership with the Swiss private sector is.

²⁰ We define a qualified demand for support as follows: a qualified demand entails that local reform actors acknowledge a development challenge, have defined a reform agenda to address the challenge, committed (significant) own resources to the implementation of the reform agenda, proceeded - on their own volition - with the envisaged reforms, and identified concrete and well-motivated areas for external support.

²¹ This presents, in principle, a case for involving the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs SECO into the programme, given its expertise in public financial management, trade promotion, access to finance, and entrepreneurship. As neither country is a priority country for SECO and it must reduce its 'complementary measures' programme, SECO's involvement in the two countries will be unlikely in the medium-term.

3 Coherence

Evaluation question

To what extent is the cooperation programme internally and externally coherent?

3.1. Introduction

This evaluation question often raises questions. What does it mean and how does one assess it. Textbox 2 offers the OECD/DAC definition and elaborates on its different dimensions. The chapter subsequently assesses the programme's 'internal' and 'external' coherence using these concepts. The analysis of external coherence also considers the government and development partner dialogue - and Switzerland's position therein - and whether it reinforces the programme's external coherence.

Textbox 2 Defining and circumscribing 'coherence'

OECD/DAC definition: *'The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution'* (OECD/DAC, 2019).

Internal: the extent to which individual interventions within the programme are complementary to, or exploit synergies between each other.

External: the extent to which programme interventions are complementary to, or exploit synergies with interventions from local actors or other development partners.

Complementarity: The extent to which two (or more) interventions address different aspects of a development challenge thereby offering a more comprehensive redress of the challenge at hand. Complementarity is about improving the overall development 'effectiveness'.

Synergy: allows two (or more) interventions to achieve the same goal with less resources or better results with the same level of resources. Synergy implies greater development 'efficiency'.

Conceptual: interventions address broadly the same development challenge but have no operational linkages between them.

By design: complementarity and synergy between interventions is purposefully designed into their theories of change.

Operational: coherence is actively pursued and monitored during the implementation of the development interventions; interventions work together and build on each other's activities.

Source: author

3.2. Internal coherence

Let's start from our project sample. Table 4 summarizes our key observations. In the project sample, SKI and MASAP are the closest linked. Both seek to expand the cultivation of drought resilient crops through, amongst others, the promotion of farmer-led seed production. They, however, take a different approach.²² The projects' results frameworks and theories of change are not explicitly linked (SDC, 2021; 2023c). The data in Table 4 show that their operational interaction is limited as well. The two projects are conceptually and, to some extent, operationally complementary; they, however, do not appear to be designed and managed to maximize complementarity and synergy. In Chapter 4, we will argue that MASAP as a more-or-less standalone project is a missed opportunity for a more coherent line of intervention. (Note: SKI and MASAP are also conceptually coherent with Switzerland's health interventions: better nutrition is better health.)

²² In short, SKI works directly with farmer groups and associations to create a '*movement*' for good agroecological practices and the cultivation of drought resilient crops (SKI, 2023). Taking the market system development approach, MASAP seeks to overcome barriers in early generation seed production and develop agri-business.

Table 4 Internal coherence within the project sample

Projects	Description
SKI and MASAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SKI partners have trained MASAP supported farmer groups in agroecology. – Joint organization of traditional food festivals. – MASAP '<i>inherited</i>' SKI's policy work on farmer-led seed systems and is working with the ministries of agriculture in Zimbabwe and Zambia to embed these systems in the countries' legal and policy framework.
SSP, SKI, and MASAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Smallholder farmers that are supported under SKI and MASAP can also be beneficiaries of the social cash transfer system in Zimbabwe and Zambia.
Zvandiri and SHIELD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SHIELD represents a strategic shift from fighting specific diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS) towards strengthening the overall primary health care system and service delivery. It entails a new intervention. However, most people living with HIV receive their antiretroviral treatment through primary health care facilities. SHIELD is, amongst many other things, to put this treatment on an even more sustainable footing and allow for broader health coverage.

SKI, MASAP, and SSP are complementary 'in concept' in the sense that all three seek to strengthen the resilience of smallholder farmers against droughts. The SDC also uses the evidence on the production and income of smallholder farmers from SKI and MASAP in its contributions to the technical working groups on SSP. At the end of the day, however, SSP is a standalone project that operates at a different level and scale than SKI and MASAP.

The broader programme, i.e., beyond the project sample, includes one other project combination that appear to be 'operationally' complementary and synergetic (at least in Zambia). This is the Swiss support to the national social cash transfer system (SSP) and the African Risk Capacity (ARC) programme. The latter provides technical assistance and an insurance scheme to governments to better plan, prepare, and respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters. In Zambia, the social cash transfer system was used in 2024 to transfer the insurance pay-out from ARC as social cash transfers to poor, drought stricken, households. This was both efficient and, as argued in Chapter 4, effective.²³

Finally, the Swiss embassy is developing, amongst others, a local government support project. This is to 'conceptually' complement DP4P (the five local CSOs working on improving democratic governance) by also reaching out to local governments, resident associations, and media to enhance the accountability on, and quality of, local governance and service provision.

The picture that emerges from the above analysis is a classical one. We recall from Section 2.2 that 96% of the cooperation programme budget is subsumed by project interventions. With exceptions (e.g., the integration of the African Risk Capacity insurance into the national social protection cash transfer system in Zambia), most projects entail standalone interventions that are, within a topic, conceptually linked but not purposefully designed and managed to explicitly complement, and exploit synergies from, each other. This is not unique to this cooperation programme; it applies to most Swiss cooperation programmes. It simply points out that there is still room for improvement in making good on the promise of having 'cooperation programmes' and so-called 'Swiss portfolio outcomes'.²⁴

²³ The Zimbabwean social protection system is less well-developed and, in 2024, could not be effectively used for the disbursement of the insurance pay-out from ARC. The Swiss embassy is working with the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare in Zimbabwe to learn from the Zambian case and improve the Zimbabwean social protection system.

²⁴ The cooperation programmes and Swiss portfolio outcomes were, amongst others, meant to move away from Switzerland's traditional focus on the implementation and achievement of project results and instead see how - through a combination of development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions - it can contribute to addressing specific development challenges and/or bring about somewhat broader social, economic and/or political developments which no project or individual actor can do on its own. Note: this interpretation stems from discussions with the SDC Quality Assurance and Digitalization section.

3.3. External coherence

External coherence is the extent to which programme interventions are complementary to, or exploit synergies with, interventions from local actors, government or other development partners. All but one of the Swiss-supported projects in Zimbabwe and Zambia are 'contributions'. This has been a conscious choice of the Swiss embassy: better to identify what works and strengthen this, than to add another bunch of projects to the pile. This means that all projects (with one exception, MASAP) are coherent 'by design'. They complement existing efforts of local civil society (e.g., SKI, Zvandiri, DP4P) or government and international partners (e.g., SSP, SHIELD) to strengthen systems and service delivery.

An observant reader may ask, especially in the case where other international development partners are involved, what the value-added is of the Swiss contribution: is it really needed? The answer is two-fold. First, the challenges are generally too big for one development agency to tackle. It helps to pool resources. Second, Switzerland adds voice. It adds another agent calling for improvement and reform.²⁵ This was a point made on, for example, Switzerland's contribution to the social cash transfer system in Zambia. Through its contributions to the technical working and steering committee, Switzerland was able to reinforce the development partners argument to make the system (and the underlying social protection policy) more shock-responsive and accountable.²⁶

This brings us to another dimension of the external coherence criteria, namely the extent to which Switzerland participates in and uses the development partner working groups. In Zimbabwe, Switzerland was recognized for reinvigorating the development partner working group (now also holding its co-chair), thereby improving the context analysis, information exchange, and joint messaging. In Zambia, Switzerland was equally recognized but generally considered less present. Something the Swiss embassy knows and attributes to its lack of a physical presence in the country. The evaluation did not gain a further picture on how these high-level engagements translated into the project portfolio's external coherence. We must admit though that we also did not structurally raise this question in the interviews. Instead, we inquired more into Switzerland's value-added, which was discussed in Section 2.5.

3.4. Conclusion

The Swiss project portfolio is, generally, internally coherent 'in concept' and externally coherent 'by design'. Still, the portfolio does not take a truly 'programmatic' approach, where different instruments and interventions are used to address specific development challenges. In moving forward, the Swiss embassy could try to replicate the complementarity and synergy between its support to the social cash transfer systems and the African Risk Capacity programme to other areas as well. The idea would be to further strengthen Switzerland's development effectiveness. Whether that is needed is the subject of the next chapter.

²⁵ The Nobel-prize winning economist Angus Deaton considers this, to put it mildly, problematic. It carries the risk of recipient governments becoming more accountable to their international development partners than their constituents, undermining the social contract between the political leadership and citizens (Deaton, 2013).

²⁶ The discussions also highlighted a limit to this influence (and a relativization of Deaton's argument). Apparently, no one has ever 'graduated' from the social cash transfer system in Zambia as, amongst others, subsequent governments were loath to review beneficiaries' qualification for fear of losing their vote.

4 Effectiveness, impact, and sustainability

Evaluation questions

To what extent is the cooperation programme likely to achieve its Swiss portfolio outcomes? What are the contributing and hindering factors? Does the programme have (innovative) approaches which should be scaled in-country? To what extent is the cooperation programme likely to contribute to its overall goal? To what extent are the net benefits of the cooperation programme likely to continue without further Swiss support?

4.1. Introduction

This chapter uses contribution analysis to assess Switzerland's contribution to the observed and likely outcomes and impacts. Contribution analysis is a structured and qualitative inquiry build around five questions (Mayne, 2008). First, were the envisaged results achieved? Results are thereby measured both at the level of the sample projects and lines of intervention (see Section 1.3). Moreover, as the programme is new and this is in effect a mid-term evaluation, we also consider the likely future outcomes and impacts.

Second, did the envisaged, Swiss-supported, activities take place? Third, is there evidence that the assumed changes in behaviour, decisions, and actions of Switzerland's boundary partners²⁷ occurred in practice and is likely to continue in the future? Fourth, are the project and programme assumptions plausible and uncontested? Fifth, could other contextual factors explain the results? Based on the above analysis, the chapter closes with a conclusion on Switzerland's contribution to, and the sustainability of, the observed and likely future results.

4.2. Were the envisaged results achieved?

Table 5 captures the documented outputs/intermediary outcomes at the project and intervention area level. The table's quantitative data stems from the project documents and the embassy's annual report. The field mission interviews confirmed the order of magnitude of this data. To save space, color-coding is used to signal if the results are **below**, **on**, or **above** (track for) the set targets. Below target should be at least 15% to be coded red (recognizing that development is not an exact science). Table 6 subsequently shows the observed outcomes and impacts. The table's qualitative data stems from the interviews.

Table 5 From outputs to intermediary outcomes

Project	Project-level outputs and outcomes	Intervention area outcomes
SKI	– 26,921 smallholders cultivate drought-resilient crops and apply agroecology; 1,337 smallholders produce drought-resilient seeds (SKI, 2023)	– 31,817 people consume a healthy diet (SDC, 2024b) (Target ill-defined) – 143,425 smallholders gained access to agricultural markets (SDC, 2024b)
MASAP	– 23,936 smallholders produce drought-resilient seeds and crops (NIRAS, 2024)	
Zvandiri	– 6,148 children, adolescents, and young adults living with HIV peer supported; 27,979 supported by trained health workers (Africaid, 2024); Zvandiri says 60,000 are reached ²⁸ .	– 83% of children, adolescents, and young adults living with HIV have suppressed viral loads (National Aids Council Zimbabwe)

²⁷ Boundary partners are 'individuals, groups, or organizations with whom a program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence' (Earl, Carden, & Smutylo, 2001).

²⁸ In 2020, 54,764 were said to have been reached in 43 districts (Africaid, 2021)

Project	Project-level outputs and outcomes	Intervention area outcomes
SHIELD	– <i>Program started 1 November 2024; no project results yet.</i>	– 2,286,229 women, youth, and marginalized persons received at least one integrated health service; 66,7% of patients satisfied with service (no target defined). (SDC, 2024b)
PHRD results (pre-decessor of DP4P)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Peace pledge by 7 (11) political parties (youth wing) prior to 2023 elections. – Establishment of a multi-party liaison committee / the ruling and opposition political parties talk to each other. – Abolishment of the death penalty. – Consolidation and capturing of the history of the Gukurahundi massacre. – Civil society coordination platform of 60+ organizations. (ZI, 2024) 	– 24,387 people influenced (local) government decisions and budgets (no target defined). (SDC, 2024b)
SSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1,310,000 households (31% of the population) receive Social Cash Transfer (SCT). – 904,646 households received drought relief SCT in 2024, raising the number of households receiving SCT to 1,631,007 (38%) (Target: 37%) (World Bank, 2024c). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>The thematic results indicator (POV_TRI_2) inadvertently contained data entry errors, which the embassy will correct for the Annual Report 2025.</i> – 84% of the population in Zambia received some form of social assistance (no target defined). (SDC, 2024b)

Table 6 From outcomes to impacts

Project	Impacts
SKI	– Improved soil fertility, yield, and income (by as much as 75%) for smallholders.
MASAP	– Secured an off-take market and higher yields and income for smallholders (with income partly reinvested, partly used for school fees and improved housing).
Zvandiri	– Children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV are more comfortable in accessing antiretroviral treatment and confident in pursuing education and work.
SHIELD	– <i>Not applicable: program started 1 November 2024</i>
PHRD	– The 2023 general elections were, by-and-large, peaceful. ²⁹
SSP	– The SCT allowed beneficiaries ‘to buy food, purchase fertilizer, and send their children to school’. During the 2024 drought, it offered them a lifeline.

