

External Review

Modernizing Agricultural Education and
Training in Armenia (MAVETA), Phase I,
2022 - 2025

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March 2025



The production of this Report was supported by the Government of Switzerland. The Report material does not necessarily represent the official standpoints of the Swiss Government.

Report prepared by the Chair of Education Systems team at ETH Zurich in Zurich, Switzerland (<http://www.ces.ethz.ch/>) for the External Review, “Modernizing Agricultural Vocational Education and Training in Armenia (MAVETA)”, Phase I, 2022 - 2025 supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.



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and Cooperation SDC**

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank SCO Armenia for their support, specifically Ursula Laübli and Dr. Artur Pokrikyan. Data collection, field mission and coordination would have been impossible without their active efforts.

We are grateful to Jovana Mihajlovic for the peer review support provided to SDC and all the valuable insights she provided us with during the mission.

In addition, we are extremely thankful to all survey and interview participants who contributed their time and expertise.

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Terms and Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
ANAU	Armenian National Agrarian University
A-VET	Vocational education and training in the agricultural sector
AWDA	Armenia Workforce Development Activity
BFH	Bern University of Applied Sciences
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
HAFL	School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, Bern University of Applied Sciences
HEKS/EPER	Swiss Church Aid NGO
JV	Veterinary Specialist
MAVETA	Modernizing Agricultural VET in Armenia
MDPT	Milk and Dairy Production Technology
MRM	Monitoring and Results Measurement
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
NCVETD	National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development
PSD	Private sector development
SCO Armenia	Swiss Cooperation Office in Armenia
SDA	Strategic Development Agency
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SME	Small and medium enterprises
VET	Vocational education and training
WBL	Work-based learning

1 Executive Summary

This external review assesses the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the MAVETA project in Armenia, focusing on its first implementation phase (2022–2025). The review is based on fieldwork, stakeholder surveys, document analysis, and qualitative insights gathered during the evaluation mission in Armenia. Special attention is given to systemic reforms, institutionalization of dual vocational education and training (VET), and the inclusion of women, rural youth, and displaced learners.

Relevance

MAVETA launched at a critical moment for Armenia's VET system, directly supporting the adoption of a new VET law that formally introduced dual VET. This major policy breakthrough provides the pathway towards a clear legal foundation for systemic reform. At the same time, the project upgraded college infrastructure, curricula and teaching practices to embed competence-based, demand-driven learning. Through apprenticeships and curriculum co-development, MAVETA strengthened collaboration between colleges and employers and improved the relevance of vocational education to labour-market needs.

Coherence

While the project addressed urgent needs at the college and student levels, broader coherence across actor groups and implementation streams remains a challenge. The two main implementation strands, policy development and field-level delivery, operated in parallel with limited synchronization. Interactions between actors were often top-down and ad hoc, as revealed during interviews and focus groups. Despite strong partner commitment, the current steering structure is too complex to support agile coordination and long-term alignment. Colleges and private sector actors have increasingly begun to view each other as collaborators; however, this shift in perspective has not yet been fully reflected at the ministerial level. A more streamlined, flexible mechanism is needed to ensure responsiveness and clarity as the project transitions into the next phase.

Effectiveness

MAVETA has been highly effective in transforming Armenia's vocational education system, particularly when compared to its pre-project state of outdated curricula and poor labour market alignment. Through modernised curricula, upgraded laboratories, targeted teacher training, and strengthened private sector collaboration, the project brought about fundamental improvements in how vocational education is delivered. A major achievement was MAVETA's role in supporting the adoption of the new dual VET law, which now provides a sustainable legal foundation for future reforms. Early steps toward gender inclusion and refugee integration have also been made, although systemic follow-up mechanisms are still limited. MAVETA's effectiveness is further reflected in student engagement and private sector participation, however sustaining these gains will require deeper institutionalisation and continued employer commitment.

Efficiency

Resources were allocated prudently and visibly improved conditions in supported colleges. Implementation was flexible and responsive, especially at the college level. A major achievement of this

phase was MAVETA's role in supporting the adoption of Armenia's new law on dual VET, which now provides a national legal foundation for work-based learning and stakeholder engagement. However, risk mitigation mechanisms were not fully effective, and the Steering Committee lacked the agility needed for fast decision-making. Duplication and fragmentation arose from parallel planning among partners and sometime unclear role definitions within a complex governance structure inherited from the project preceding MAVETA.. Efficiency gains could be achieved through improved partner alignment and a simplified coordination structure. The final months of Phase 1 present an opportunity to consolidate coordination structures and prepare national actors to assume ownership in Phase 2.

Impact

MAVETA has laid the groundwork for systemic change in Armenia's VET sector. The passing of the new VET law is a significant indicator of policy-level traction and growing government commitment. While the full transformation is still in progress, the project has helped raise the visibility of dual VET and positioned it as a national priority. The law's implementation will require continued collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS), the Ministry of Economy (MoE), other government bodies, employers, and training institutions. The project has also sparked new engagement between schools, employers, and ministries. However, unintended effects such as lower teacher salaries, due to reduced classroom hours and uncompensated mentoring duties, pose a risk to staff motivation and retention. Stronger institutional anchoring and long-term financing will be needed to transform this momentum into durable impact.

Sustainability

The sustainability of MAVETA's outcomes is progressing, though full institutional ownership is still developing. Encouraging signs of bottom-up initiative are emerging at the college level, with colleges and universities such as Goris and Sisian independently launching new programmes and outreach activities. Nationally, the MoESCS has been an engaged partner, while the MoE's involvement remains limited. The establishment of a new VET coordination body, mandated by the revised VET law, offers a crucial opportunity to anchor reforms within national structures. Continued but temporary financial support to private sector partners remains essential in the short term, alongside efforts to gradually build sustainable employer engagement through cost-benefit awareness and training alliances.

The recommendations presented in the report reflect these findings and are structured to address short-term needs and strategic long-term reforms, including policy coordination and governance simplification.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project overviews

This external review evaluates the Modernizing Vocational Education and Training in Agriculture in Armenia (MAVETA) project, which seeks to enhance agricultural vocational education and training (A-VET) in the country by strengthening skills development, increasing employment opportunities, and fostering innovation in agricultural practices. The project is a collaboration between GIZ, HEKS/EPER, SDA, and HAFL, with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in partnership with the Government of Armenia, the Izmirlian Foundation, and Vanand Agro "CJSC". By introducing a dual education model and promoting public-private collaboration,

MAVETA ensures that graduates acquire market-relevant competencies that enhance productivity, generate higher incomes, and support self-employment.

MAVETA is structured around two key outcomes. Outcome 1 focuses on equipping professionals and graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to meet labour market demands, secure sustainable income opportunities, and contribute to agricultural innovation. Outcome 2 aims to establish an effective dual VET system by developing coherent policies, enhancing institutional capacities, and fostering stronger cooperation between public and private stakeholders. These outcomes are designed to create a structured, sustainable VET system that supports long-term improvements in Armenia's agricultural sector.

This external review assesses the implementation of MAVETA from September 2022 to January 2025. It is conducted approximately 29 months into project implementation, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Project Document (ProDoc). The review aims to guide the project toward achieving its objectives for the remaining period until August 31, 2025, extract lessons learned to inform the development of MAVETA Phase II and ensure accountability to donors by providing an evidence-based assessment of progress.

The evaluation examines MAVETA's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, with a particular focus on its alignment with Armenia's educational and labour market needs. It explores the systemic impact of the project on the country's VET sector, the governance and implementation setup, and the extent to which private sector engagement in dual VET has been successfully integrated. Additionally, it assesses the alignment of training programs with market demand from both private sector and youth perspectives, as well as the efficient use of resources and the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

Findings from this review will be compiled into a report and shared with key stakeholders, including donors, project partners, government institutions, and VET organizations at local, regional, and national levels. The review will also serve as a foundation for ex-post evaluations of MAVETA's long-term impact and ex-ante assessments of potential follow-up projects in the VET sector. By employing a structured evaluation framework, this review ensures a systematic approach that will yield actionable insights to enhance MAVETA's long-term impact and sustainability.