What do these results say? To what extent do they correspond to the programme’s ambitions? Table 7 captures the objectives of the applicable lines of interventions and reflects to what extent the above-listed results hit the bar. The bottom line is that Switzerland has contributed to real and meaningful results which remain shy of its ambition (except for SSP) or the in-country needs. The key emerging question is how Switzerland, together with its boundary partners, can up their game. A question that we return to in the closing chapter. First, we need to better understand the projects’ underlying workings.

²⁹ The fact that the 2023 general elections were peaceful was appreciated by all key informants with which we discussed the topic. That makes sense. Contested elections in neighboring countries or in Zimbabwe’s own recent past have seen violence resulting in (massive) injuries and death. Every life saved has merit and worth. There is, however, a flipside to the story. The 2023 elections were neither free nor fair (The Economist, 2023; BTI, 2024a). Leaving the election results uncontested, perpetuates a repressive regime. As stated in Section 2.3, the ruling party possibly ‘maintains’ poverty, which is closely associated with food insecurity and malnutrition. Consequently, a drought easily translates into death. In other words, every strategy carries a price. The supported CSOs are well-aware of this fact. They consciously decided to play the long game - seek change in the medium- to long-term - believing that, in the end, this will be more successful.

Table 7 Assessing the scale of the results

Project	Objectives lines of intervention	Assessment, observations, and questions
SKI & MASAP	– Smallholder farmers realize more stable harvests and improve their food and income security, sovereignty, and resilience.	– SKI is on track to have 50,000 smallholders across Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe practice agroecology and over 2000 smallholders produce drought resilient seeds.
		– MASAP sought to reach 94,000 smallholder farmers by the end of 2025. This proved too ambitious for the first phase.
		– Switzerland's ambition, as gleaned from the cooperation's results framework and the projects' credit proposals, appears to be broader, referring more generally to the poor and smallholders, i.e., to achieve food sovereignty for broader swaths of the population. SKI and MASAP should thus be seen as mere steppingstones.
Zvandiri	– Zvandiri was a legacy project from the regional programme. The new health line of intervention seeks to enable more people to access quality primary health care.	– Zvandiri is 'on target' in terms of its own goals, relevant (see Chapter 2) and, according to all key informants, effective. Still, there are over 150,000 children, adolescents, and young people in Zimbabwe living with HIV. The question is how to integrate/expand this model into the primary health care system and reach most (if not all).
PHRD	– Peace promotion, social cohesion, reconciliation, and good governance.	– Chapter 2 referenced that Zimbabwe remains an authoritarian state with limited rule of law. Switzerland has upped its ambition, wanting to contribute to a transformation from a negative to a positive peace. The results are modest against this backdrop, albeit concrete and a foundation to build on.
SSP	– Expand SCT to people chronically poor and exposed to external shocks and link it with the Africa Risk Capacity climate insurance.	– Switzerland targeted that 37% of households in Zambia are covered by the shock-responsive SCT system in 2026 (SDC, 2024b). This was achieved in 2024 with 38% of households covered. The link with the Africa Risk Capacity was successfully made.

4.3. Did the envisaged, Swiss-supported, activities take place?

On the second question, we can be short. All project partners appeared to act as intended. Table 8 summarizes - the listing is indicative, not comprehensive.

Table 8 Swiss supported activities (amongst others, i.e. indicative)

Project	Envisaged activities	Delivery
SKI	– Knowledge generation, capacity development, and evidence-based advocacy	– The fifteen partner organizations provided training to, and conducted research with, smallholder farmers on producing drought-resilient seeds, maintaining seed banks, and practicing agroecology. With smallholders, they advocated for policy changes. (CCDS, 2022; SKI, 2024)
MASAP	– Technical and financial assistance to government and market actors (including smallholders) to strengthen the value-chain for drought resilient small grains and legumes.	– NIRAS, the implementing agency, supported government and market actors, as well as smallholder farmers with amongst others: – knowledge on the seed production process and policy/regulatory framework, – establishing a contract farming model for seed and crop production,

Project	Envisaged activities	Delivery
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – farming / processing equipment, – extension services on seed planting and agroecology, – certification systems and processes, – financial literacy / business case development.
Zvandiri	– Zvandiri seeks to ensure access to antiretroviral treatment and provide social, psychological, and education support to children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Zvandiri provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Training to Community Adolescent Treatment Supporters (CATS), 18–24-year-olds living with HIV, to act as ‘peers’ to their peers. – Training health workers in (primary) health centres on working with and treating children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV. – Coordination between CATS and health workers. – Coordination and policy dialogue with Ministry of Health and the National Aids Council.
SHIELD	– Replicate the decentralized nurse training model of the Swiss NGO Solidarmed, improve the public financial management and evidence-based decision-making of the Ministry of Health (MoH), and introduce integrated health care packages in primary care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The project activities still need to start, but build on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Solidarmed’s successful operation of its decentralized nurse training model in Zambia. – The MoH’s introduction of a national community health information system and financial management system. – The Clinton Health Access Initiative’s support to the MoH under Swedish funding.
PHRD/ DP4P	– Strengthening leading CSOs in their work on democratic governance, social cohesion, and dealing with the past (reconciliation).	– Between 2015-23, PHRD ³⁰ engaged in a dialogue with the highest level of government and with established CSOs to create a network, identify governance issues that could be worked on, and initiate on these issues processes to find common, politically acceptable, solutions. PHRD supported these processes with punctual interventions, e.g., training, peer exchange, or facilitated consultations. Under DP4P, the CSOs are financially supported to continue this work.
SSP	– Enable the government (with support from the World Bank, and UNICEF) to strengthen the SCT payment system, institutional structures, policy framework, grievance redress, and shock-responsiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Insurance payment of the Africa Risk Capacity programme used for funding the drought emergency social cash transfers. – Successful digital payment of social cash transfers. – Updated national Social Protection policy in 2024, which includes the ‘cash plus approach’, i.e., layering cash assistance with other services, such as nutrition sensitization or livelihood support.

4.4. Is there evidence that the boundary partners responded as envisaged?

The third question in a contribution analysis investigates to what extent Switzerland’s boundary partners have changed their perspective, rationale, and behaviour in response to the support and, ideally, created a ripple effect. Table 9 summarizes our findings on the boundary partners’ response. The observations show that Switzerland’s boundary partners responded positively to, and acted upon, the support. It probably goes too far to claim that they changed their perspective and rationale, but they clearly saw the value of adopting

³⁰ PHRD is used as shorthand. The actual work was done by the Swiss ambassador, the human security advisor, and the local political advisor.

drought resilient crops, providing improved health care services, improving the shock-responsiveness of the social protection systems, and continuing the political dialogue and promoting more democratic governance. This is, of course, closely linked to the finding from Chapter 2 that the Swiss target groups included local actors with their own reform agenda.

Table 9 How Switzerland's boundary partners responded to the Swiss support

Project	Partners' response
SKI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Many of the partner (civil society) organizations were itself the product of the wish to change the prevailing, restore indigenous, and introduce climate change resilient agricultural practices. The Swiss funding allowed the partners to expand the scope of their work. To sustain the initiative after the Swiss support ceases, the partners have (as said) registered SKI as a non-for-profit company in South Africa. Smallholders saw the need for diversifying their agricultural practices and, upon success, expanded their seed diversification and agroecological practices. Government is receptive to agroecology (ostensibly having included it in its national conservation agricultural programme 'Pfumvudza') but looks at development partners for the funding.
MASAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) embraced MASAP as its contract farming model for early generation seed (EGS) production allowed it to overcome its own production constraints. The Ministry of Agriculture responded positively by changing the Planters Breeders Act to allow ZARI to sell EGS and earn an income (further incentivizing ZARI). Smallholder farmers came on board as ZARI and agribusinesses provided a guaranteed off-take market. Individual agribusiness responded to the funding opportunity for business expansion.
Zvandiri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Peers are motivated to share their experience with their peers, guide them, gain valuable experiences, and learn themselves in the process. – HIV focal point health workers embraced the peer support as it allows them to work more effectively with children, adolescents and young people living with HIV. – The government has replicated/adopted the Zvandiri model but is hampered by resources to ensure national coverage (Africaid, 2021).
SHIELD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Not applicable. Chapter 2 evidenced the relevance.
PHRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The CSOs embraced Swiss support as it supported their own ongoing efforts and reform agenda. The government selectively accepted the reform processes and targeted results as they fit their interests and narrative, but procrastinated where they did not (e.g., on electoral reforms or the CSO bill).
SSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The current government was critical about the social cash transfer system prior to taking office (when in opposition) but has embraced it since. It is the largest social protection programme, covering over 30% of the population making it <i>'highly political/a vote bringer'</i>. The annual budget of the SCT system has (mostly) increased annually.

4.5. Are the project and programme assumptions plausible and uncontested?

Table 10 reflects on the plausibility of the assumptions underlying the sample projects' theories of change (see Volume II for the theories of change per line of intervention). This is based on the document review and the interviews.³¹ The table focusses on the generic underlying assumption that the target groups have the interest, incentive, capacity, power, resources, and tenacity to initiate and foster positive development processes; where relevant, other assumptions are discussed on a project-by-project basis.

³¹ A rigorous contribution analysis would require a further literature review to ascertain whether the observed behavioural change and cause-and-effect relations are uncontested. In this evaluation, however, we used the sample projects merely as a window to understand the broader cooperation programme. We did not evaluate the sample projects. Such a literature review therefore exceeded the scope and resources of this evaluation.

The reflections suggest that:

- from a narrow, project-based, perspective the theories of change hold up as Switzerland is working with boundary partners with the intrinsic motivation to develop/change, with Switzerland's support allowing them to accelerate this development/change, and
- from a broader, lines of intervention, perspective, it is not quite clear whether (i) the boundary partners have sufficient political power and vision, (ii) the government is sufficiently on board, and (iii) the embassy has sufficient focus, mandate, and programmatic approach to effectively foster development at a larger scale.

Note: The project-level reflections in Table 10 lead - quasi-automatically - to some tentative conclusions, ideas, or even suggestions on the individual projects. As said, we have not 'evaluated' the individual projects and only used them as a 'window' for assessing the development effectiveness of the cooperation programme. Still, we did not want to withhold these conclusions, ideas, and suggestions from the reader as they offer interesting 'food-for-thought'. They are captured, per project, in the blue-highlighted boxes in the table.

Table 10 The plausibility of the projects' theories of change

Project	The assumptions revisited
SKI	<p>– For the partner organizations, it is (at least part of) their <i>raison d'être</i>. For smallholder farmers, it was an urgent need, albeit probably short of an absolute necessity as one would have expected to see a broader, more natural, uptake, i.e., well beyond the project participants (although farm scale, limited means for investing, conventional practice, and conventional government subsidy programmes also play a role here). The converted have nonetheless a 'movement' going, intent on evidence-based policy influencing (SKI, 2023), albeit a movement that at its ten-year anniversary in 2024 still had to call on government for, amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – legal recognition of farmer-produced seeds and seed banks, – support for accessing markets, and – a redirection of the government subsidy programme and training/expansion of extension services on agroecology. (SKI, 2024) <p>– The project's mid-term review recognized the results, but also observed that the '<i>multiplier needs to be validated</i>', and that there is a need '<i>for a more formidable case for influencing policy and agricultural practice</i>' (CCDS, 2022; SKI, 2024).</p>
	<p>– Our inductive analysis during the field mission was that farmer-led seed systems and agroecology make perfect sense (with a small but positive business case), change takes time, SKI may be on an exponential growth curve, and therefore (question mark): should Switzerland 'bet' on future expansion, including by linking SKI to, and replicating, MASAP's intervention on smallholder produced early generation seeds? It also raised the question why SKI and MASAP were not integrated in the first place.</p>

Project	The assumptions revisited
MASAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MASAP intervenes, roughly speaking, at three points in the value chain for small grains and legumes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – early generation seed (EGS) production³², – seed multiplication³³, and – agri-processing³⁴. – The intervention in EGS production is a textbook example of the Market System Development (MSD) approach (The Springfield Centre, 2015). MASAP identified with ZARI a market barrier early in the value chain and intervened to effectively remove it. Importantly, the results are available for most (if not all) smallholders.³⁵ The support to individual agri-processing businesses mirrors how the MSD approach is often applied in practice. This model rests on the assumption that entrepreneurs copy each other's successful business approaches. Whilst we may observe this in tech hubs (Engelsman & Tarnutzer, 2017; 2022), the evidence basis for such crowding-in in agribusiness in the global south was (at least until recently) thin (PEM Consult, 2021; Osorio-Cortes & Albu, 2021; Engelsman & Piya, 2019; Engelsman, Bahadur KC, & Nepal, 2023). The support to seed multiplication looks at face value more of the latter (crowding-in) sort. However, there are fewer seed multiplication firms and a MASAP programme may be able to support most (if not all of them), reducing the market distortions otherwise emanating from individual 'selecting the winners' business support. Moreover, this may be critical to truly make the seeds available to most if not all smallholders and merited from a public good perspective as smallholders will become more resilient against unpredictable and low precipitation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Our takeaway from this rapid assessment is threefold: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Switzerland should concentrate its resources on textbook MSD interventions where one can achieve the biggest bang for the buck (for example, access to finance), – the intervention in EGS production is highly complementary to SKI and it makes sense to explicitly link them in the three joined operating districts and prioritize the replication in SKI's other 24 operating districts in Zimbabwe and Zambia, and – Switzerland can probably accelerate replication by supporting ZARI in other districts.
Zvandiri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The peer support model works with key informants reporting better access to and higher retention rates in antiretroviral treatment (ART) for children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV. – For 80% of people living with HIV, ART is provided through primary health care facilities. The challenge to sustainability and scale is funding. The National Aids Council estimates that for ART alone around USD 144 million is needed annually. The national AIDS levy raises USD 60 million. The balance is mostly covered by development partners with the biggest contribution from the United States. (Zvandiri's budget is also covered for circa 30% by USAID (Africaid, 2021)). The effective closure of USAID will severely test Zimbabwe's ability to serve people with HIV. Additional challenges are health workers, equipment, and medicine shortages at health centres.