2.2 Evaluation Scope and purpose

The purpose of this external review is to assess the implementation of the MAVETA project, focusing on its systemic impact, governance, private sector engagement in dual VET, demand-related aspects of agricultural vocational education and training, and the efficient use of resources. The review aims to provide evidence-based insights that will support the continuous improvement of project activities and ensure the achievement of intended results. Additionally, the evaluation will offer a set of recommendations to guide the remaining implementation period and lay the groundwork for Phase II. By assessing project progress against set targets, the review will help refine strategies, improve effectiveness, and enhance sustainability. Furthermore, it serves as a means of accountability, ensuring transparency in reporting project outcomes to key stakeholders, including donors, government entities, and beneficiaries.

The evaluation covers the full scope of MAVETA's implementation from September 2022 to January 2025. It examines the performance of the project in relation to its planned outputs and outcomes, evaluating the extent to which the project has contributed to the enhancement of the A-VET system in Armenia. The review includes an in-depth analysis of curriculum development, institutional strengthening, and stakeholder engagement in work-based learning, considering both quantitative and qualitative data. Particular attention is given to project governance and the collaboration between public

and private actors. Field visits and stakeholder consultations were conducted to ensure a comprehensive and contextually informed assessment. The findings will inform strategic decisions for Phase II and contribute to broader policy discussions on the future of VET in Armenia.

2.3 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation followed the OECD DAC criteria, assessing the project's **relevance** to Armenia's VET needs, the **coherence** of interventions among stakeholders, the **effectiveness** of implemented strategies, the **efficiency** of resource utilization, the **impact** on beneficiaries, and the **sustainability** of project outcomes.

The review questions outlined in the Terms of Reference were refined based on initial consultations and document analysis. Each question was examined using qualitative and quantitative criteria, supported by relevant data sources and collection methods to ensure evidence-based conclusions. Table 1 presents the detailed Evaluation Question Matrix (EQM) for this project.

Table 1: Evaluation Question Matrix

Criteria	Questions	Indicators	Data Sources	Collection methods
Relevance	What is the added value of the project?	- Alignment of project activities with Armenia's VET reform strategies.	- Policy documents - Project's partners stakeholders	- Document analysis - Survey - Focus groups - Interviews
	Has the project been responsive to the priorities, needs and future aspirations of the beneficiaries: VET students, especially women and vulnerable students, and the businesses?	- Stakeholder satisfaction with project relevance. - Number of businesses and students engaged in VET programs.		
	What follow-on work could build on the results of the project's current phase to further enhance their relevance to the beneficiaries and key stakeholders? Why?	- Extent to which new policies or practices were adopted due to the project. - Degree of alignment between project outcomes and beneficiary priorities.		
	Did the project supplement or undermine existing programs or policies?	- Degree of synergy or overlap with other programs. - Stakeholder perceptions of collaboration effectiveness.	- Stakeholder feedback.	- Desk review

Coherence	How well do Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 work together?	- Identified challenges and lessons learned.	- VET coordination platform documents	- Key informant interviews
	How coherent is the implementation process among partners?	- Level of coordination between different implementing agencies.	- Partnership agreements.	- Case studies.
Effectiveness	How effective is the project in promoting gender equality and inclusion?	- Number of women and vulnerable groups engaged.	- Stakeholders feedback - Operational reports	- Document analysis (e.g. gender study)
	What factors influenced project effectiveness?	- Perceived factors by stakeholders		- Survey
	How effective was the VET coordination platform?	- Perceived effectiveness of partnerships.		- Focus groups
	Did the VET stakeholder platform contribute to policy dialogue?	- Stakeholder feedback on platform usefulness.		- Interviews
Efficiency	Were governance and management structures appropriate for risk mitigation?	- Timeliness of project implementation.	- Financial reports. - Project implementation timeline. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Analysis of the operational reports - Interview - Survey
	How well did partners collaborate?	- Perceived coordination effectiveness.		
	Was financial investment in infrastructure efficient?	- Resource allocation efficiency.		
	What synergies exist with other projects?	- Perceived synergies		
	Are project interventions fostering systemic change?	- Changes in VET system policies.	- Government policy updates. - Stakeholder feedback.	- Policy reviews - Case studies
	Is the project contributing to an Armenian VET system aligned with European standards?	- Alignment of project with European best practices		

Impact	Is the project contributing to an Armenian VET system aligned with European standards?	- Socio-economic impact assessments.	- Impact studies.	- Survey - Interviews
	Have there been unintended consequences?	- Perceived positive or negative impacts		
Sustainability	Have key stakeholders taken ownership of project outcomes?	- Institutionalization of project initiatives.	- Stakeholder agreements	- Desk Review - Interviews - Survey
	Has the project created a platform for ongoing VET-business cooperation?	- Financial sustainability measures in place. - Policy commitments to long-term project adoption.	- Government commitment to sustaining initiatives.	

3 Methodology

The evaluation of the MAVETA project followed a mixed-methods approach. To assess the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability the OECD DAC criteria was employed (OECD, 2021). The evaluation process was conducted in three phases: desk review, survey, and field visit. These phases ensured that both qualitative and quantitative data were systematically collected and analysed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the project's performance and outcomes. A central aspect of this mixed-methods design was the triangulation of data from multiple sources (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2015). The findings from the desk review, survey, and field visits were systematically compared and cross-verified to ensure consistency and strengthen the credibility of the conclusions. This process helped to identify and address any discrepancies between different data sources, ensuring a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the project's impact.

3.1 Phase 1: Desk Review

In the first phase, the evaluation team conducted a desk review to establish a solid foundation for the evaluation. This phase involved a thorough analysis of key project documents, including project proposals, operational reports, budget analyses, stakeholder analyses, curricula, monitoring reports, and policy documents. The goal of this phase was to gain a clear understanding of the project's objectives, its alignment with Armenia's VET reform strategies, and the context in which it was

implemented. The desk review helped refine the survey questions and allowed for the identification of potential areas of focus for the subsequent phases. It provided essential background information that guided the design of the survey and shaped the areas of focus during the field visits.

3.2 Phase 2: Survey

The second phase involved the administration of a stakeholder survey, which was designed to gather quantitative data on various aspects of the project. The primary goal of the survey was to capture stakeholder feedback on their involvement in the development of the MAVETA, the effectiveness of the regulatory framework, and the project’s overall governance and impact. Stakeholders included employers, VET institutions, government representatives, and international/implementing partners, among others. The survey focused on areas such as the alignment of project activities with Armenia’s VET needs, gender equality and inclusion, stakeholder satisfaction, and the effectiveness of collaboration among project partners. It also aimed to assess the operational challenges faced by stakeholders, particularly in implementing dual VET. The survey was conducted through LimeSurvey and targeted a sample of 136 respondents, resulting in a total of 121 response. The breakdown of the response rate by each stakeholder group is provided in Table 2. Participants could choose to complete the survey in either English or Armenian.

Table 2 : Sample and response rates by stakeholder groups

2024-2025	Sample	Respondents	Response Rate
Employers, Private Sector Representatives, VET Instructors	49	38	77.55%
Government, international partners/implementing partners	23	22	95.65%
Sector/Unions	4	2	50.00%
VET Institution	60	59	98.33%
Total	136	121	88.97%

The results of the survey provided valuable quantitative data that helped identify trends, perceptions, and satisfaction levels among stakeholders, which were then analysed using statistical software (Stata and R).

3.3 Phase 3: Field Visit

The third phase involved field visits to gain direct insights into the MAVETA project’s implementation. These visits aimed to assess the practical aspects of the project and observe the on-the-ground impact of the dual VET system. The evaluation team met with stakeholders, including donors and implementing partners, government authorities (both federal and local), and VET institutions.

During the field visits, the team conducted bilateral meetings with:

- **Donors and Implementing Partners:** Discussions with these stakeholders helped assess coordination and alignment with broader VET goals.
- **Government Authorities:** Both federal and local government representatives were engaged to evaluate their support for the project and the alignment of national and regional policies with the project's objectives.
- **VET Institutions:** Representatives from VET colleges shared perspectives on how the project influenced curriculum development, institutional capacity, and resource allocation.
- **Employers and Community Members:** Employers in sectors such as farming and dairy production, as well as community stakeholders, were interviewed to explore the effectiveness of the VET system in meeting local labour market needs.

In addition to these individual interviews and meetings, the evaluation team also conducted **five focus group** discussions as part of the field visits, designed to capture collective insights and perceptions. The focus groups were structured as follows:

- **Two mixed-focus groups:** Groups included a mix of students, teachers, and employers to explore the direct experiences of those involved in the dual VET system.
- **One focus group with unions/associations:** This session included representatives from VET-related unions and associations to understand their views on the project's impact and alignment with labour market needs.
- **One focus group with other VET initiatives in Armenia:** The discussion engaged stakeholders from other VET initiatives in the country, providing a broader perspective on the national VET landscape and identifying potential synergies and challenges.
- **One focus group with all implementing partners:** This session brought together representatives from all the project's implementing partners to discuss coordination, project effectiveness, and lessons learned.

These focus groups allowed the evaluation team to gather diverse perspectives on the MAVETA project's impact and its challenges. Discussions helped to identify key issues, common concerns, and opportunities for improvement, providing rich qualitative data that complemented the quantitative findings from the survey. The field trip also included visits to local farms and dairy production facilities, offering a direct view of the project's practical implementation. These on-the-ground observations enriched the analysis by providing a firsthand understanding of how the dual VET system was being applied in specific sectors.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected through the desk review, stakeholder survey, and field visits were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey data was analysed using Stata and R to identify trends and statistical patterns. The qualitative data from the field visits and any open-ended survey responses were analysed thematically, focusing on key themes and insights from interviews and direct observations. The final analysis was based on the synthesis of all data sources, ensuring that both qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated to form a comprehensive narrative about the MAVETA project's implementation, successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. The three-phase approach—desk review, survey, and field visit—allowed the evaluation to gather a rich and diverse set of data. By combining document analysis, quantitative survey results, and qualitative insights

from field observations, the evaluation team was able to provide a detailed and evidence-based assessment of the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The triangulation of these data sources strengthened the reliability and validity of the findings, forming the foundation for actionable recommendations that address key issues and inform future project interventions.

4 Findings

The findings presented in this section are structured around the evaluation's key research questions (see Table 1). These questions were specifically tailored to reflect the unique scope and local context of the MAVETA project. They cover four essential areas: Effectiveness and Impact, Private Sector Engagement, Policy and Sustainability, and Project Governance and Resource Management, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of the project's achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement. Findings were developed through methodological triangulation, drawing on document analysis, stakeholder survey responses, and qualitative insights gathered from focus groups and interviews conducted during the evaluation mission in Armenia in February 2025. Each subsection directly addresses one of the key evaluation questions.

4.1 Effectiveness and Impact of the MAVETA Project

Key findings: Considering the significant challenges present at the outset, including limited teacher capacity to deliver market-relevant skills, inadequate school equipment and teaching resources, varying levels of preparedness among private companies to host and train apprentices, and gaps within the legal framework, the project's first phase has successfully established a solid foundation. MAVETA interventions have enhanced the quality and market alignment of VET, strengthened institutional capacities, and initiated essential policy reforms, laying the groundwork for sustained impact and systemic improvements.
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Teachers have improved their competencies and teaching methods, but structural challenges remain.

Over 80 percent of college staff confirmed in the survey that the MAVETA project has contributed to strengthening their institutions' capacity to deliver labour market-relevant skills and knowledge (Figure 1, Appendix). Prior to the intervention, vocational colleges lacked essential teaching resources, leading many teachers and students to rely on Wikipedia articles, YouTube videos, or university-level textbooks that were not tailored to the needs or learning levels of VET students. Interviews with teachers highlighted that, previously to MAVETA, they had not received any structured pedagogical training. MAVETA addressed these gaps by providing subject-specific textbooks, practical learning materials, and basic laboratory equipment. Teachers also participated in competence- and activity-based training sessions, which were unanimously assessed as relevant, timely, and beneficial. While these inputs have laid important groundwork for improving teaching quality, these are only initial steps. Although the situation has improved compared to previous years, colleges are still far from being able to deliver consistently high-quality, practice-oriented education aligned with the needs of the labour market.

Despite these positive developments, structural issues remain concerning the remuneration of teaching staff. Before the introduction of dual VET, students received all instruction within the classroom. The implementation of work-based learning has introduced structured time in companies, which has in turn reduced the number of hours students spend in the classroom. Since teacher salaries continue to be

calculated primarily based on classroom hours, this shift has led to a reduction in pay for some staff. At the same time, teachers are now expected to take on new responsibilities, such as coordinating apprenticeships, liaising with private sector actors, and monitoring student progress in company placements. These tasks are essential to the functioning of the dual system but are not yet formally recognised or compensated as part of the standard workload.

At the same time, the Government of Armenia has introduced a new attestation system designed to assess and accredit teachers' professional competencies. Passing the attestation is a prerequisite for continuing to teach, and good results lead to a salary increase. However, the system has not yet been rolled out across all the subjects taught in the colleges, which means that not all teachers currently benefit from it. While the attestation framework may contribute to incremental improvements in teacher salaries, it does not address the underlying issue that certain tasks, such as coordinating apprenticeships and supervising students in the workplace, are not formally recognised as payable work. This disconnect reinforces the structural gap between actual responsibilities and compensation in the current dual VET implementation.

Students have begun earning income through apprenticeships and are acquiring skills more closely aligned with market demands, though outcomes remain preliminary.

Students have expressed greater satisfaction with the new dual VET program, highlighting improved learning experiences and increased relevance to labour market needs. Evidence from student discussions and employer feedback indicates that learners have begun to generate income during their apprenticeships, with some even securing part-time employment with their host companies. This suggests that MAVETA is beginning to create tangible income-generating opportunities, though the full impact will only become clear after the first cohort graduates in 2026.

The program's emphasis on WBL has substantially improved students' practical training. Previously, such training was often limited to passive observations in laboratories or brief excursions to farms and factories. Now, there is awareness that the way things were done before was not sufficient for the students to profit in any form and they report to be more hands-on approaches during the apprenticeships. This shift has been supported by revised curricula, targeted teacher training, and increased cooperation with private companies. However, both students and teachers emphasized the need for flexibility in implementing WBL. Apprenticeship structures often depend on the operational rhythms of individual companies, including seasonal variations. Consequently, the quality and scope of apprenticeship experiences can vary considerably. Teachers noted they adapt both curriculum content and the allocation of classroom versus workplace hours based on the availability of placements and employer expectations. While this flexibility allows colleges to respond to immediate opportunities, it is important to assess whether the current curriculum framework still meet the operational realities and needs of the sector.

Additionally, remuneration during apprenticeships varies considerably across professions. For instance, students pursuing veterinary specialisations are typically not paid, as their mentors are state-employed and lack the financial capacity to offer compensation. While these students do receive state-funded scholarships, this issue was raised repeatedly during focus group discussions. The absence of payment serves as a disincentive, particularly in a sector already struggling with declining student interest and an ageing workforce. Addressing such disparities will be crucial to enhancing the appeal and long-term viability of the dual VET model across all professional fields.

MAVETA-supported programs have improved inclusion and attracted students, especially where financial support is available.

Preliminary survey data from key stakeholders, along with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups, suggest that MAVETA's activities are beginning to have a positive effect on gender equality and inclusion. These early signals are particularly evident in feedback from employers and VET institutions

(see Table 9, Appendix), though the evidence base remains limited at this stage. At the institutional level, colleges such as Stepanavan Agricultural College have launched regular gender-focused seminars, aiming to foster ongoing awareness and dialogue among staff and students.

At the national level, MAVETA has collaborated with the National Centre for VET Development (NCVETD) under the MoESCS to begin integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) into policy and curriculum development. While NCVETD does not have a dedicated gender focus, it has introduced mandatory modules on gender equality as part of these efforts.

The project has also initiated targeted outreach to refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, with colleges reporting some positive early experiences of integration. In parallel, students and teachers noted that state-funded scholarships remain a key factor in attracting enrolment, particularly among disadvantaged groups.

4.2 Private Sector Engagement

Key findings: The project has made significant progress in engaging the private sector in dual VET, but challenges remain in ensuring meaningful and sustained employer participation. Many businesses and farms express a strong willingness to host apprentices, yet their understanding of work-based learning often leans toward seasonal labour rather than structured training. This reflects a broader gap in awareness of the dual VET system and its long-term benefits. Furthermore, private sector actors have explicitly highlighted the need for incentives to reduce their costs and mitigate financial burdens associated with effectively implementing dual VET.

Limited employer capacity and financial constraints hinder private sector involvement.