³² The seeds of small grains and legumes are self-pollinating. This means that smallholders can 'recycle' their own seeds. Seed productivity, however, diminishes over the years. Smallholders therefore can best replace their seed base with EGS every few years. The market is too thin for private seed companies to serve. Smallholders therefore rely on ZARI to produce EGS. Its production capacity, however, was limited. MASAP introduced, as stated in Table 9, a contract farming model and a policy change which enabled ZARI to expand its EGS production. (There is also a quality control and seed certification dimension to the story/intervention. For the sake of simplicity and brevity, we left this out.)

³³ Private sector companies multiply EGS (in first, second, and third generation seeds) to make them available at larger quantities in the market.

³⁴ MASAP supports agri-business to process the small grains and legumes crops into consumer foods. The idea is twofold. First, it should create a demand for small grains and legumes, incentivizing smallholders to cultivate the crops. Second, it is to showcase the positive business case of small grain and legumes processing, which should crowd-in other entrepreneurs.

³⁵ It remains subject to the production capacity of ZARI and its contract farmers, the ability of smallholders to reach ZARI's sales points, and the ability of government agricultural extension workers to sell the EGS to smallholders.

Project	The assumptions revisited
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Zvandiri provides, in its own way, an integrated health care package within primary health care centres. As such, it (should) bear(s) lessons for SHIELD (including its Thrive 95 Tool for governments to adopt the Zvandiri model). – Zvandiri works. The challenge is how Zvandiri (lessons) can be integrated into the primary healthcare system (and the envisaged SHIELD equivalent in Zimbabwe). Sustainable funding plays a critical role.
SHIELD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The decentralized nurse training model makes sense as it seems to improve retention rates of nurses in rural areas and there needs to be a vast increase in nurses across the three levels of care (SDC, 2024f), even though the increase can, ostensibly, in the short term, be partly covered by currently unemployed health workers. – The health care management intervention responds to operational needs (see Table 2), government action (Table 3), as well as the need to make the most of available scarce resources and the government's decentralization agenda. Key informants observed that the operational and political fragility of the Ministry of Health could undermine the project results.
DP4P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For the CSOs, it is their <i>raison d'être</i>. They have the network and relations to engage with the government. DP4P offers them a financial 'lifeline'. Still: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the discussions (and program document (ZI, 2024)) did not reveal what the logical next steps and strived after concrete results are (except for continuing the dialogue and engagements), – Zimbabwe politics remains governed by a zero-sum and winner-takes all mentality and culture (ZI, 2024), and – PHRD has left and the Swiss cooperation office does not have the same mandate, experience, competencies, and – importantly - discretionary budget³⁶ to emulate some of PHRD's work approaches. – Whatever we say about the localization of development or that '<i>development is self-development</i>', contested issues often benefit from a neutral facilitator, an honest broker, and non-threatening partner (which Switzerland is, see Chapter 2). A role, which key informants stated, Switzerland also effectively played. It, however, was not self-evident during the field mission that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the CSOs had the political power to independently instigate reform, – the Swiss ambassador and his political advisor could continue alone, – the cooperation office had the political backing, intent, and time to adopt some of PHRD work approaches (in tandem with the Swiss ambassador)³⁷, and – how the other upcoming governance intervention would strengthen the line of intervention (see Textbox 3). – In other words, it is plausible that Switzerland contributed to the achieved results with PHRD's presence, and questionable whether it can continue to do so as effectively in the future without PHRD or a changed mandate, role-perception, and resource allocation of/to the cooperation office.
SSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There are three levels/assumptions to consider: the World Bank/UNICEF/SDC nexus, the government response, and the SCT size: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – As stated, Chapter 3, Switzerland was appreciated for its inputs into the technical working groups and adding its voice to the call for a more shock-responsive SCT system. The question remains: was Switzerland really needed? The World Bank, for one, has invested USD 355 million (World Bank, 2024c) and has the in-house

³⁶ The human security advisor had a (discretionary) annual budget at her disposal of around CHF 500,000 to CHF 600,000 between 2022-23.

³⁷ Yes, the cooperation office wants to engage more politically and free-up time. Its briefing to the OECD-DAC mission mentioned to that end an intent to change their job-descriptions and reduce time spend on project cycle management (SDC, 2024c). Whether it is truly ready to adopt some of PHRD's work approaches: go out, talk, network, and instigate and support reform processes in a discretionary way, i.e., not through projects, remained up in the air.

Project	The assumptions revisited
	<p>expertise. Having put this (nagging) question on the table, Switzerland's benefit (and Zimbabwe's) may be that Switzerland is now in a better position to replicate the SCT system in Zimbabwe. Here, the benefit from the two-country cooperation programme shines through.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Table 9 evidenced that the government 'embraced' the SCT system. Some key informants observed almost to a fault. The SCT system requires a 'retargeting' every three years to ensure that only the deserved receive SCT. Because this is politically sensitive, this is not done, and no one has yet graduated from the system. Ideally, one rather has less than more people requiring SCT. This raises the question what additional measures are being undertaken to reduce the need for SCT (see also our observations on the required 'economic transformation' in Section 2.2). – The SCT is small.³⁸ Some key informants raised the question how much more food secure and resilient the recipients truly get through this small amount. Still, 27% of SCT recipients, ostensibly, invest part of the money in income generating activities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SSP is relevant and the SCT effective and, probably, reasonably impactful. The challenge for Switzerland is to secure its value-added over the World Bank. In Zimbabwe, this likely lies in its unique political access. This could allow it to have the difficult conversations with government on the integration of the currently dispersed social protection systems and the need to combine social protection with economic transformation. In the short to medium term, the value-added could also lie in funding, as the World Bank cannot provide core funding as long as Zimbabwe is in arrears.

Textbox 3 A new local governance project

The embassy is preparing a new local governance project in Zimbabwe. It was not part of our project sample, and we did not study it in detail. The subsequent observations are based on our discussions with the embassy, our knowledge of the SDC decentralization policy guidance, and the recent independent thematic evaluation on SDC's Engagement in the field of Good Governance and the Rule of Law from 2017-22.

The objective of the project will be to improve public service delivery. It is based on the observation that there is often *'little sense in the country of the state "serving" the people'*. As the national level tends to be politicized, the project is to focus on the local level. The idea is to engage with, and provide technical advice and capacity building to, duty bearers (municipal councilors and executive officers), rightsholders (e.g., resident associations), and local media (e.g., community-based radio) on transparent and effective public service delivery (e.g., water supply, extension services, or education).

This is *'a tested road for the SDC'*. The abovementioned evaluation observed that when the going gets tough, *'going local'* tends to be the fallback option for the SDC to stay engaged on governance. On the one hand, this has proven effective. It has brought about *'positive behavioral and attitudinal changes in how citizens and local authorities interact'*, indeed leading to more accountable and effective public service delivery. On the other hand, *'political will plays a critical role in enabling or hindering success'* and *'a well-articulated narrative of how the sum of parts leads to overall portfolio ambitions is often lacking'*. The evaluation posits as *'alternative entry point ... transversal governance [where] governance issues [are often] more concrete'*. (Nordic Consulting Group, 2024)

These observations appear, to outsiders like us, prescient. Switzerland is very likely to achieve some concrete results at the local level given its own (and the envisaged implementing partner's**) *'strong expertise and tradition'* and the fact that local authorities and communities can often indeed carve out their own operating space. Having said that, there are three interrelated concerns:

- the ruling party has so far blocked decentralization to hinder the opposition parties (who partly rule local authorities) (SDC, 2023b), secure the unitary nature of the state, and maintain stability/curtail violence (North, Wallis, & Weingast, 2009; Muzondidya & Musekiwa, 2023),
- governance is often reduced to something 'technical' (e.g., improved financial management, better oversight), disregarding the political undercurrents responsible for the technical deficiencies, and
- how exactly will this work complement DP4P and Switzerland's ambition to contribute to the transformation of the current negative peace in the country into a positive peace (SDC, 2024e)?

³⁸ The SCT is CHF 6.5 per month for the base amount, and the same for the drought pay-out. CHF 6.5 is 14% of the Zambian minimum wage.

These concerns, by no means, represent the complete story. There may be other arguments for the SDC to initiate this project. Still, together with this chapter's conclusion (see below), they appear to warrant a 'double-check' whether this project is indeed the next best thing to do or whether the SDC's scarce resources could better be allocated somewhere else (a case we make in Chapter 6).

*The review of SDC's Strengthening Social Accountability in Health and Agriculture in Southern Africa also found that governance interventions need to connect to and address 'issues of concern of citizens and solution holders' to gain traction (Muzondidya & Musekiwa, 2023).

**The project is envisaged as a contribution to the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH which is already working with duty bearers on improving local public services.

4.6. Could other contextual factors explain the results?

The final question in a contribution analysis inquires into the possibility that 'other factors' could explain the observed results. To this end, it is - first-and-foremost - to recognize the principal work/contribution of Switzerland's boundary partners themselves. It is the smallholders who tilt the land, the health workers who treat the patients, the government workers who organize and pay the social cash transfers, and the civil society organizations and politicians who engage in dialogue. It is they who the groundwork.

The background of this question, however, is slightly different. It rather asks whether there are changes in the context (e.g. prices, health conditions, or social unrest) or support from other development partners that could have triggered Switzerland's boundary partners and led to the observed results. Whilst we cannot exclude that such other factors played a role, we did not readily identify them except of course for:

- the 2024 drought: its effects on policy or agricultural practice will only be felt in the coming years but is likely to accelerate the shift to drought resilient crops and shock-responsive social protection systems, and
- donor co-funding: especially, SSP (World Bank, UNICEF, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, and the UK), SHIELD (Lichtenstein, Hilti Foundation) and Zvandiri (incl. USAID).

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter's contribution analysis offers the following answers to this chapter's evaluation questions:

- Switzerland is likely to attain, and has contributed to, the envisaged outcomes and impacts at the level of individual projects.
- These outcomes and impacts are likely to be sustainable as Switzerland's boundary partners have the interest, incentive, and tenacity, as well as - for the most part - sufficient capacity, power, and resources to continue the work/practices without Switzerland's further support ... again speaking at the scale of the individual projects.
- There is both a need and the ambition from the boundary partners and Switzerland to go beyond these project level results and achieve outcomes and impacts at a greater scale. The applied approaches are effective and there is potential to replicate and bring to scale most (if not all) interventions within Zimbabwe and Zambia.
- The key contributing/supporting factor, both for the achieved results and the prospects for bringing these to scale, is that Switzerland's boundary partners have the intrinsic motivation to develop/change.
- The hindering factors are that (i) the boundary partners do not appear to always have sufficient political power and vision, (ii) the government is not always fully on-board, and (iii) the embassy has insufficient focus, mandate, and a programmatic approach to effectively foster development at a larger scale. Moreover, there are immediate challenges to overcome, for example: operational coherence (SKI/MASAP), sustainable funding model (Zvandiri), capacity Ministry of Health (SHIELD), continued Swiss political mandate (DP4P), and Swiss value-added (SSP).

5 Efficiency

Evaluation question

Could better results have been achieved through a different allocation of resources?

5.1. Introduction

The OECD/DAC defines efficiency as *‘the extent to which an intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way’*. ‘Economic’ means the cost-effective conversion of inputs into outcomes and impacts; ‘timely’ the delivery of the intervention within the intended timeframe. (OECD/DAC, 2019) At the level of a cooperation programme, with its multiple and heterogenous projects (with their own timeline), this criterion makes little sense.

Together with the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service, we decided to take a different approach (SDC, 2024a). Instead, we look at how the budget has been spent across the six lines of intervention and consider whether - based on the effectiveness and contribution analysis of Chapter 4 - a different allocation of resources could have achieved better results. Section 5.2 makes this inquiry, whereby it turned out that this approach, at least in the case of this cooperation programme, presented its own challenge and offered limited insights. On a standalone note, Section 5.3 offers some reflections on the recent outsourcing of the partner risk assessments to a private consultancy company.³⁹

5.2. The follow the money approach to efficiency measurement

Figure 3 shows the expected allocation of funds across the six lines of intervention between 2023-26.⁴⁰ As noted in Chapter 1, the embassy is transitioning from a regional to a bilateral programme. Some projects will not be continued after this programme period (e.g., rural resilience, safeguarding young people, and accountability in health and agriculture⁴¹). If we take these out of the calculations, Figure 4 gives, indicatively, the future expenditure profile. Both graphs show that three lines of interventions take up the bulk of the budget: employment and income, health, and social protection.