Employers identified financial constraints, limited time to train, and a mismatch between college curricula and workplace needs as key barriers to effective engagement with VET institutions (Figure 2, Appendix). While the new dual curricula were designed to enhance relevance and strengthen the link between classroom learning and workplace practice, implementation challenges persist, and the intended improvements are not yet fully evident to all employers.

Survey responses and interviews confirmed that financial barriers are the most significant obstacle to hosting apprentices, followed by infrastructure limitations and a shortage of qualified staff (Figure 3, Appendix). Field visits confirmed that many businesses are small-scale and require external support to enhance their efficiency and meet necessary standards for apprenticeship training. Employers indicated that direct financial incentives or subsidies would most encourage them to host apprentices, closely followed by broader governmental support, such as clear regulations and simplified administrative processes (Figure 4, Appendix). However, the type of financial support desired by some employers tends to diverge from commonly accepted incentive models and raises concerns about sustainability and long-term commitment. Interviews also showed that contact between employers and government representatives is minimal, highlighting the need for improved coordination mechanisms at local and national levels.

Capacity-building and co-investment mechanisms were appreciated and effective for private sector involvement.

Field visits and interviews with employers confirmed that the support provided through MAVETA, both in terms of technical training and financial contributions, was not only well received but considered essential for enabling businesses to participate in dual VET. Employers who attended MAVETA-supported training activities described the content as practical, timely, and directly applicable to their operations, particularly in areas such as financial planning, and mentoring apprentices. This training helped clarify expectations under the dual model and enhanced employers' readiness to host apprentices.

In parallel, MAVETA supported early-stage private sector partners through a co-investment mechanism, under which investment plans were developed jointly with each company. The purpose of the

mechanism was to strengthen training infrastructure and improve production conditions necessary for effective apprenticeship delivery. Several employers explicitly stated that this support was an important factor that motivated their decision to engage in the dual VET. This indicates that the mechanism was not only appreciated, but also effective in encouraging private sector participation.

Interviews further revealed that many employers feel they lack consistent contact and structured support from public authorities. In this context, the assistance provided by MAVETA was viewed as particularly important. It filled a critical gap in institutional engagement and helped build trust and confidence among companies.

The lack of employer associations limits coordination, representation, and advocacy efforts.

The limited presence and maturity of employer associations in Armenia remains a structural barrier to effective coordination, sectoral representation, and long-term institutionalisation of private sector engagement in dual VET. Findings from the stakeholder survey, as well as interviews and focus groups, highlight that while there is a general openness to association-based collaboration, most professional associations in Armenia are still emerging. The tradition of organised employer representation remains weak, particularly in agriculture and related rural sectors where MAVETA is most active. Few of the interviewed employers were members of a formal association. Nonetheless, many expressed interests in such structures as platforms for knowledge exchange, collective problem-solving, and advocacy—functions that are essential for a sustainable dual VET system.

Where associations have taken root in other sectors, such as winemaking and information technology, they demonstrate a greater capacity to engage with public institutions and represent employer interests. These examples suggest that with the right support, associations can become effective actors in VET governance and delivery.

MAVETA has made important initial contributions in this area, notably through its support to the establishment and integration of the cheese producers' association into the dual VET landscape. While this association still faces capacity challenges and limited institutional visibility, it provides an early model that can inform similar initiatives in other value chains.

Employers recognize the need for skilled workers but do not fully see themselves as part of the education process.

While employers consistently acknowledge the growing difficulty of finding skilled workers, many still do not fully perceive themselves as integral actors in the VET system. Interviews revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the preparedness of apprentices, with employers frequently noting that they often arrive at the firm with limited practical experience and require more support than anticipated. This reflects a disconnect between employer expectations and the foundational purpose of dual VET, which is to cultivate those very skills through structured, workplace-based learning.

Employers also expressed frustration with the process by which apprentices are assigned to companies. In several cases, participants reported that they were not involved in the selection process, leading to a lack of ownership and reduced willingness to invest time in training. Time spent on apprentice supervision is often viewed as lost productivity, particularly among smaller businesses with tight staffing and operational margins. This tension illustrates a key challenge: although businesses clearly recognise the long-term value of a skilled workforce, they remain hesitant to take on a proactive role in the education and training of future employees.

This gap in perception highlights the need for a more deliberate strategy to position employers not only as end-users of the VET system, but as co-creators of its quality and relevance. Without this shift, the burden of training will continue to fall disproportionately on public institutions, and the full potential of WBL to bridge the skills gap will remain unrealised.

International exchange visits have been effective in improving employers' understanding of work-based learning.

Employers who participated in international exchange visits reported a significantly improved understanding of how dual VET systems function in practice. Exposure to well-established models abroad, particularly those in countries with mature work-based learning systems, helped clarify the roles

and responsibilities of employers in apprentice training. These visits allowed participants to see how companies integrate apprentices into daily operations, manage supervision, and benefit from structured cooperation with training institutions. As a result, employers became more aware of the long-term benefits of investing in training and gained a more realistic view of how work-based learning can contribute to both business development and workforce preparedness. The findings suggest that such experiential learning opportunities are a valuable tool for shifting perceptions and building private sector ownership within an evolving VET system.

4.3 Policy and Sustainability

<p>Key findings: The project has made significant progress in improving the policy framework for dual VET, with the introduction of the new VET law representing a key milestone. However, translating this policy change into sustainable implementation remains a challenge. Government ownership of the dual system is still limited, and collaboration between key stakeholders relies heavily on MAVETA's facilitation. While vocational schools and businesses have strengthened their engagement, concerns persist about the long-term sustainability of these relationships without continued external support. Institutional capacity remains weak, and structural mechanisms for coordination between the public and private sectors are not yet fully established.</p>
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The adoption of the new VET law represents an important step toward institutionalizing dual VET.

The importance of the new VET law cannot be overstated. Until now, stakeholders have rated the effectiveness of the previous legal framework for supporting work-based learning at just 3.76 out of 5, a clear signal that while the foundations were in place, there was significant room to strengthen and modernize (Table 3 : **How effectively does the current regulatory support the implementation of work-based learning?**, Appendix Even so, 85.71 percent of those same stakeholders confirm that MAVETA's activities have already driven systemic improvements in dual VET, evidence both of the project's impact and of a collective readiness to move beyond pilot schemes into a full, sustainable national rollout (Figure 5, Appendix).

A cornerstone of the law is the creation of a dedicated VET Coordination Body, charged with bringing together the MoESCS, the MoE, vocational colleges, and private-sector representatives under one roof. By institutionalizing this multi-stakeholder unit, the law ensures that curricular updates, quality-assurance mechanisms, and on-the-job training standards will all be developed and overseen collaboratively, eliminating the fragmentation and delays.

Equally critical is the law's mandate for a clear, robust sub-legislative framework, covering everything from internship contracts and credit-transfer rules to accreditation procedures and funding formulas. Stakeholders have insisted that these regulations be drafted and finalized by 2030, giving the system decade-long stability even as Armenia navigates its complex geopolitical landscape and forthcoming election cycles. This approach will facilitate a strategic transition from the prior framework's limited effectiveness to a fully integrated, market-responsive dual VET ecosystem, anchored in robust quality assurance and performance metrics, that delivers sustained, quantifiable outcomes for both learners and industry stakeholders.

Government ownership of dual VET remains limited.

Although the new VET law provides a solid legal framework for dual vocational education and training, its rollout in this initial project phase naturally requires a period of adjustment. The MoESCS has embraced its key role and regards itself as an integral part of this transformation. By contrast the MoE has encountered greater challenges in fully integrating VET responsibilities and does not yet have a dedicated officer to oversee dual VET. During this formative stage, MAVETA has been undertaking functions typically performed by state institutions such as coordinating stakeholders, advancing policy development and delivering capacity building to public and private sector partners. Stakeholder survey feedback reflects generally positive yet evolving political support for VET reform underscoring the importance of sustained government engagement and collaboration to ensure these initiatives become fully institutionalised (Table 4, Appendix).

Absence of a designated body for policy dialogue among stakeholders.