Figure 3 Current financial profile

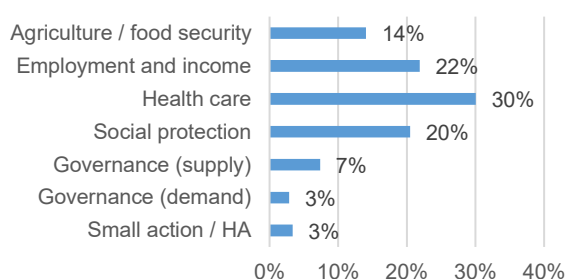
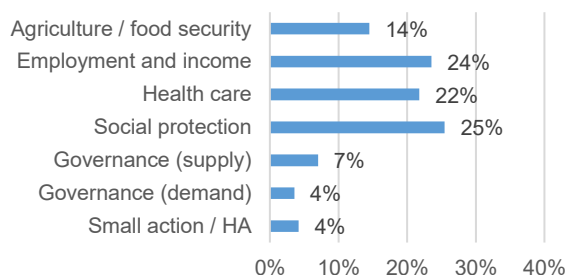


Figure 4 Expected future financial profile



Chapter 4 taught us that Switzerland contributed to real and meaningful results across all four evaluated lines of interventions: agriculture and food security, health, social protection, and governance. This finding complicates this exercise. It means that the contribution analysis does not ‘indicate’ where the embassy is ‘most’ effective and where it could best spend its money.⁴²

³⁹ The reason for including it here is (i) the partner risk assessments are led by the embassy's chief financial officer, and (ii) the chapter still offered the space, thereby not adding to the total number of pages of the report.

⁴⁰ It is based on actual expenditures (2023) and planned outlays (2024-26). See Appendix A.

⁴¹ In Appendix A, these projects have been marked with an asterisk. They have no planned budget beyond 2026.

⁴² In addition, we are not able to ‘compare’ results and judge whether one has more merit and worth than another, e.g., a peace pledge versus 26,921 smallholders cultivating drought resilient crops versus 6,148 children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV being peer supported.

But is there not something that we can take out of this exercise? Perhaps the following: the graphs underscore the ‘spread’ of the cooperation programme. This raises the following question: could Switzerland achieve better results through a greater concentration of resources? This question brings to mind two earlier findings: (i) most projects are standalone interventions (Chapter 3), and (ii) there is a need, potential, and ambition to bring the project-level results to scale (Chapter 4). This points to the possibility and opportunity to achieve results at a larger scale within individual lines of interventions by pulling resources and applying, therein, a more programmatic approach. If such sub-programmes contain ‘synergies’, then Switzerland can also achieve greater development efficiency. Chapter 6 follows-up on this finding.

5.3. The partner risk assessment

Switzerland conducts a comprehensive risk assessment of all partnerships that it engages in. This partner risk assessment (PRA) comprises, amongst others, the associated fiduciary, reputational, implementation, and political risks. The PRA is normally led by the chief financial officer of the cooperation office. The financial administration of the Swiss embassy, particularly pertaining to the cooperation programme, was, until recently, understaffed.⁴³ The embassy, therefore, outsourced the partner risk assessment of the five CSOs of DP4P.

The CSOs valued the risk assessment, recognizing and appreciating the opportunity to review and subsequently improve their internal business processes (even when they considered the process tough: *‘I could feel it in my bones’*). The embassy emphasized that despite having outsourced the assessment, they were involved in the process and discussions with the CSOs. The discussions with the CSOs, nonetheless, raised two concerns:

- CSOs in Zimbabwe operate in a very precarious political environment, where the ruling party imposes clear limits on what CSOs can and cannot do (and regularly threatening to tighten the screws further). CSOs must walk a fine line in their cooperation with, and funding from, international partners. Moreover, trust between organizations is an earned (and rare) good. Against this backdrop, it is understandable that the CSOs were not comfortable in opening their books to a Zimbabwean private consultancy company.
- The PRA offers an opportunity to make good on the ‘localization’ of cooperation and operating *auf Augenhöhen* with local partners. The best starting point for building equal and productive relationships is to engage in-depth and extensively with the partner.

Both observations speak for undertaking the partner risk assessment oneself for local partners. Of course, this needs to be commensurate to the available resources. With the allocation of an additional financial officer and with the involvement of the cooperation office staff, the embassy intends to resume this standard and good practice again. The above findings support and encourage this intention.

⁴³ The cooperation programme was overseen, financially, by 0.9 full-time equivalent. An additional full-time financial officer position was approved end 2024.

6 Conclusion, lessons, and recommendations

6.1. Introduction

To come full circle, Section 6.2 responds to the primary intended use of the evaluation: to inform the mid-term review of the cooperation programme and suggest future strategic directions. Section 6.3 serves the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service, drawing attention to the key development results and lessons of the programme. First though, the textbox below recognizes the rapidly changing political environment.

Textbox 4 A rapidly changing context

This evaluation report was written against the backdrop of a rapidly changing development context. In the last few weeks, USAID has effectively ceased to exist. The British government has announced a 40% cut in its development cooperation (Mitchell & Hughes, 2025). In 2023, the United States provided USD 320 million (52% of total) and USD 423 million (25%) of official development assistance to Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively. The figures for the United Kingdom were USD 34 million (5%) and USD 23 million (1%). (OECD, 2025) These changes will have profound effects. First and foremost, to the people of Zimbabwe and Zambia (amongst many other countries). It will, however, also directly impact government operations (and, likely, the political dynamics therearound) and significantly alter the development cooperation landscape in the countries. These changes will present challenges and – ironically - opportunities for Swiss international cooperation. Which exactly cannot be known at this point. It will likely require (even) greater agility from the embassy.

6.2. Informing the mid-term review of the cooperation programme

Target audience: the Swiss embassy and the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section.

Building on the evaluation results, recognizing the institutional constraints (amongst others, the phasing-out of Zambia, and a 10% budget reduction in 2025-26) and the embassy's strategic deliberations, we **recommend** to:

1. **Double-down on, and seek to scale, the positive project results within the current portfolio.**
Reason: Many of the Swiss supported interventions work and reflect local reform agendas. The remaining challenge, as aspired to, is to bring them to scale.
2. **Combine development diplomacy, policy dialogue, project interventions, and small actions in a programmatic approach to address bottlenecks and bring the project results to scale.**
Reason: Development is an emerging evolutionary process that can neither be planned, nor achieved within single projects. Instead, it requires accompaniment by a coherent set of different interventions: political, policy, technical, and process-wise.
3. **Adopt some of PHRD's approaches to political engagement in supporting local development processes.**
Reason: Networking, outreach, engagement, and dialogue with the political, economic, civil society leadership and reform actors of the country (the movers, the shakers, the veto players), and providing punctual and discretionary support to domestic reform processes are the *sine qua non* for the effective accompaniment *and* acceleration of such processes. It is also the epitome of the 'localization' of development cooperation and a comparative advantage of Switzerland (as a '*non-threatening partner*').
4. **Pilot the use of state systems in the delivery of development cooperation in Zimbabwe.**
Reason: there is formidable capacity within government and the use of country systems would further strengthen the sustainability of interventions. Switzerland has the position as a trusted partner and risks can be managed.
5. **To indeed return to conducting the partner risk assessments for local partners in-house.**
Reason: Within Zimbabwe's repressive regime, one should not ask local partners to open their books to domestic consultancy firms.

6. **Reduce the lines of intervention to four (or even less).**

Reason: to create the space (time and resources) for recommendations one to five.

Note: It is not for this evaluation to suggest which (lines of) intervention to focus on. This would be unserious. We spent 10 days in the field, and did not look at all lines of interventions. The combination SKI/MASAP, as well as Zvandiri, primary health care system strengthening, and social protection (SCT) all carry further potential. It is for the embassy to decide which carry the biggest potential within the narrative of ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe. The embassy should continue DP4P as it, indeed, provides unique political access. Otherwise, governance is probably best addressed transversally in lieu of recommendations 1 and 2 (see Textbox 5).

Textbox 5 On transversal governance

With transversal governance, we mean - in this evaluation - to *'think and work politically'*, i.e., within the selected lines of intervention to identify reform space, foster political support, and go beyond policy formulation to actual policy implementation. We do not mean that this governance work has to translate into alternative governance structures and formal processes. In this interpretation, transversal governance could, for example, be working with the Ministry of Agriculture in Zimbabwe and Zambia to replicate MASAP's market system development intervention on early generation seeds across districts *and* change the longstanding farmer subsidy programme in the two countries to foster agroecology and the cultivation of drought resilient crops.

Timeline: the above recommendations are all for the **short to medium term**. This recognizes that changes to the cooperation programme (approach) cannot be made overnight, whilst also stressing that all upcoming decisions should be in line with these recommendations (of course, only once they are accepted). An example would be to think twice about further pursuing the current entry proposals (on health and local governance in Zimbabwe).

The key words for the cooperation programmes future strategic orientation are thus: **focus and selectivity, a truly programmatic approach, and political engagement**. Textbox 6 offers our reflection on a responsible phase-out from Zambia. Finally, we did not include recommendations on the need for an *'economic transformation'* in Zimbabwe and to better define the Swiss interests (see Chapter 2). These are, however, things to keep in mind when developing the next cooperation program, working programmatically, and engaging politically.

Textbox 6 A responsible exit from Zambia?

The embassy understandably strives for a responsible phase out from Zambia. Generally, this means (i) honouring contracts, and (ii) helping partners to capitalize on, and strengthen the sustainability of, the results. The SDC has given the embassy four years to phase out the programme. As SDC project phases rarely exceed four years, this would speak for simply ending each engagement after the current project phase. However, the embassy also faces budget cuts: 15% for 2025 and maybe more thereafter. The question then becomes whether to shave x% of the budget across all interventions, or whether better to preliminary cut one or two projects. The embassy has just started two new interventions on health system strengthening in Zambia and gender in Zimbabwe. Both are in their inception phase; little work has yet been done. Maybe now is still the time to halt these projects and create budgetary room to effectively finish the embassy's other interventions in Zambia. Of course, the health sector in Zambia is already reverberating from USAID's exit, so should Switzerland really leave this sector now? A better candidate may be social protection which can count on significant support from the World Bank. The point is, there is also a case to be made for biting the bullet now (even if, in the short term, this associates one with questionable company).

Target audience: the SDC Africa division management

For heads of cooperation and Swiss cooperation offices to be able to truly *'think and act politically'*, we **recommend** to:

1. **Provide or reiterate the Swiss cooperation offices' mandate to engage politically** (of course under the tutelage and in close cooperation with the ambassador).
Reason: This makes explicit that (i) development (cooperation) is political, and (ii) the cooperation office, like PHRD, can engage with the political leadership of the country (as well as the economic and civil society leadership and reform actors of the country).
2. **Authorize the inclusion in the cooperation programme of a discretionary budget of about CHF 300-400k per year to support emerging and promising (political) development processes.**
Note: This refers to a budget 'carve out' that the Swiss embassy can allocate at its discretion (without much bureaucracy) to provide punctual support to emerging local reform processes, i.e., organize a dialogue between stakeholders, provide a peer or trainer on a specific topic, arrange for a professional facilitator, conduct a quick mapping study, etc. Point is that these are not 'project funds' / do not underlie the credit process.⁴⁴ Accountability can (and, of course, should) be provided in the annual report (process).
Reason: This recognizes that development cannot be planned in four-year cycles or confined to project interventions. Instead, it requires agility: an ability to respond to developments and opportunities. The proposed budget is a gut suggestion based on the fact that PHRD Zimbabwe had an operational budget of CHF 500-600k per year. The latter, however, was also partly tied to 'micro-projects'.
3. **Pilot a peer exchange mechanism between PHRD and the SDC.**
Reason: this enables SDC's heads of cooperation that (want to) work politically but have no human security advisor within their embassy to exchange experiences, solicit best practices, and cross-check ideas with experienced political operators within PHRD.

6.3. Main development results and institutional lessons

Evaluation question:

What lessons can be drawn, and does the programme have (innovative) approaches which should be scaled ... or replicated elsewhere?

Target audience: the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service.

The SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service may want to highlight the following development results in its **accountability reporting**:

- MASAP: contract farming and ZARI's ability to sell EGS resolved a market barrier and allows for the cultivation at scale of drought-resilient small grains and legumes.
- Zvandiri: peer support is an effective way for ensuring that children, adolescents, and young people living with HIV access antiretroviral treatment and gain confidence.⁴⁵
- SSP: Switzerland contributed to using the SCT system for shock-response social cash transfer, including by using it for the insurance pay-out from the Africa Risk Capacity.
- PHRD: political engagement with the political leadership of Zimbabwe resulted in cross-party dialogue, a peace pledge, and contributed to the abolishment of the death penalty.

⁴⁴ Even though the SDC and PHRD are both part of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, PHRD's financial approval processes are, ostensibly, lighter than for the cooperation programme budget. For this envisaged discretionary budget, the financial approval procedures may be brought on par with the current PHRD procedures.

⁴⁵ There is probably a larger story to tell around Switzerland's contribution to successfully (close to) end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe as Switzerland implemented multiple projects to that purpose. This evaluation, however, did not cover these other projects.

The evaluation offers the following **lessons** for Swiss development cooperation:

- The textbook Market System Development (MSD) intervention of MASAP on the production of EGS is likely to foster development impact at a larger scale than supporting individual agri-processing businesses (as often practiced under the MSD banner).
- PHRD's political engagement showcases that development is an emerging, evolutionary, process that can be triggered and accompanied, but not planned. It calls to mind SDC's political engagement in Nepal (conflict resolution, constitutionalism, and federalization) and Ukraine (on decentralization and e-governance).
- The embassy's strategy notes offer an approach/blueprint for making the annual reporting on cooperation programmes more evaluative and strategic (see epilogue).

Epilogue: on management

Introduction

After the field mission, the leadership of the SDC Africa division asked the evaluation team to offer a reflection on the ‘management’ of the cooperation programme. The leadership understood that this was not part of the evaluation mandate⁴⁶ but trusted that, based on our findings, we could put our two cents in. This could help identify or confirm the critical issues to engage on with the embassy over the next two years. This epilogue responds to this call. It builds on our readings, observations, and the previous chapters’ findings. Still, the reflection is impressionistic, the writing not evaluative. We do not claim to be comprehensive, either in scope or argumentation. It is, indeed, our two cents.