The stakeholder platform, while not originally designed for policy coordination, brings together educational institutions, private sector actors, and government representatives, and has the potential to support such discussions. Survey respondents rated the platform's contribution to project success and policy dialogue positively (4.2 out of 5), suggesting it is valued for facilitating interaction and exchange across sectors (Table 8, Appendix). However, focus group participants, particularly those involved at the policy and implementation interface, emphasized that structured opportunities for policy dialogue are still missing. They noted that while the platform is useful for technical collaboration and networking, it has not evolved into a space for joint agenda setting or coordinated policy formulation.

Enhanced collaboration between colleges and private sector remains dependent on MAVETA's support, amidst limited engagement with the government.

VET colleges have reported improved connections with the private sector, with numerous of them actively participating in curriculum development and hosting apprentices. However, these collaborations predominantly involve private sector actors engaged through MAVETA's capacity-building courses and collaborations. Despite these advancements, both colleges and private sector actors express concerns about the sustainability of these relationships without MAVETA's ongoing facilitation. Survey responses further indicate scepticism regarding the establishment of a sustainable platform for collaboration between VET colleges, the private sector, and associations (

Note: N = 112. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 5, Appendix). Additionally, there is limited direct engagement between colleges and federal government bodies, as current VET reforms are primarily driven by initiatives like MAVETA rather than institutionalized government support.

Decentralization efforts in compulsory education could support the institutionalization of dual VET.

In a structured exchange with a senior official from the Goris municipal administration, whose primary responsibilities include tourism and rural development, we were informed of the government's plans to decentralize compulsory education. Although dual VET is not yet included in this initial mandate, transferring educational authority to the municipality represents a significant advancement. By strengthening local capacity and accountability in compulsory education management, these reforms establish a foundation for the future integration of dual vocational training. International precedents underscore this potential: in Germany municipal and regional authorities coordinate both general schooling and dual VET to address regional labour market needs while in Switzerland the cantons oversee general and vocational education to ensure coherent pathways.

Armenia's small and interconnected landscape presents opportunities for greater coordination between projects.

Focus group participants noted that MAVETA is one among several concurrent efforts in Armenia pursuing dual vocational education reform. Because many of the same public and private organisations engage across multiple sectors, they already share networks, training expertise and administrative processes. This overlap creates opportunities to harmonise curricula development, align outreach and coordinate technical support. Shared budgets for material translation and printing can reduce unit costs, and pooling resources for instructor training can build a larger cadre of qualified educators. Capitalising on these natural synergies rather than treating each project in isolation will strengthen Armenia's overall dual VET ecosystem.

4.4 Project Governance and Resource Management

Key findings: The MAVETA project's governance structure, while inclusive and multi-stakeholder by design, has presented coordination challenges due to its structural complexity.
Despite these, the project has made consistent progress toward its objectives and demonstrated effective use of resources at the implementation level.

The dual implementation structure has introduced coordination complexities.

The dual implementation structure, combined with the involvement of multiple implementing partners, has introduced notable coordination challenges. While Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 share the same overarching objectives, they operate at different levels of the system, Outcome 1 working closely with colleges and private sector actors at the implementation level, and Outcome 2 focusing on national policy and regulatory frameworks. This difference in operational perspective means that the two streams often experience and interpret challenges differently, and there is a tendency for misalignment in operational details rather than strategic goals. In addition, the sheer number of actors involved, each with specific mandates and approaches, has made coordination more complex and, at times, slowed decision-making processes. During interviews, several stakeholders also noted that bureaucratic procedures, particularly around financial reporting, have become lengthy and cumbersome, as they often require input and approval from all partners. Suggestions were made to simplify some of these processes and delegate more responsibility to local staff where appropriate, in order to improve efficiency and responsiveness.

The Steering Committee is not consistently fulfilling its strategic coordination role.

Focus group discussions revealed that the Steering Committee currently functions primarily as a reporting forum rather than a platform for strategic dialogue or rapid decision-making. With only one meeting per year and limited operational flexibility, it lacks the responsiveness needed to address emerging challenges, such as the contingency planning required during the refugee influx from Nagorno-Karabakh. While survey results indicate that basic communication between stakeholders and steering platforms is functioning relatively well (average rating of 4.19 out of 5), strategic steering remains underdeveloped. (Table 6, Appendix).

Given the committee's high-level political positioning and limited convening frequency, there is a clear need for an additional coordination mechanism, less politically formal, but sufficiently empowered, that can support more agile, ongoing exchange between implementing partners, facilitate joint planning, and ensure coherence across project streams. Such a body could play a bridging role between operational realities and strategic intent, ensuring that coordination is not only inclusive but also responsive and timely.

Strong field implementation has driven progress despite governance challenges.

Despite coordination challenges at the governance level, the project has demonstrated strong and consistent progress both in field implementation and in policy advancement. Operational activities, particularly in institutional strengthening and private sector collaboration, have advanced steadily, supported by the flexibility, responsiveness, and effective resource use demonstrated by implementing partners. At the policy level, the adoption of the new VET law represents a landmark achievement, laying the foundation for systemic reform and long-term sustainability of the dual VET approach. Importantly, the project's implementing partners are present and active across all levels of the system they seek to influence, supporting reform efforts within VET colleges, engaging directly with private sector actors, and contributing to national policy processes. This multi-level presence has enabled the project to drive change in a coordinated and contextually grounded way. The survey results suggest broad confidence in the project's ability to manage operational risks, reflected in an average rating of 4.3 out of 5 for governance and management structures (Table 7, Appendix).

Collaboration between stakeholder groups remains hierarchical, with limited lateral exchange and weak institutional ties.

Survey results indicate relatively optimistic perceptions of stakeholder collaboration (Figure 6, Appendix). Most respondents noted strong links between international partners, government actors, and VET institutions. However, the direction of these relationships tends to be top-down, government and donors are seen as initiating most exchanges, while collaboration between VET institutions and the private sector is not fully reciprocal. Interviews and focus groups revealed that direct collaboration between ministries and the private sector remains limited. While formal structures exist, most engagement appears sporadic and unstructured. Several employers mentioned they had never been in contact with government representatives. In contrast, VET institutions noted that through MAVETA, new peer relationships have emerged. College directors described connecting with other colleges for the first time and beginning to see them as partners for exchange rather than competitors, an important shift for future collaboration and system development.

Resource use has been efficient and closely aligned with sector needs.

MAVETA has demonstrated effective and contextually responsive resource management. Despite minor underspending in the first year, primarily due to delayed activities, competitive procurement, and delayed staff onboarding, the project maintained a strong implementation pace and reallocated funds flexibly to priority areas in Year 2. Financial adjustments were transparently reported, and savings were redistributed across outputs in line with evolving implementation needs, with a portion reserved as a contingency fund. Importantly, implementing partners remained embedded in all areas they aim to influence, working simultaneously with colleges, private sector actors, and government entities, ensuring that resources were channelled into areas of high relevance and systemic value. In interviews and focus groups, stakeholders consistently noted that the project filled critical gaps in funding, expertise, and coordination, particularly in rural areas where such support is otherwise limited. While a formal cost-effectiveness assessment was not conducted, available evidence suggests that resources were used strategically to generate both immediate improvements and lasting institutional gains. Continued attention to transparent reporting and adaptive financial planning will be key to sustaining this performance as the project matures.

5 Conclusions

MAVETA's intervention logic is based on the assumption that dual vocational education and training (Outcome 1) can be sustainably implemented if supported by coherent policies, capacitated institutions, and strong stakeholder cooperation (Outcome 2). Interventions at both the systemic and field levels were simultaneously launched, and the project has contributed to significant progress on both fronts. Notably, the adoption of the new VET law marks a major systemic milestone, and the broad-based management training of VET colleges has strengthened institutional leadership across the country. These achievements lay important foundations for long-term reform. However, as of the evaluation period, most systemic reforms remain in early stages of implementation and have yet to be fully operationalised across the system. Consequently, the majority of field-level progress to date has been driven by project-led activities and targeted capacity-building. The evaluation confirms that the intervention logic remains valid, but its intended sequencing, where systemic reform enables and sustains transformation at the operational level, is still in the early stages of realisation. The following conclusions assess the extent to which expected results have been achieved and identify areas where continued attention is needed.

1. Relevance

MAVETA has been highly relevant to Armenia's VET reform priorities and was launched at a critical moment when systemic and institutional gaps were hindering the development of labour-market-oriented dual VET. One of the project's most strategically relevant contributions has been its role in supporting the drafting and adoption of Armenia's new VET law, which formalises the dual approach and reflects a strong alignment between MAVETA's activities and national reform priorities. At the same time, there was a clear and urgent need for capacity building, particularly for teachers, many of whom lacked training in competence-based and inclusive pedagogical methods. Likewise, colleges were operating without adequate laboratories or updated teaching materials and relied heavily on informal or outdated resources. MAVETA's support in improving infrastructure, curricula, and instructional practices directly addressed these foundational gaps and laid the groundwork for more relevant, applied learning experiences.

The project has also responded to the needs and aspirations of both learners and employers. Many employers, particularly in agriculture, had not previously engaged with the VET system. Through apprenticeships, consultation, and curriculum co-development, they were brought into closer collaboration with colleges, which strengthened the perceived value of vocational education and contributed to a shift toward more demand-driven training.

However, responsiveness has not been uniform across all sectors or groups. Some professions, such as veterinary, remain under-resourced or dependent on mechanisms that do not consistently promote learner motivation. For example, while state scholarships are available for apprentices in several MAVETA-supported professions, they are often used to help colleges meet minimum class sizes rather than to attract highly motivated learners. These scholarships may support enrolment but do not necessarily lead to long-term engagement in the profession.

To enhance relevance going forward, the project should deepen its focus on quality and motivation-driven participation. Inclusion mechanisms such as scholarships and transportation support remain important, especially for students in rural areas, but their design should be better aligned with learner needs and professional expectations. At the same time, future interventions should carefully consider the scalability and sustainability of such measures and focus on strengthening system-level incentives that attract and retain genuinely motivated learners. Consolidating efforts within already-engaged colleges and aligning training pathways with evolving labour market demands will be key to ensuring continued relevance and long-term impact.

2. Coherence

While the project has responded effectively to immediate needs at the college and student levels, ensuring coherence across implementation streams and stakeholder groups remains an area for improvement. Outcome 1 (college-level implementation and private sector engagement) and Outcome 2 (policy and system development) share a common objective but have progressed at different speeds and through distinct institutional entry points. As a result, coordination between the two streams has not always been consistent. In some instances, Outcome 1 activities have advanced ahead of formal frameworks, particularly in the context of early-stage systemic reforms. This has resulted in modest and expected misalignments, such as how curricula are adapted to seasonal realities, how work-based learning hours are tracked, or how practical skills are assessed. These gaps are not systemic failures but reflect a natural sequencing in reform implementation. They are likely to be addressed as sub-legislative processes and quality assurance mechanisms under the new VET law are put into place. Strengthening the link between policy development and implementation will help ensure that field-level innovations are harmonised with the emerging regulatory environment.

Amongst the colleges it has been reported increasing peer-to-peer collaboration, noting that MAVETA has helped foster new institutional networks and shift attitudes from competition to cooperation. This progress at the college level illustrates the project's capacity to strengthen lateral relationships and build system-wide ownership where enabling conditions exist.

The Steering Committee has provided important political visibility and formal oversight for the project. However, its current structure and infrequent convening limit its role as a mechanism for strategic dialogue or timely coordination. While it remains useful for maintaining high-level stakeholder engagement, it does not offer the continuity or responsiveness required to support ongoing alignment across actors. Establishing a more agile and operationally grounded coordination mechanism could improve coherence across implementation levels, allowing for more regular dialogue, joint planning, and timely adjustment, while complementing the strategic function of the Steering Committee.

3. Effectiveness

MAVETA has been highly effective in the given context, particularly when compared to the state of the VET system prior to its intervention. Many programmes were outdated, lacked practical content, and were poorly aligned with labour market needs. The project's support on modernised curricula, upgraded laboratory equipment, targeted teacher training, and improved collaboration with the private sector, has brought about a fundamental shift in how vocational education is delivered in participating colleges. These improvements were not incremental adjustments but foundational changes, repeatedly described by stakeholders as essential to restoring even a basic level of functionality and credibility to the system.

A significant achievement contributing to the project's overall effectiveness was its role in supporting the development and adoption of Armenia's new law on dual VET. In addition to its strategic value, the law establishes a sustainable legal foundation for all future initiatives in the VET sector, including those under Outcome 1. By creating an official framework for dual VET, the law helps reduce fragmentation, provides clarity for stakeholders, and allows future investments to build on an institutionalised system rather than project-based structures.

As part of its broader effectiveness, the project has taken initial steps toward promoting gender equality and inclusion. Interviews and focus group discussions on the field indicated that several MAVETA-supported classes had a roughly equal gender balance, suggesting an encouraging shift in participation. Teachers who attended gender-focused training sessions reported feeling better equipped to consider inclusive approaches in their teaching. However, these trainings were limited in number and scope, and there is not yet a comprehensive framework for systematically addressing gender across the system. While these early efforts are promising, further work is needed to ensure that increased participation translates into equitable learning experiences, professional opportunities, and long-term inclusion—especially for young women facing structural barriers in rural areas. In addition, the project made targeted efforts to include refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, and while some students have been integrated, institutional follow-up mechanisms remain limited and require reinforcement in the next phase.

MAVETA's effectiveness is further reflected in students' choices and behaviour. Many learners are attracted to programs that offer scholarships and are willing to work part-time during their studies, highlighting not only engagement but also the economic necessity driving their participation. This underscores the importance of linking VET with financial support and real employment prospects. The project's support to private sector actors through targeted training and selected financial contributions laid important groundwork for motivating stronger engagement in dual VET.

Capacity-building activities were generally well targeted and helped participating businesses to address immediate operational gaps, including how to structure on-the-job learning, improve internal processes, and prepare to host apprentices. In parallel, several companies received co-financing through the project's private sector support facility, which enabled them to invest in infrastructure and operational improvements. Although the evaluation did not directly assess the experiences of co-financed companies, this approach is consistent with international practice, which suggests that financial support at the early stages of dual VET is often necessary to lower entry barriers and incentivise employer involvement. Nonetheless, significant work remains to ensure that this initial engagement evolves into sustained, structured collaboration. The long-term effectiveness of these efforts will depend on whether

companies are able to remain involved beyond the project's direct support, and whether colleges and employers can rely on clear, institutionalised frameworks for cooperation.

4. Efficiency

MAVETA has delivered key outputs effectively and with prudent use of resources at the implementation level, though certain governance and coordination challenges have constrained efficiency at the strategic level. Investments in infrastructure, curriculum development, and teacher training were well-targeted and aligned with institutional needs, resulting in visible improvements across participating VET colleges. Stakeholders consistently emphasised that these investments addressed long-standing gaps, and that such targeted support had not been available through national systems.

Despite this progress, the project's governance mechanisms did not always enable timely decision-making. The Steering Committee, while broadly representative, convened infrequently and primarily served an informational role. Its limited flexibility became particularly evident during the refugee integration response, when delays and unclear responsibilities slowed operational adaptation. Much of the project's adaptive capacity relied on the responsiveness and flexibility of implementing partners, rather than on embedded governance mechanisms.

Communication between Outcome 1 (field-level implementation) and Outcome 2 (policy and systems) also presented challenges, due to differing levels, institutional actors, and implementation rhythms. These structural differences at times complicated the alignment of priorities and timelines. However, coordination improved in the later stages of implementation, setting the groundwork for stronger integration in future phases. As the sector moves into implementation of the new VET law, there is now a strong opportunity to align efforts across actors. A more structured and unified approach to coordination could help maximise the impact of ongoing initiatives and ensure that public and donor investments contribute to a coherent, system-wide reform process.

5. Impact

MAVETA has generated significant momentum and visibility for dual VET in Armenia. Its contributions to policy development, institutional engagement, and the integration of work-based learning into national conversations have helped elevate VET from a marginal topic to a recognised component of workforce development. However, the broader transformation of the system is still in its early stages, as the implementation of the new VET law and accompanying institutional reforms are just beginning. The project's approach is well aligned with European best practices, particularly in competence, based education, work-based learning, and stakeholder engagement, while maintaining flexibility to adapt these principles to the Armenian context. This pragmatic adaptation has improved the project's local legitimacy and laid a strong foundation for future, nationally owned reforms. One notable unintended consequence of the dual VET model has been a reduction in teacher compensation. While teachers now take on new responsibilities in supporting and mentoring apprentices, this additional workload is not formally recognised or remunerated. At the same time, the number of face-to-face teaching hours has decreased due to the shift toward work-based learning. As a result, many teachers are earning less despite contributing more, which may have negative effects on morale and retention if left unaddressed.