The management questions

The SDC Africa division voiced the following indicative sets of questions:

- How useful were the embassy’s seven strategy notes?
- How is the collaboration between the diplomatic and development section? Does the embassy have the requisite staff profile to respond to the priorities and opportunities?
- Is the programme setting the right priorities and sufficiently thematically/geographically focused? Is the embassy contributing to the right development partner working groups?
- How is the embassy dealing with/incorporating SDC foci, such as localization, decentralization, and nexus thinking?

As Switzerland will phase-out of Zambia, our answers focus on Zimbabwe.

Note upfront

If anything, the Swiss embassy appeared to be on top of things. This showed through:

- the strategy notes: the fact that they were prepared, evaluative in their approach, and self-critical, for example *‘the absence of open conflict ... has led our work to be peace-blind ... our efforts lack proactive and intentional implementation under a specific strategic vision with measurable outcomes’*,
- the expressed knowledge of the political development context and project portfolio, and
- their connection to, and appreciation/rave reviews by, SDC headquarter staff and development partners in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Succinct answers

How useful were the embassy’s seven strategy notes?

That depends on the follow-up. The proof of the pudding is in eating it. The notes have been prepared; the reflection made. Now, it is decision-time. What changes in the programme will they herald? Chapter 6 offers the evaluation’s recommendations to this end. Having said that, we view the strategy notes positively - deserving replication by other offices - as:

- most (although not all) are evaluative: stating their intent, succinctly presenting key data points, providing critical analysis, formulating tentative conclusions, and proposing follow-up action (as such, they could be a model for the annual report,
- they empowered individual staff to self-reflect on the programme, offered an instrument for collective reflection, and signalled an explicit attempt to reflect on priority-setting, and
- aligned the thinking/position of headquarters and embassy on the development cooperation with Zambia (prior to the decision to phase out of the country).

⁴⁶ These questions were part of cooperation programme evaluations in the past. The Evaluation and Controlling specialist service revised the evaluation concept in 2024 (SDC, 2024a). The new concept is defined around the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. Programme management plays a subordinate role in these criteria, as a contributing, neutral, or hindering factor in the programme’s development effectiveness.

How is the collaboration between the diplomatic and development section? Does the embassy have the requisite staff profile to respond to the priorities and opportunities?

On the first question: excellent, with room for further improvement. The ambassador and head of cooperation exchange daily. Both are all too aware of the fact that politics and development are two sides of the same coin and want to better link the two. It's added value that the current ambassador stems from PHRD, worked on Zimbabwe's land reclamation issues, and with the human security advisor on conflict prevention and dealing with the past (before PHRD left the country at the end of 2023). The plan is that the ambassador will share PHRD's experience with and approach to 'political engagement' with the cooperation office staff. The latter is important for three reasons (all emerging from the evaluation):

- in Zimbabwe, progress can only be made where it fits the narrative of the ruling party; one therefore needs to uncover this narrative and the political interests involved,
- the cooperation office has limited direct personal interaction with the (political) leadership in government, and
- cooperation office staff have limited experience with political engagement, as:
 - the programme is transitioning from a regional to a bilateral programme and the office is still building up its in-country network, and
 - the SDC traditionally engages on a technical/policy level.

Looking forward, the management challenges are to:

- effectively use the ambassador to expand the political dialogue to 'development', for example about the requisite 'economic transformation' (see Chapter 2),
- ensure the cooperation office staff see the value and have the competencies to engage with the political leadership of the country,
- find an effective division of labour and coordination between the work of the ambassador and the cooperation office⁴⁷, and
- keep the local political advisor to the ambassador, i.e., secure budget.

Does the embassy set the right priorities? Is the programme sufficiently focused, thematically and geographically? And is the embassy contributing to the right development partner working groups?

Thematic focus. The embassy has reflected on the programme (priorities). The evaluation concluded that there is a need to focus and double-down on a select number of successful interventions to see whether the results can be brought to scale. Above, we alluded to the fact that it is decision-time. Care should be taken not to take away the embassy's room for manoeuvring beforehand. The embassy has just started a new gender programme and is working on three entry proposals (on decentralization, health system strengthening, and urban resilience). The risk is that these will absorb the embassy's discretionary headroom and not allow the scaling of successful current interventions (through a 'programmatic approach'). We therefore recommend reconsidering these entry proposals (see Chapter 6).

Geographic focus. We did not investigate the geographic spread of the portfolio during the evaluation. It did not emerge as an issue during our interviews. Appendix B shows that the project portfolio is more geographically focused in Zambia than in Zimbabwe. It also shows that some projects in Zimbabwe cover the same districts. The embassy wants new projects within the same or overlapping thematic area, and which have a '*clear geographic landing*', to converge in at least one or two locations.

⁴⁷ The simple and formal division of labour is that the ambassador and the head of cooperation (with the blessing of the ambassador) deal with the 'political' leadership (president, ministers, economic elite), and the cooperation office exchanges with the civil servants. But sometimes this belies the on-the-ground reality, where programme managers may count ministers to their network and can approach these 'informally'. That's why teamwork is needed.

The question to ask, however, is whether these projects have concrete complementarities and synergies (see also Chapter 3). Moreover, its merit depends on the involvement, functioning, and power of district governments. Within the unitary state of Zimbabwe without a clear decentralization reform agenda, this is not self-evident. If geographic focus supports or evidences development effectiveness, fine; otherwise, it may not be a core concern. Finally, the embassy consciously works with contributions, limiting its say in geographic focus.

Development partner working group participation. The fact that Switzerland has reinvigorated the development partner working group in Zimbabwe is positive as networking, information exchange, and coordination are important. Which sub working groups, Switzerland participates in should really be a function of its thematic priorities (see above). The embassy is well-recognized for its engagement in social protection, health, and agroecology.

How is the embassy dealing with/incorporating SDC foci, such as localization, decentralization, and nexus thinking?

The short answer is all three. This is perhaps to its own detriment as focus and selectivity are key to achieving results at scale (as argued). Having said that, the strategy notes covered localization and nexus-thinking. Section 2.4 explained that Switzerland is both using country systems, and is intent on expanding this, thereby strengthening the localization of its cooperation. The humanitarian aid-development nexus is well-reflected in the programme (e.g., shock-responsive social protection, drought response/resilience, crisis modifiers). The evaluation argued that the embassy is right in continuing PHRD's previous engagement with five CSOs to work on more democratic governance but also suggested to approach governance transversally and expand the political dialogue to 'economic transformation'.

Conclusion: the critical 'management' issues for the next years

Based on the above reflections *and* this evaluation's findings, conclusions, and recommendations (see Chapter 6), the following topics deserve management's attention:

- pushing and supporting the embassy to be 'bold' in focusing its resources on a few thematic challenges and taking a programmatic approach in addressing them,
- strengthening the mandate, competencies, tools, and resources of the Swiss cooperation office for their political engagement,
- piloting the use of governments systems in the development cooperation within a politically incongruous and risky environment, and
- explicating the Swiss interests in cooperation with Zimbabwe and integrating this in the next cooperation programme's results framework and theory of change (see Chapter 2).

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Appendices

A Portfolio overview

Table 11 Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-23

#	Swiss Portfolio Outcomes (SPO)	Status	Project name	Acronym	Continental Yes/No	Regional Yes/No	Country Zimbabwe Zambia	Start	End		
1	SPO 1: Improved food security and higher incomes	Phase out	7F-07807 Rural Resilience & Integr. Risk Mgt*	R4		YES	X	X	01/07/2021	30/06/2025	
2		Current	7F-08781 Seed and Knowledge Initiative	SKI		YES	X	X	01/06/2013	28/02/2027	
3			7F-10511 Markets and Seeds Access Project	MASAP			X	X	01/08/2020	31/12/2033	
4			Phase out	7F-10595 Urban FS and Resilience Programme*	UFRBP			X		15/10/2020	31/10/2024
5		Outcome 1.2: Economic opportunities and (self)employment increased in food systems & climate resilient crops	Current	7F-10076 Scaling-up youth empl.agric.initiative	OYE			X	X	01/08/2018	30/04/2032
6				7F-10713 BUILD fund	BUILD	YES		X	X	01/10/2022	30/11/2032
7				7F-10845 EEP Africa Trust Fund	EEP	YES		X	X	15/11/2021	14/11/2029
8			New	7F-10712 Transformative Urban Resilience for All	TURFA			X	X	01/01/2025	30/06/2037
9	SPO 2: Improved health and resilience	Phase out	7F-10204 Future Life-Now!*	FLN		YES	X	X	01/01/2019	31/12/2030	
10			7F-08713 Safeguard Young People*	SYP		YES	X	X	01/04/2013	30/09/2026	
11		Current	7F-10603 Our Rights,Our Lives,Our Future	O3+			X	X	01/10/2020	31/08/2033	
12			7F-10714 Zvandiri Programme	Zvandiri			X		01/11/2021	31/10/2029	
13			7F-10972 Strengthening the National HIV Response*	NLC			X		15/06/2023	31/12/2027	
14		New	7F-11357 Health Systems Project-Zambia	SHIELD				X	01/07/2024	31/10/2036	
15			7F-11368 Health Systems Zimbabwe	Health ZIM			X		01/06/2025	31/05/2037	
16		Outcome 2.2: Social protection and DRR systems are strenghtened	Current	7F-10484 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation	ARC	YES		X	X	01/11/2021	31/10/2031
17	7F-10919 Strengthening Social Protection Zambia			SSP				X	15/06/2022	31/10/2030	
18	New		7F-10715 Strengthening Foundations for Social Protection in Zimbabwe	FOSTER			X		01/12/2024	30/11/2028	
19	SPO 3: More accountable, participatory, and inclusive governance	Phase out	7F-08562 Accountability in Health & Agriculture*	PSA		YES	X	X	01/07/2019	31/12/2024	
20		New	7F-11355 Local Governance Project	LOGO			X		01/01/2025	31/12/2032	
21			7F-11397 Securing Women's Social & Economic Right	SAGE			X		15/07/2024	31/10/2036	
22		New	7F-11112 Diverse Pathways to Good Governance	DP4P			X		01/08/2024	31/01/2029	
23			7F-10466 Swiss Support to Arts Development in Zimbabwe	ARTS			X		01/09/2024	30/09/2028	
Small actions &			7F-02102 Small Action SCO in Harare	SA 1			X		01/11/1987	31/12/2025	
			One-off HA* 7F-11366 Zimbabwe El Nino Response	El Nino			X		01/08/2024	31/07/2025	

Note 1: Chapter 1 gave an overall budget envelop for the cooperation programme of CHF 106 million. The table suggests a budget envelop of CHF 115 million. The difference is 'overplanning', a regular practice as not all planned expenditures will be realized.

Note 2: This table and the next tables have been compiled based on:

- SDC SAP portfolio data (dated 30 September 2024)
- Summary financial planning (dated 14 October 2024 and an update 20 January 2025)
- Dashboard Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia Portfolio (received 1 November 2024)
- Actual cooperation portfolio 2024 Zambia (Note on the implementation of the Swiss Cooperation Programme in Zambia, Annex 1, dated 18 June 2024)
- Project factsheets
- Updated inputs by the Swiss embassy (dated 26 March 2025)