6. Sustainability

The sustainability of MAVETA's outcomes is gaining traction, although the full transfer of responsibilities to national institutions is still underway. While key government actors and implementing partners are engaged, the long-term ownership of reforms has not yet been institutionalised across all levels. Encouragingly, there are visible signs of progress, at the college level, initiative and ownership are beginning to take root. For example, the Goris college has independently initiated engagement with local businesses, conducting needs assessments and exploring the development of a new dual VET programme in Orchard Management. Similarly, the ANAU branch in Sisian has launched outreach

efforts targeting 9th-grade students, offering after-school classes and organising summer camps to promote vocational pathways. These bottom-up actions reflect growing confidence and capacity within institutions to carry forward elements of the dual VET model.

At the national level, the MoESCS has been a consistent and committed partner, contributing to policy development and participating in coordination processes. In contrast, the MoE has been less actively engaged, possibly due to the lack of a dedicated operational unit tasked with overseeing VET-related matters within the ministry. Strengthening its role will be important to align dual VET more closely with Armenia's economic and workforce strategies. The upcoming establishment of a new VET coordination body, as mandated in the revised VET law, presents a crucial window of opportunity to reinforce institutional structures and clarify leadership. If well-designed and adequately supported, this mechanism could anchor long-term reform implementation within national structures and reduce dependency on project-based facilitation.

In supporting private sector participation, MAVETA's early financial contributions to selected companies were necessary and align with international experience in VET reform. Research and practice, including evidence from Nepal's SDC-supported ENSSURE programme (Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment), show that initial financial support to firms can be an important catalyst for overcoming entry barriers, particularly when firms are unfamiliar with apprenticeship models or lack the resources to host trainees (Renold, Bolli, McDonald, & Sharma, 2024). In Nepal, even after cost-benefit analyses demonstrated clear advantages for employers engaging in apprenticeship training, temporary financial support remained necessary to fully establish private sector participation and to allow firms to adjust to new training responsibilities.

Similarly in Armenia, continued financial support remains essential in the short term to allow companies to build the necessary capacities and integrate apprenticeship training into their operations. However, this support should be temporary and accompanied by broader institutional strengthening and systemic improvements to avoid creating dependency. The way forward is to gradually phase out subsidies by helping employers understand the tangible return on investment in training. Conducting and communicating cost-benefit analyses, showing benefits such as increased productivity, lower recruitment costs, and higher employee retention, will be key to fostering employer commitment over time. In parallel, the formation of training alliances among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), coordinated by associations and/or the MoE, can help share the costs and responsibilities of training, making participation more feasible and attractive even for smaller companies.

6 Recommendations

The MAVETA project has laid a strong foundation for dual vocational education and training in Armenia. However, to ensure institutional sustainability, coherence across actors, and impact at scale, a number of immediate and longer-term steps are required. The recommendations below reflect findings from stakeholder consultations, document analysis, field visits, and survey data. They are structured in two sets: (1) actions to be undertaken until the end of Phase 1 (August 2025), and (2) strategic priorities for the next phase.

6.1 Immediate Actions for Phase 1 (Until August 2025)

In the final months of Phase 1, the focus should be on consolidating progress into system-level readiness, clarifying responsibilities among stakeholders, and preparing the ground for successful implementation.

Foster a Unified Vision for Dual VET Implementation

While both implementation streams have made important progress, a shared understanding of the dual VET model, its core principles, implementation approach, and long-term objectives is still lacking. Rather than aiming to define a comprehensive strategic vision during a period of intense implementation, a more realistic and useful step is to bring together a small, focused group of representatives from Outcome 1, Outcome 2, donors, and key stakeholders. This group should form before the end of Phase 1 and include people who are expected to stay engaged in Phase 2.

The aim is not to introduce deep or structural changes. Instead, this group would operate at a meta level to develop a focused 12-month operational roadmap that clarifies roles, defines shared priorities such as employer engagement and teacher compensation, and supports a more coordinated approach going forward. Acting as a light policy alignment unit (Strategic Alignment Group), the group would address key coordination gaps between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, surface differing expectations, and model a more integrated way of working. Its outputs would strengthen collaboration for the remainder of Phase 1 and inform the design of governance and regulatory processes in Phase 2.

This effort is intentionally light and focused. It should not be seen as a major reform initiative, but as a modest and necessary step to improve communication and alignment. In doing so, it can serve as a bridge between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 and help model the kind of coordination that will be essential going forward. Looking ahead, synergies between the two streams are expected to become more pronounced in Phase 2, particularly as both groups will need to collaborate closely on the development of the sub-legislative plan. The field experience and practical insights gathered by Outcome 1, through its direct engagement with colleges, teachers, and employers, will be crucial in informing Outcome 2's policy and regulatory work and establishment of associations. This will help ensure that the new regulatory frameworks are realistic, responsive to implementation needs, and aligned with the operational realities of the system. As a result, the collaboration between the two outcomes will be more organically connected in Phase 2 than it was in the first phase.

Initiate Planning for the VET Governing Body

The decision to establish a national VET governing body, as foreseen by the new law, represents a critical step toward institutionalising dual VET in Armenia. More than a technical measure, it is a structural investment in the long-term sustainability of the VET system. This body can play a central role in ensuring that dual VET continues to evolve in a coherent, inclusive, and quality-assured manner, guided by national priorities and shaped by the contributions of all key actors. It is through such an institution that the Armenian government can take full ownership of the reform and lead its future development with continuity and confidence.

The remaining months of Phase 1 provide a valuable opportunity to initiate the planning process for this body. This includes defining its mandate, clarifying its functional responsibilities, identifying the actors to be involved, and setting out the working modalities that will ensure effective coordination and decision-making. The new body should be positioned to support system development, oversee implementation processes, and enable meaningful collaboration between public and private actors in vocational education and training.

This planning process should be supported by the Strategic Alignment Group, drawing on the practical experience of both implementation streams. Concrete proposals should be developed for the body's composition, governance model and priority functions, reflecting lessons from MAVETA and informed by international practices. In several countries, national-level institutions have been established to provide technical and strategic coordination of VET. For example, Germany's Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) serves as a reference point for the kind of support such a body can offer, including in the areas of curriculum development, quality assurance, and stakeholder coordination. While Armenia's model must be adapted to its own context, experiences from other systems suggest that a well-mandated and technically capable body can be highly effective in sustaining reform momentum.

To ensure broad ownership, the governing body should formally include representation from the private sector, regional colleges, sectoral associations, and the Ministry of Economy, alongside the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. It should be conceived as a permanent institutional platform, with the authority and legitimacy to coordinate, monitor and guide the development of dual VET. Such a body will provide the structure needed to consolidate reform gains, support long-term system improvement, and embed dual VET as a strategic component of Armenia's national development agenda.

Align Teacher Roles and Incentives to Support Dual VET and Explore the Expansion of PET-Level Programmes

The implementation of dual VET has introduced a range of new responsibilities for teachers that are not yet reflected in their formal job descriptions or in the government salary structure. While teachers are required to coordinate apprenticeship placements, liaise with companies, and supervise students during work-based learning phases, these essential tasks are currently not classified as payable work. This misalignment poses a risk to staff motivation and to the long-term viability of dual VET implementation. The immediate next step is the formal adaptation of job descriptions for VET teachers. This would enable new roles and responsibilities specific to the dual system—such as mentoring, company coordination, and workplace supervision—to be recognised and compensated through the salary framework. While full implementation may take time, initiating this process during the current phase is essential and should be prioritised in the policy dialogue for Phase 2.

In parallel, the offering of PET-level short courses should be explored as a medium-term strategy. Similar to the short-term course for Tractor Drivers, these would include short training offers that move in the direction of professional education and training (PET). These courses provide teachers with additional teaching opportunities, contributing to higher compensation through increased workload. At the same time, they strengthen the attractiveness and progression pathways within the vocational track by expanding the training offer beyond initial qualifications. To advance this opportunity, it is recommended that implementing partners, together with the Ministry of Education and other relevant authorities, assess the systemic and legal conditions under which PET-type courses can be developed and officially offered within VET colleges. This includes clarifying what legal status and accreditation mechanisms such programmes would require, and how they would fit within the broader qualifications and financing framework.