Status	Project name	Acronym	Start	End	Actual 2023	Budget 2024	2025	2026	Total
Phase out	7F-07807 Rural Resilience & Integr. Risk Mgt*	R4	01/07/2021	30/06/2025	CHF 1.520.000	CHF 1.080.000	CHF 190.000	CHF 0	CHF 2.790.000
Current	7F-08781 Seed and Knowledge Initiative	SKI	01/06/2013	28/02/2027	CHF 882.700	CHF 1.000.000	CHF 975.000	CHF 900.000	CHF 3.757.700
	7F-10511 Markets and Seeds Access Project	MASAP	01/08/2020	31/12/2033	CHF 2.406.576	CHF 2.166.004	CHF 2.650.000	CHF 2.414.987	CHF 9.637.567
Phase out	7F-10595 Urban FS and Resilience Programme*	UFRBP	15/10/2020	31/10/2024	CHF 2.884.200	CHF 527.713	CHF 0	CHF 0	CHF 3.411.913
Current	7F-10076 Scaling-up youth empl.agric.initiative	OYE	01/08/2018	30/04/2032	CHF 390.150	CHF 1.421.205	CHF 1.242.000	CHF 1.244.000	CHF 4.297.355
	7F-10713 BUILD fund	BUILD	01/10/2022	30/11/2032	CHF 3.393.210	CHF 285.380	CHF 1.850.000	CHF 1.910.000	CHF 7.438.590
	7F-10845 EEP Africa Trust Fund	EEP	15/11/2021	14/11/2029	CHF 1.732.564	CHF 2.375.000	CHF 950.000	CHF 2.600.000	CHF 7.657.564
New	7F-10712 Transformative Urban Resilience for All	TURFA	01/01/2025	30/06/2037	CHF 0	CHF 0	CHF 125.000	CHF 2.250.000	CHF 2.375.000
Phase out	7F-10204 Future Life-Now!*	FLN	01/01/2019	31/12/2030	CHF 1.817.784	CHF 909.521	CHF 360.578	CHF 0	CHF 3.087.883
	7F-08713 Safeguard Young People*	SYP	01/04/2013	30/09/2026	CHF 2.568.796	CHF 2.272.500	CHF 1.738.735	CHF 552.675	CHF 7.132.706
Current	7F-10603 Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future	O3+	01/10/2020	31/08/2033	CHF 2.391.636	CHF 2.275.240	CHF 1.788.624	CHF 1.500.000	CHF 7.955.500
	7F-10714 Zvandiri Programme	Zvandiri	01/11/2021	31/10/2029	CHF 1.499.450	CHF 1.284.136	CHF 1.867.186	CHF 2.297.550	CHF 6.948.321
	7F-10972 Strengthening the National HIV Response*	NLC	15/06/2023	31/12/2027	CHF 1.256.200	CHF 1.089.046	CHF 950.000	CHF 900.000	CHF 4.195.246
New	7F-11357 Health Systems Project-Zambia	SHIELD	01/07/2024	31/10/2036	CHF 0	CHF 1.228.395	CHF 829.313	CHF 1.740.775	CHF 3.798.483
	7F-11368 Health Systems Zimbabwe	Health ZIM	01/06/2025	31/05/2037	CHF 0	CHF 0	CHF 0	CHF 1.450.000	CHF 1.450.000
Current	7F-10484 Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation	ARC	01/11/2021	31/10/2031	CHF 1.615.000	CHF 1.228.500	CHF 1.233.000	CHF 2.260.000	CHF 6.336.500
	7F-10919 Strengthening Social Protection Zambia	SSP	15/06/2022	31/10/2030	CHF 1.855.000	CHF 4.100.000	CHF 2.550.000	CHF 3.200.000	CHF 11.705.000
New	7F-10715 Strengthening Foundations for Social Protection in Zimbabwe	FOSTER	01/12/2024	30/11/2028	CHF 0	CHF 1.502.000	CHF 2.684.000	CHF 1.330.000	CHF 5.516.000
Phase out	7F-08562 Accountability in Health & Agriculture*	PSA	01/07/2019	31/12/2024	CHF 631.182	CHF 930.222	CHF 429.100	CHF 0	CHF 1.990.504
New	7F-11355 Local Governance Project	LOGO	01/01/2025	31/12/2032	CHF 0	CHF 0	CHF 1.000.000	CHF 1.000.000	CHF 2.000.000
	7F-11397 Securing Women's Social & Economic Right	SAGE	15/07/2024	31/10/2036	CHF 0	CHF 663.065	CHF 1.967.500	CHF 1.855.000	CHF 4.485.565
New	7F-11112 Diverse Pathways to Good Governance	DP4P	01/08/2024	31/01/2029	CHF 0	CHF 563.195	CHF 675.000	CHF 950.000	CHF 2.188.195
	7F-10466 Swiss Support to Arts Development in Zimbabwe	ARTS	01/09/2024	30/09/2028	CHF 0	CHF 280.819	CHF 403.879	CHF 421.420	CHF 1.106.118
	7F-02102 Small Action SCO in Harare	SA 1	01/11/1987	31/12/2025	CHF 99.467	CHF 286.410	CHF 1.011.667	CHF 0	CHF 1.397.544
One-off HA*	7F-11366 Zimbabwe El Nino Response	El Nino	01/08/2024	31/07/2025	CHF 0	CHF 1.972.800	CHF 524.000	CHF 0	CHF 2.496.800
					CHF 26.943.915	CHF 29.441.150	CHF 27.994.581	CHF 30.776.407	CHF 115.156.053

Acronym	Type	Phase	Main contractor / implementing agency	Co-funding	Sector	Gender classification
R4	Contribution	3	WFP	Green Climate Fund	Agricultural development	n/a
SKI	Contribution	3	AFSA	Bread of the World, Swedbio	Agricultural development	Significant
MASAP	Mandate	1	NIRAS		Household food security	Significant
UFRBP	Contribution	1	WFP	USA, UK, France, EU, UN	Household food security	Significant
OYE	Contribution	2	SNV	Sweden	Employment creation	Significant
BUILD	Contribution	1	UNCDF & Bamboo Capital Partners		Private sector development	n/a
EOP	Contribution	2	Nordic Development Fund	Netherlands, Austria, Finland	Renewable energy generation	Significant
TURFA	Contribution		To be decided		Household food security	Significant
FLN	Contribution	2	Media in Education Trust Africa (MIET)		STIs including HIV/AIDS	Significant
SYP	Contribution	4	UNFPA	Netherlands, EU	Sexual and reproductive health rights	Significant
O3+	Contribution	1	UNESCO		Sexual and reproductive health rights	Significant
Zvandiri	Contribution	1	Zvandiri	PEPFAR, National Aids Council	STIs including HIV/AIDS	Significant
NLC	Contribution	1	Rüdi Lüthy Foundation		STIs including HIV/AIDS	Significant
SHIELD	Contribution	1	Solidarmed & CHAI	Sweden, UK, LED, HILTI	Health system strengthening	Significant
Health ZIM	Contribution	1	To be decided		Health system strengthening	n/a
ARC	Contribution	2	African Risk Capacity		Climate change adaptation	n/a
SSP	Contribution	2	World Bank & Unicef	UK, Sweden, Germany, Ireland	Social protection	Significant
FOSTER	Contribution	1	World Bank & Unicef		Social protection	Significant
PSA	Mandate	2	Action Aid International		Public financial management	Significant
LOGO	Contribution	1	GIZ		Decentralization	n/a
SAGE	Contribution	1	UN Women	EU	Women's equality organizations	Significant
DP4P	Contribution	1	Zimbabwe Institute	EU, Denmark	Democratic participation	Significant
ARTS	Contribution	1	Diverse		Culture	n/a
SA 1						
EI Nino	Contribution				Emergency food assistance	Significant



Cooperation Programme Evaluation Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26

Specialist Service Evaluation and Controlling – SDC

Annexes (volume II)



April 2025

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Acronyms

CHF	Swiss franc
CSO	Civil society organizations
EGS	Early generation seeds
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus, a retrovirus which causes AIDS
MERV	Monitoring system for development-relevant changes, SDC internal document
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PHRD	Peace and Human Rights Division, FDFA, Switzerland
SCO	Swiss cooperation office
SCT	Social Cash Transfers
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

1 Cooperation programme evaluations: methodology

A purposeful, qualitative, and theory-based inquiry

Cooperation programme evaluations are purposeful, structured, theory-based, and qualitative inquiries into the development effectiveness of the Swiss cooperation programmes. Purposeful, because the evaluations seek answers to the six lead evaluation questions of the SDC. Structured, as the evaluations are organized around and address the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. Theory-based, because the evaluations take the programme's underlying theory of change as reference point to assess the programme contribution to the observed development results and draw lessons on '*what worked, what didn't and why*'. And, finally, qualitative, as the evaluations rely on the insights and perspectives from interviews and documentation to offer a descriptive analysis and assessment of the programmes.

A structured process

The cooperation programme evaluations are structured in three phases:

1. an inception phase to determine and mutually agree on (i) the context, purpose, use, scope, judgement criteria, and approach of the evaluation, (ii) the evaluation benchmark and the programme's theory of change, (iii) the sampling strategy, (iv) the field mission outline, including prospective key informants, and (v) the workplan and evaluation report outline, culminating into an inception report which serves as reference point to the evaluation,
2. an evaluation phase to purposefully collect and analyse data to answer the main evaluation questions, resulting in a concise, albeit comprehensive, evaluation report, and
3. a review and capitalization phase to:
 - double-check the factual correctness of the underlying data,
 - ensure the clarity of the evaluation findings and recommendations, and
 - jointly discuss and capitalize on the evaluation findings and recommendations.

An external and peer review

The evaluations are conducted by a team of two external evaluators and two SDC employees. The two external evaluators consist of:

- an international evaluation specialist, who is the team lead and principal evaluation specialist, and who carries full responsibility for delivering a quality evaluation in time, managing the evaluation process, and writing the inception and evaluation reports, and
- a local development specialist, who (i) inserts local context and sector knowledge in the team, enabling a context-sensitive evaluation and evaluation findings, and (ii) helps organize the field mission, collect local (quantitative) data, and provide translator services when necessary.

The two SDC employees are experienced development experts who either are or have been heads of cooperation in a Swiss embassy or Swiss cooperation office or bring specific (thematic or regional) experience to the evaluation. The two SDC employees serve as 'peer' to the evaluators, the Swiss embassy, and the responsible SDC geographic section.

Jointly, the two evaluators and the two peers offer an external and quasi-internal perspective on the cooperation programme under evaluation. Importantly, the joint field mission allows the team members an in-depth and continues exchange, sharing experiences and insights, based on the field observations.

Document review

The document review is carried out during the inception phase and during the evaluation phase prior to the field mission. The purpose of the document review is to:

- understand the design, scope, and intent of the cooperation programme,
- reconstruct the cooperation programme's theory of change per Swiss portfolio outcome,
- collect stories and data on the development effectiveness of the programme, and
- contextualize the Swiss results against the local development context.

The review covers all relevant documentation:

- programme documentation: cooperation programme, results framework, annual reports,

- SDC documentation: MERV, internal control system, office management report,
- project documentation: credit proposals, annual reports, outcome monitoring summary,
- project evaluation reports, mid-term reviews, and self-evaluations of the last 3 years,
- government visions, strategies, policies and plans, and
- a purposeful selection of third-party country and sector studies.

The evaluators take handwritten notes on the document review and code these notes based on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and the specific topics of interest of the primary intended users of the evaluation. These notes serve as basis for the deductive analysis.

Reconstructing the theory of change

Any development programme rests on a set of assumptions on how to effectively and sustainably affect change. Jointly, these assumptions form a programme's theory of change. These assumptions are about:

- with which individuals, groups or organizations the programme anticipates opportunities for development,
- how these so-called boundary partners¹ can be empowered to make use of the development opportunities,
- how these boundary partners will respond to both the support received and the development opportunities, and
- the outcomes and impacts which the actions and behavioural change of the boundary partners will invoke.

The theory of change goes beyond the logical framework. The latter states the inputs and activities, as well as the envisaged outputs, outcomes and impacts. The theory of change explains the causal mechanisms which cause the outputs, outcomes and impacts. It explicates the incentives, responses, and actions of key stakeholders which prelude and are responsible for the achievement of the envisaged outputs, outcomes and impacts. The theory of change thus details the pathway of change. It is more detailed and explanatory than the logical framework. A programme's theory of change can be reconstructed by completing the '*if-then statements*' inherent in a logical framework by answering the '*because*'-part of the argument, resulting in '*if-then-because*'-statements.²

By confirming or reconstructing the theory of change, one captures the commonly understood vision on how a programme is to leverage action for or directly affect development. By testing the theory of change, one offers the opportunity to compare the (implicit) working assumptions of a programme with what actually transpires on-the-ground, and from this comparison, to learn.

A theory of change can be tested through a so-called contribution analysis³. This answers the following 5 questions: (i) are the assumptions underlying the theory of change plausible and uncontested? (ii) did the envisaged activities take place? (iii) is there evidence that the assumed changes in behaviour, decisions and actions occurred in practice? (iv) were the envisaged results achieved? (v) could other contextual factors have reasonably and significantly contributed to the results? The answers to these five questions tell whether the theory holds up in practice and the extent to which any results can be attributed to the programme.

¹ The International Development Research Center in Ottawa, Canada, defines boundary partners as '*individuals, groups or organizations with whom a program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence*' (Earl, Carden and Smutylo 2001).

² The methodological approach rests on: Leeuw, F. L. (2003). Reconstructing Program Theories; Methods Available and Problems to be Solved. *American Journal of Evaluation*, Volume 24(Nr. 1), pg. 5-20; Morra Imas, L. G., & Rist, R. C. (2009). *The Road to Results. Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations*. Washington DC: The World Bank; and Patton, Michael Quin. 2002. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Third edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

³ Based on John Mayne (2008). Contribution analysis: An approach to exploring cause and effect. ILAC Brief 16.

Key informant interviews

The key informant interviews are conducted virtually prior to the field mission and in-person during the two-week field mission. The purpose of the key informant interviews is to:

- discuss in-depth the main themes/questions of the evaluation,
- collect qualitative information on the development effectiveness of the programme, and,
- collectively with the key informants reflect on and draw out the main lessons learned from the programme implementation.

Key informants are purposefully selected based on their function, expertise, and/or the sampling strategy. Key informant groups include: the Swiss embassy, its boundary partners, government and sector representatives, development partners, beneficiaries, and independent experts, and in Switzerland staff from the SDC headquarters, and as applicable, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, and the Peace and Human Rights Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

An interview checklist/guide is prepared prior to the key informant interviews. These interviews are conducted semi-structured. This means that we start all interviews in an open, non-judgmental fashion and invite each interview partner to express their involvement, experiences, and views freely. This provides unbiased answers, tend to cover (roughly) 30% of the interview guide and provide insight into which other questions are likely to receive informative answers (often another 20 – 30% of the questions). We then focus the interviews on the remaining relevant questions as well as on emerging themes stemming from the document review and the interviews.

The evaluators take hand-written notes on the interviews and code these notes based on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and the specific topics of interest of the primary intended users of the evaluation. These notes serve as a basis for the deductive analysis.

Data analysis methods

Cooperation programme evaluations apply various data analysis techniques for answering the evaluation questions:

- **inductive analysis:** 'making sense' of the collected data during the data collection (for example the field mission) and identify 'emerging themes and patterns',
- **deductive analysis:** 'a structured analysis' of the collected data to specifically answer the evaluation questions,
- **comparative analysis:** a structured comparison between targets and reported quantitative results and/or between qualitative ambitions and external quantitative data sources, including international indices,
- **contribution analysis:** a structured and qualitative inquiry to ascertain to what extent Switzerland 'contributed' to the observed results or whether other contextual factors were responsible,
- **follow-the-money analysis:** based on the expenditure profile of the cooperation programme and drawing on the results of the contribution analysis, assess whether - in hindsight - better results could have been achieved with a different resource allocation,
- **peer review:** the two peers on the evaluation and the Swiss embassy engage in an open and continuous dialogue, sharing and comparing experiences and perspectives based on the collected data and discussions,
- **triangulation:** findings and conclusions rest on data stemming from different categories of key informants and/or documents, different data analysis methods, and consensus amongst the evaluators and SDC peers, i.e., there has been a triangulation across data sources, data analysis methods, and evaluators.

Evaluative reporting

The evaluation report is the product of the above lines of analysis and internal evaluation team dialogue. The report is structured along the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. The specific interests of the primary intended users of the evaluations are integrated in the relevant chapters. Each substantive chapter and/or section of the report:

- explicitly defines the question at hand and the ex-ante judgement criteria (see evaluation design matrix),
- presents the main jest of the collected data, including contradictory information,
- analyses the collected information based on the judgement criteria, and
- offers an evaluative conclusion based on this analysis, i.e., a conclusion which flows logically from the presented data and analysis.

The evaluation report closes with:

- an overall conclusion around the primary intended users' main areas of interest,
- the main development results and (institutional) lessons from the programme, and
- a set of recommendations, which detail the target audience, the suggested timeframe for implementation, a succinct explanation, and possible actions.

2 Evaluation design matrix

The table below lists the standard evaluation questions and details the judgement criteria, the data collection methods, the data sources, and the data analysis approaches per question for this evaluation. The table offers a concise overview of the scope of and approach to the evaluation.

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria/dimensions	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
Relevance				
1. To what extent does the cooperation programme's objectives and design respond to the recipient countries, target groups, and the Swiss government needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recipient country: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – development challenges as gleaned from macro-economic data (e.g., poverty rates, human development index, etc.) – formal policy objectives (taken from national plans and policies) – policy actions (comparing stated objectives with lived experience) – Target groups' needs, demands, and own initiatives – The relevant Swiss international cooperation strategies, (sub)-objectives, and the three criteria for the strategic orientation of Swiss international cooperation (recipient country needs, Swiss interests, and Swiss value-added). <p>Changes in development context (as gleaned from, amongst others, the Monitoring for development relevant context changes), promising dynamics/initiatives in the recipient country, the room the cooperation programme (and its instruments) offer to adapt, and how the Swiss embassy adapted the programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Document review – Key informant interviews 	<p>Document review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cooperation Programme – National statistics and international indices scores – National visions, strategies, and development plans – Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24 and 2025-28 – Sub-Sahara Africa Guidelines – MERVs & annual reports – Country and sector studies <p>Key informants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Government officials – Swiss boundary partners – CSOs – Beneficiaries – Implementing agencies – Independent experts – Youth associations – Business associations – Development partners – Swiss Embassy – PHRD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inductive and deductive analysis – Peer review

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria/dimensions	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
Coherence				
2. To what extent is the cooperation programme internally and externally coherent?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The extent to which the development diplomacy⁴, project interventions, and small actions⁵ of the programme are complementary⁶ to, or exploit synergies⁶ (i) between each other, and (ii) with interventions from the recipient government, recipient country private sector/civil society actors, and other international development partners. – The extent to which development diplomacy, policy dialogue, and donor coordination strengthen above complementarities and synergies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Key informants 	Key informants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inductive and deductive analysis – Peer review
Effectiveness				
3. To what extent is the cooperation programme likely to achieve its Swiss portfolio outcomes, what are the contributing and hindering factors, what lessons can be drawn, and does the programme have (innovative) approaches which should be scaled in-country or replicated elsewhere?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Swiss portfolio outcomes and the underlying theory of change – Did the programme theories hold up in practice or not and why, and how did they evolve/were they refined? – To what extent has the cooperation programme helped the creation of new, positive, unexpected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Document review – Key informant interviews 	Document review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Annual reports – The results framework – Selected project-level program documents, theories of change, annual reports, and evaluations Key informants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Same as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inductive and deductive analysis – Comparative analysis – Contribution analysis – Peer review

⁴ Diplomacy is *‘the profession, activity, or skill of managing international relations, typically by a country's representatives abroad’* (Definition from Oxford Languages, Google Dictionary). Development diplomacy refers to the use of the Swiss Embassy / good offices to engage in a political exchange with the political and economic leadership of a country on their development agenda. It serves to identify the reform space and garner (further) support for development.

⁵ Small actions are one-time interventions with a value of CHF 200,000 or less. They can be decided upon at the sole discretion of the Swiss embassy and can serve strategic objectives or foster cultural exchange.

⁶ ‘Complementary’ means that two (or more) interventions address different aspects of a development challenge thereby offering a more comprehensive redress of the challenge at hand. Complementarity is about improving the overall development ‘effectiveness’. ‘Synergy’ allows two (or more) development interventions to achieve the same goal with less resources or better results with the same level of resources. ‘Synergy’ implies greater development ‘efficiency’.

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria/dimensions	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
	orientations, processes, developments? – What approaches are being scaled up or replicated?			
Impact				
4. To what extent is the cooperation programme likely to contribute to its overall goal?	– Cooperation programme goal statement and the underlying theory of change – To what extent is the cooperation programme contributing to new, emerging, positive or negative, developments, and especially also why and how, to the benefit of whom and what, and to the expense of whom and what?	– Document review – Key informant interviews	Same as above	– Inductive and deductive analysis – Contribution analysis – Peer review
Efficiency				
5. Could better results have been achieved through a different allocation of resources?	– Based on the contribution analysis under the effectiveness criteria, to review whether - with hindsight - a different allocation of resources is likely to achieve better results or whether the cooperation programme used its available resources to the maximum. (Note: this evaluation question serves learning.)	– Document review – Key informant interviews	– Same as above	– Follow-the money analysis – Deductive and contribution analysis – Peer review

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria/dimensions	Data collection methods	Data sources	Data analysis methods
Sustainability				
6. To what extent are the net benefits of the cooperation programme likely to continue without further Swiss support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The extent to which the SDC empowered systemic actors and organizations, which have the interest, incentive, capacity, (political) power, and tenacity to continue the requisite actions without further external (Swiss) support. – Programme and project-level theories of change – Actual actions to enhance sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Document review – Key informant interviews 	– Same as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Inductive and deductive analysis – Contribution analysis Peer review

3 Theory of change

The cooperation programme pursues six lines of intervention. Each has its own theory of change. This appendix captures these theories of change. The main report explained why we used these lines of intervention as our reference point for evaluating the cooperation programme. The cooperation programme, however, had formulated the theory of change at the level of the Swiss portfolio outcomes, not at the level of these lines of intervention. We reconstructed the theories of change based on the project documentation and discussions with the Swiss embassy staff. The Swiss embassy confirmed that these reconstructed theories of change are broadly correct. As we only used these theories of change as an entry point to our inquiry and analysis, and we did not ‘evaluate’ the individual lines of intervention, this was considered sufficient.⁷

1. Agricultural production, value-chains, and food security:

IF the SDC supports government extension services, civil society organizations, private input suppliers, and financial institutions to adapt their offering to the challenges posed by climate change to small scale agricultural production,

THEN smallholder farmers will (i) diversify to nutritious and climate change resilient crops (e.g., sorghum, millet, ground nuts), (ii) adopt better seed varieties and good agroecological practices, (iii) realize more stable harvests across different years, (iv) improve their food and income security, and (v) enhance their resilience,

BECAUSE

- government extension services, civil society organizations, private input suppliers, and financial institutions offer relevant and affordable knowledge, inputs, and services,
- smallholders have the interest, incentive, capacity, knowledge, resources, and market access to shift to traditional crops, use different seed varieties, and adopt good agroecological practices, and
- markets work to spread these new and better practices geographically to reach a scale that goes beyond the project interventions.

2. Economic empowerment, employment, and entrepreneurship.

IF the SDC works with local and international partners to increase the life, business, and vocational skills of especially women and youth and support their access to finance, markets and employment opportunities in in Zimbabwe and Zambia,

THEN these women and youth will find gainful formal employment or start/expand their own business,

BECAUSE

- the targeted women and youth have the incentive, interests, resources, capacity, power, and tenacity to go through the training, seek employment and/or start/expand their own business,
- the government effectively addresses gender norms, market barriers, and the challenges related to the predominantly informal economy, and
- project interventions complement each other to allow women, youth, and SMEs to graduate to the next level of support and business growth.

⁷ In other words, it was not deemed cost-effective for the Swiss embassy staff to define these theories of change more precisely. Note: see also the appendix in the main volume on the suggested future formulation of the cooperation programme results framework and theories of change.

3. **Primary health care:**

IF the SDC and its implementing partners (i) engage in a policy dialogue with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the allocation efficiency and organization of primary health care (including the introduction of 'integrated service packages', as per WHO standard, in primary health care clinics), (ii) coordinate their work with other donors, (iii) invest in decentralized training of nurses, and (iv) introduce data-driven public financial, management practices and accountability and monitoring mechanisms in the Ministry of Health,

THEN the Ministry of Health will reduce inefficiencies across the health sector, public primary health care facilities will and can offer 'integrated services packages', and more people, especially in rural areas, will access basic, good quality, primary health care services at public primary health care clinics,

BECAUSE

- the Ministry of Health has the incentive, interests, resources, capacity, political power, and tenacity to invest in strengthening primary health care delivery,
- working conditions and pay are sufficient to attract the necessary number of nurses for the primary health care clinics, including in rural areas,
- the target groups for the nursing training have the capacities to complete the decentralized nursing training and the interest to work in rural remote health clinics, and
- the Ministry of Health staff have the capacities incentive, interests, resources, capacity, power, and tenacity to adopt good management practices.

4. **On cash transfers and climate insurance:**

IF the SDC supports (i) the World Bank and UNICEF in working with the relevant ministries⁸ in Zimbabwe and Zambia to strengthen and expand the government's shock-responsive cash transfer system (including policy framework), and (ii) the Africa Risk Capacity and relevant ministries in Zimbabwe and Zambia to adopt and/or expand the uptake of climate insurance as part of integrated disaster risk management strategies,

THEN governments will invest more in shock-responsive social protection, social cash transfers will be better targeted, and more people will benefit unconditional and shock-responsive cash transfer and climate insurance systems, and through the system's effective functioning improve their food security and resilience,

BECAUSE:

- the governments of Zimbabwe and Zambia have the interest, incentive, capacity, political power, and tenacity to strengthen and expand the two systems,
- SDC's funding makes a difference, i.e., allows its development partners to further strengthen and expand the systems' capacities, and
- the SDC brings into the partnership relevant and valued knowledge and experience from its agricultural development and resilience projects that work at the household and farm level which allows the relevant ministries in Zimbabwe and Zambia to improve the two systems.

5. **Local public service delivery:**

IF the SDC and its implementing partners work with duty bearers (municipalities and municipal councils), right holders (e.g., resident associations), and media (e.g., local radio stations) and build their awareness, understanding, and capacities to increase local revenue collection, deliver services, engage in dialogue, provide accountability and oversight, and/or investigate the proper use of resources and delivery of local public services⁹,

⁸ Zimbabwe: Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare. Zambia: Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Community Development and Social Service.

⁹ Example given, primary and secondary education, primary health care, water supply, sanitation and hygiene, and agricultural extension services.

THEN local governments will improve the delivery of local public services, and more people gain access to these services,

BECAUSE:

- local governments, municipal councils, civil society organizations, and local radio stations have the interest, incentive, capacity, (political) power, and tenacity to either improve or demand the improvement of local public services, and
- local governments are empowered by the central government through sufficient political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization.

6. **Peace, cohesion, governance, youth:**

IF the SDC empowers leading civil society organizations in Zimbabwe to work, in a very restrictive political environment, on whatever can be done regarding 'positive peace' promotion, social cohesion, reconciliation, good governance, and youth empowerment,

THEN small but important steps can and will be made in Zimbabwe towards 'positive peace' and promote social cohesion, reconciliation, good governance, and youth empowerment,

BECAUSE:

- these leading civil society organizations have the interest, incentive, capacity, political power, abilities, and tenacity to work with the limited reform space available, expand this space, and change the perspectives and behaviour of both duty bearers and rights holders,
- the political and economic elite of the country have an interest and incentive to enhance their commitment to 'positive peace', growth, development, and social cohesion.

4 Sampling strategy

At present, there are about 24 projects being implemented under the cooperation programme (See main report, appendix A)¹⁰. The purpose of this evaluation was NOT to evaluate individual projects. This evaluation's interest was in how project interventions are used to contribute to the cooperation programme envisaged outcomes and overall objective. The number of days available to the evaluation (overall and for the field mission) did not allow us to review all projects. We therefore selected a sample of projects that offered a 'window' into how projects are used to foster development processes that contribute to the programme's outcomes and objectives.

The project sample had to offer a fair and realistic picture of the overall portfolio and the programme's theory of change (without necessarily being 'representative' in a statistical sense). The selected projects also had to be credible in the eyes of the embassy and the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section to ensure that they - the primary intended users of the evaluation - would consider the evaluation (findings) valid and relevant.

The project portfolio was too small to meaningfully draw a (stratified) random sample. Instead, we selected the projects through purposeful sampling. This meant that a selection was made based on pre-defined and pertinent criteria. Based on the discussions with the embassy, the SDC Eastern and Southern Africa section, and the Evaluation and Controlling specialist service, we used the following selection criteria:

- focus on relevant projects, i.e., projects that mirror the reorientation of the Swiss cooperation programme and intention of the Swiss embassy to contribute to 'system building' and the 'localization' of the development cooperation,
- look at projects that complement each other and jointly seek to contribute to a Swiss portfolio (sub)outcome,
- cover all three Swiss portfolio outcomes,
- include successful and more challenging interventions, older and new projects, and
- manageable within a two-week field mission.

Based on these criteria, an initial portfolio analysis, and discussions with the Swiss embassy in Harare and the SDC Evaluation and Controlling specialist service, we arrived at the following sample:

- Swiss portfolio outcome 1.1:
 - Seed and Knowledge Initiative (Zimbabwe): older (phase 3), successful, to be built upon,
 - Markets and Seeds Access Project (Zambia): newer (phase 1), relevant private sector work,
- Swiss portfolio outcome 2.1:
 - Zvandiri (Zimbabwe): showcase SDC older approach to focus on individual health issues and which are now to be integrated in the health system projects.
 - Health Systems Project (Zambia): new (Phase 1, but builds on previous work of partners), reflects SDC's ambition to work at the (health) system level,
- Swiss portfolio outcome 2.2:
 - Strengthening Social Protection (Zambia): newish (phase 1), successful, big
- Swiss portfolio outcome 3.2:
 - Diverse Pathways to Good Governance (Zimbabwe): new, builds on PHRD work, including development diplomacy and policy dialogue, localization initiative, and can include the small action: Youth Voice and Agency in Promoting Accountability.

¹⁰ This includes a double count of the support to the Rüdi Lüthy Foundation which features under two project numbers in SDC's SAP data and excludes the one-off El Nino response.

Through these selected projects, we were able to investigate four core lines of intervention of the cooperation programme:

- strengthen the agricultural production and value chains of traditional nutritious crops, including through private sector development,
- strengthening the primary health care system,
- strengthening social protection systems, and
- improving democratic governance.

The selection also allowed us to cover, at least to some extent, each of the Swiss embassy's specific strategic interests:

Embassy strategy notes		Sample projects
Peace & development	✓	– Diverse Pathways to Good Governance
Humanitarian aid & development	✓	– Social Protection Zambia
Localization of development cooperation	✓	– Diverse Pathways to Good Governance – Health Systems Project Zambia
Youth	✓	– Small action: Youth Voice and Agency in Promoting Accountability
Private sector development	✓	– Markets and Seeds Access Project
Climate change	✓	– Markets and Seeds Access Project – Seed and Knowledge Initiative
Development partner cooperation	✓	– Social Protection Zambia – Health Systems Project Zambia

Finally, and briefly, we excluded from the sample:

- EEP Africa Trust Fund: this is a continental renewable energy programme that stands independent from the cooperation programme, i.e., is not intrinsically part of the theory of change, even though the Swiss embassy strives to make good use of the programme.
- The cooperation programme reference to Swiss FDI in / Swiss private sector relevance of Zimbabwe and Zambia: the Swiss embassy has only embryonic discussions (at best) with the Swiss private sector for collaboration on development.
- The cooperation programme reference to regional cooperation and continued work with Southern Africa Development Community (SADC): In practice, the focus is 100% on bilateral cooperation; the embassy doesn't have the capacity to also work with SADC.

5 Interview guide

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cooperation Programme – a coherent set of support to ZZ development: 2023-26 – June 2025: SDC MTR October 2025: preliminary decision on how to continue in ZZ – 2026: development of new CP – CPE: to inform internal reflection and strategic decision-making on current and future CP ZZ.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To what extent does the intervention respond to your / the needs, policies, priorities, and own initiatives? <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Where do you observe reform / development momentum? – Who are the local reform actors? What is the local reform agenda? – What are the driving forces behind this reform / development momentum? – What are the most paramount constraints on these reforms / developments? </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Have you observed any changes in the development context over the last three years? – What has SDC's response been to these changes? – What are the Swiss interests and value-added? </div>
Effectiveness Coherence Impact Sustainability Strategy notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Localization – PSE – Nexus – Youth – Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How did the intervention intend to contribute to development? Key assumptions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Boundary partners, approach, and process – How did the boundary partners respond to the support? Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What changes in perspective and behaviour of the boundary partners can be observed? – What has been the ripple effect of these changes? – To what extent is the intervention complementary and/or synergetic with other (SDC) interventions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development diplomacy, interventions, small actions and donor coordination? – How likely will the targeted (sectoral) outcomes be brought about? Why? – What is the likely impact of these outcomes? How? – What worked, what didn't and why? – What other factors / developments could explain the (non-achievement) of the outcomes and impacts? – Have any new / unexpected processes and developments emerged? How? Why? Effects? – Are there any development contradictions? How dealt with these? – To what extent do the boundary partners have the need, interest, incentive, capacity, power, and tenacity to continue their actions after the intervention ends?
GESI	<div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What is the most successful change (story)? How? – What is the most persistent non-change? Why? – Which approaches / processes have proven prescient? Why? How? Scalable? Replicability? – What are systemic / recurrent challenges? Field presence Zambia? Budget constraints? </div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Localization – Linkage with humanitarian aid and / or peace – Youth – Private sector engagement – Climate change adaptation or mitigation – Development partner coordination and cooperation </div>
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Could better results have been achieved through a different allocation of resources?
Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What do the past experiences / results, current development context, and SDC's institutional constraints suggest for the future strategic orientation of the SDC in ZZ?

6 Switzerland International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24

'Poverty reduction and sustainable development are the raison d'être of international cooperation' (FDFA, 2021). To contribute, the Swiss Federal Council defined four objectives for its international cooperation, namely:

- contributing to sustainable economic growth, market development and the creation of decent jobs (economic development),
- addressing climate change and its effects and managing natural resources sustainably (environment),
- 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), and
- promoting peace, the rule of law and gender equality (peacebuilding and governance) (FDFA, 2021).

The table below lists the 10 sub-objectives of the International Cooperation Strategy 2021-24. The Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia contributes to all except sub-objective 6.

Sub-objective 1: Strengthening framework conditions for market access and creating economic opportunities. IC aims at strengthening the framework conditions for stability and economic governance through the promotion of an environment conducive to private initiatives as well as sound management of public resources, balanced trade policies and an investment-friendly environment
Sub-objective 2: Promoting innovative private sector initiatives to facilitate the creation of decent jobs. IC facilitates access to capital markets and sustainable financing to promote financial inclusion. It works on market mechanisms to enable businesses and producers to benefit from globalization, integrate into global value chains and contribute to resolving global challenges. IC works in support of entrepreneurship, health systems, basic education and vocational training geared to the changing needs of the labour market and financial inclusion. It helps to create decent jobs and other adequate income generating activities for all, with a particular focus on disadvantaged populations and young people. In addition, it engages with the private sector to strengthen standards and promote good practices on sustainability, gender equality and respect of human rights.
Sub-objective 3: Addressing climate change and its effects. Through its IC, Switzerland supports developing countries in their efforts to mitigate climate change (reduction of greenhouse gas emissions) and adapt to its effects, while at the same time contributing to the search for sustainable financing. The IC contributes to the sustainable management of urban and rural areas by reducing the growing risks related to the impacts of climate change and by promoting renewable energies and energy efficiency.
Sub-objective 4: Ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources. IC supports the sustainable management of resources such as water, air, soil, raw materials and ecosystems as well as the conservation of biodiversity, for the benefit of all people, especially the most vulnerable, along value chains in order to respect planetary boundaries
Sub-objective 5: Providing emergency aid and ensuring the protection of civilians. IC places at the heart of its work the safety, dignity and rights of populations affected by crises, armed conflicts and disasters, including forcibly displaced persons.
Sub-objective 6: Preventing disasters and ensuring reconstruction and rehabilitation. Switzerland is committed to disaster risk reduction and to reconstruction and rehabilitation in order to prevent natural disasters as far as possible and to restore basic services after a disaster or an armed conflict.
Sub-objective 7: Strengthening equitable access to quality basic services. Investment in basic education, vocational training and health contributes to economic development and to mitigating population growth. Quality and equitable access to health services, education, safe drinking water and sanitation, energy, urban transport and food are fundamental. Switzerland is committed to meeting the basic needs of the poorest and most neglected, in particular migrants and refugees, young people and people with disabilities, by strengthening international standards, the capacities of state systems and state-owned enterprises, and by improving living conditions, taking into account the challenges of growing urbanization.
Sub-objective 8: Preventing conflicts, promoting peace and respect for international law. Switzerland contributes to the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts so that a lasting solution can be found by peaceful means. It acts through mediation, facilitation and political dialogue, as well as through the provision of expertise. As a State party to the Geneva Conventions, it promotes international humanitarian law and disarmament norms, particularly humanitarian aspects, which are essential for the protection of civilians and non-combatants
Sub-objective 9: Strengthening and promoting human rights and gender equality. Switzerland defends and promotes the universality, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights. Through its IC, Switzerland is committed to the respect, protection, promotion and development of human rights. Projects and programmes

that pay particular attention to possible sources of conflict avoid aggravating tensions while ensuring the participation of beneficiaries in the implementation of projects. Switzerland is committed to reducing factors of exclusion and promotes equal opportunities and equitable access to resources, public services and decision-making processes. The equitable sharing of responsibilities, duties and decision-making powers between men and women is an important driving force for sustainable development, including economic growth (higher level of education, better economic, political, cultural and social participation and choice of the number of children). IC is committed to promoting gender equality and women's rights in all its interventions and with its partners, with particular emphasis on the prevention of gender-based violence, economic empowerment and women's political participation.

Sub-objective 10: Promoting good governance and the rule of law and strengthening civil society.

Switzerland promotes democratic values, including citizen participation, transparency and accountability, as well as the fight against corruption and against impunity. IC strengthens state institutions so that they meet the needs of the population. It strengthens the capacity of countries to base their policies on reliable data, with particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. Switzerland is committed to systemic change, aimed at strengthening the accountability of partner governments to tackle obstacles to development such as corruption, cronyism and mismanagement. IC is committed to promoting good governance in all its interventions and with its partners. Support for balance of powers and public mechanisms for government accountability and oversight are key, including through culture and the media. Switzerland strengthens civil society in developing countries because of its key role in ensuring social inclusion, advocacy, monitoring and public accountability.

Legend: IC = international cooperation. Source: Switzerland's international Cooperation Strategy 2021-24.

7 Documentation

Swiss International Cooperation

- Federal Constitution of the Swiss Federation
- Bundesgesetz über die internationale Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und humanitäre Hilfe
- Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024
- Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2025-2028
- Meta-Analysis of Cooperation Programme Evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2024)
- SDC Guidance on Results Indicators
- SDC Guidance on Cooperation Programmes and Programmatic Framework 2023

Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia

- Swiss Cooperation Programme Zimbabwe and Zambia 2023-26, including Results Framework
- Annual Report 2023 and 2024, including management response
- Monitoring System for Development Changes. Zimbabwe and Zambia. 2023
- SDC headquarters mission report. 16-20 September 2024
- Mapping for potential entry points on governance
- Strategy notes:
 - Zambia engagement
 - Peace & development
 - Humanitarian aid & development
 - Localization of development cooperation
 - Youth
 - Private sector development
 - Climate change
- OECD/DAC mission: Swiss presentation
- OECD/DAC mission debriefing
- SAP portfolio data
- Geographic mapping of project portfolio
- Organigram Swiss embassy

Project Portfolio

- SKI
 - Factsheet
 - Credit proposal
 - Program document
 - Semi-annual report 2024
 - Mid-term review 2022
- MASAP
 - Factsheet
 - Credit proposal
 - Program document
 - Fifth operational report 2024
 - Mid-term review 2024
- Zvandiri
 - Factsheet
 - Credit proposal
 - Program document
 - Annual report 2024
 - UNICEF and UNAIDs website on HIV
- SHIELD

- Factsheet
- Credit proposal
- Social protection Zambia (SSP)
 - Factsheet
 - Credit proposal
 - Programme document UNICEF
 - Programme document World Bank
 - Multidonor Trust Fund Report 2024
 - UN Joint Programme on Social Protection in Zambia. Annual Progress Report 2023
- Development Pathways for Good Governance (DP4P)
 - Technical proposal
 - Credit proposal
 - Nordic Consulting Group (2024). Independent evaluation of SDC's engagement in the field of good governance and rule of law from 2017-22
- Youth agency and voice
 - Programme document

Government of Zimbabwe

- National Development Strategy 1 2022-26

Government of Zambia

- Eight National Development Plan 2021-25

Other

- OECD (2024): Pathways to \wards effective localization
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- Wikipedia Zimbabwe
- Wikipedia Zambia

8 Key informants

Swiss international cooperation

Organization/division	Name	Function	Project
SDC			
Eastern and Southern Africa section	Ms. Katharine Stocker	Head of section	Portfolio
Eastern and Southern Africa section	Ms. Romana Tedeschi	Country programme manager	Portfolio
Health and Food Section	Ms. Erika Placella	Health sector expert	SHIELD/Zvandiri
Africa staff office	Mr. Cyprien Hauser	Regional and thematic advisor climate, disaster, and environment	SSP, ARC
Africa staff office	Ms. Rahel Fisher	Regional and thematic advisor governance	PHRD/DP4P
Africa staff office	Ms. Frederique Weyer	Regional and thematic advisor employment and income	SKI/MASAP
FDFA			
PHRD	Ms. Christelle Melly	Former human security advisor Zimbabwe	PHRD/DP4P

Zimbabwe – details only internally available

Zambia - details only internally available

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Pictures© Embassy of Switzerland in Zimbabwe,
(from left to right):

- An elderly woman in Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe's Harmonised Social Cash Transfer scheme.
- Young people play soccer as part of community initiatives aimed at reducing HIV infections.
- Anna Chitiyo inspects her stunted maize plants on her farm in Mutare Rural District, Zimbabwe.

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