International evidence shows that strong VET systems are characterised by clearly structured and vertically permeable pathways that allow learners to progress to higher qualification levels, including that equivalent to bachelor's, master's, or even doctoral degrees (Caves, McDonald, Naço, & Renold, 2023). Planning to expanding the vocational pathway in this direction would lead to the introduction of PET-type programmes would significantly enhance the attractiveness of VET in Armenia. It would signal that dual VET is not a dead-end but part of a full and valued educational and professional pathway. In addition, PET short courses can become a platform for deepening cooperation with the private sector. When designed and delivered in close collaboration with employers, such programmes ensure greater relevance to current industry needs, offer targeted upskilling for employed adults, and create

opportunities for companies to send their staff to participate in selected courses at colleges. This model not only allows firms to benefit from updated training infrastructure and expertise but also strengthens long-term partnerships between colleges and employers. In this way, PET courses serve both system development goals, and the evolving skills needs of the labour market.

Expanding Armenia's vocational pathway toward tertiary-level qualifications through carefully planned PET programmes would significantly strengthen the attractiveness of VET. It would signal that dual VET is not a dead-end but part of a complete and valued educational and professional pathway. However, this expansion must be deliberate and aligned with national qualification frameworks. Over-reliance on short-term non-formal courses and micro credentials risks fragmenting the system. These courses, often exempt from quality assurance and lacking academic currency, limit learners' ability to build deeper knowledge and adapt flexibly to a changing labour market. While short programmes can support immediate labour market integration for unemployed adults, they should not form the basis of a national education system. PET programmes, when properly designed in close collaboration with employers, can ensure relevance to current industry needs, offer upskilling opportunities for workers, and create long-term partnerships between colleges and the private sector. Building these pathways carefully will be essential to developing a sustainable, inclusive, and future-ready VET system in Armenia.

Promote Gender Equality with Attention to Structural Barriers and Programme Quality

Promoting gender equality should remain a strategic priority within Armenia's dual VET system. However, this must be approached with nuance and care to avoid reproducing entrenched patterns of occupational segregation and undervaluation, as illustrated by the situation of VET teachers, where women are concentrated in roles that remain underpaid and increasingly burdened without formal recognition. While the MAVETA project has taken meaningful steps to promote inclusion, young women, particularly in rural areas, continue to face significant constraints. These include limited mobility, financial barriers, and traditional family expectations, all of which restrict access to agricultural education. These factors often prevent participation not because of a lack of interest or ability, but because the conditions for equal access are not yet in place.

To be effective, gender promotion must be integrated into a broader agenda focused on quality and opportunity. This includes strengthening the content and reputation of programmes in sectors where women are underrepresented and ensuring that all learners have access to real career development prospects. At the same time, concrete measures should be introduced to address access barriers. These may include decentralised training offers, transportation support, and gender-sensitive career guidance. Building trust with families and communities is essential for creating an environment that encourages and supports girls to enrol and thrive.

Initial progress has been made through piloting gender-responsive teaching approaches and raising awareness among staff. However, to sustain and expand these efforts, a more systematic and evidence-informed strategy is needed. This should include the development of a monitoring system that captures participation, retention, and learner outcomes by gender, as well as qualitative changes in learners' agency and decision-making power. International experience shows that lasting gender equality results from persistent attention to both social and practical barriers, combined with efforts to enhance learner empowerment and align inclusion with quality.

For this reason, gender strategies in dual VET should be deepened and refined to move beyond enrolment figures. Stakeholders should ensure that all gender-related interventions contribute meaningfully to the attractiveness and quality of programmes, while directly addressing the systemic factors that disproportionately affect girls and women. In this way, gender equality can become a driver of system-wide improvement that benefits all learners and supports the development of a more inclusive and resilient VET system.

Stakeholders should assess how curricula are implemented in practice to ensure alignment with the seasonal realities of agricultural work-based learning

Initial observations from interviews and focus group discussions at the two colleges indicate that teachers are making adaptations to the newly introduced curricula in response to the seasonal patterns of agricultural work and the operational needs of employers. These adjustments suggest that there may be a partial misalignment between the formal structure of the curriculum and the conditions and needs of the training companies. Although the findings are based on a limited number of institutions, the underlying causes, such as the cyclical nature of agricultural activities and variable capacity in training companies, are likely to be shared across other colleges.

Such adaptations are a common and expected feature in the early stages of implementing new curricula and developing new forms of cooperation with the private sector. They should not be interpreted as a failure of the new curricula, but rather as an opportunity to understand how new approaches are being applied in practice. It is therefore recommended that curriculum implementation be systematically reviewed, both to assess whether current structures reflect sector-specific conditions and to determine whether adaptations made by teachers are consistent, appropriate, and pedagogically sound. Based on the findings, adjustments may be needed either in the curriculum design itself or through targeted support to teachers, helping them navigate how much flexibility is appropriate and how best to adapt learning content while maintaining intended learning outcomes.

6.2 Strategic Priorities for Phase 2 (Beyond August 2025)

Streamline the steering structure to strengthen coordination and policy engagement

Project implementation in Phase 1 has involved a wide range of actors, including implementers, donors, ministries, employers and colleges. Their commitment has been vital to MAVETA's success. However, the complexity of the current steering structure has at times slowed decision-making, created overlaps, and limited the project's agility. As the project moves into Phase 2, avoiding delays caused by coordination challenges will be critical. A more functional and streamlined governance model will be essential not only to enhance implementation efficiency but also to strengthen the project's involvement in policy dialogue.

We suggest that the governance structure for Phase 2 should be organised into three complementary levels. The Steering Committee should be retained as a high-level reporting and political visibility platform. Continuing to meet annually, it should bring together all key MAVETA stakeholders—ministries, donors, implementing partners, to review overall project progress, endorse broad strategic directions, and maintain transparency and political commitment. Its role would be limited to endorsement and oversight, without operational steering responsibilities.

A Policy Engagement Group should be newly established to strengthen structured engagement with policymakers and national institutions. Positioned at a lower political level than the Steering Committee, this group would meet quarterly or as needed, serving to align policy advocacy messages, present unified positions, and maintain reform momentum in national strategies. Initially coordinated by implementing partners with strong experience in policy dialogue, such as GIZ, SDC, and SDA, the group's leadership should gradually transition to national actors as institutional capacity strengthens. Its membership should include senior representatives from MoESCS, MoE, (ideally) associations and college leadership.

The Operational Management Platform, already functioning as a coordination mechanism between Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 implementers, should continue to exist in Phase 2. Meeting monthly and coordinated by the MAVETA backstopper, this platform ensures alignment of activities, operational troubleshooting, harmonised reporting, and systematic follow-up on implementation decisions. Maintaining and strengthening this operational coordination layer will be critical to ensure day-to-day efficiency and coherence across project streams.

Anchor Dual VET in National Strategies, Legal Frameworks, and Financing

To ensure lasting impact, Phase 2 must focus on embedding dual VET firmly within Armenia's national systems. This includes formalising its place in long-term development strategies, institutionalising leadership through a dedicated governing body, and securing public financing for implementation. Dual VET should no longer be treated as a pilot or externally driven initiative but recognised as a strategic lever for employment, rural development, and economic modernisation. A key task will be the development and adoption of the sub-legislative plan that translates the new VET law into operational guidance. This process must be led by public authorities and structured as a joint effort between policy and practice. It should bring together the expertise of implementation partners under Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 to ensure that regulations are grounded in real conditions and are implementable at the college and enterprise level.

The VET governing body foreseen by the law must be fully established and capacitated during Phase 2. This body should play a coordinating role across ministries, employers, training providers, and associations, with a mandate to guide implementation, monitor progress, and ensure coherence between policy and practice. Its establishment should not be seen as a parallel structure, but as a step toward consolidating national ownership and enabling long-term institutional leadership of the dual VET system.

Finally, a sustainable financing model must be introduced. This includes the integration of dual VET into regular budget planning under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, and the development of co-financing mechanisms involving the Ministry of Economy and other stakeholders. This will not only ensure continuity, but also signal a political and financial commitment to dual VET as a permanent feature of Armenia's skills and employment system.

Build Standards Before Scaling: Phase 2 as a Foundation for Quality and Expansion

Before expanding dual VET to additional colleges or sectors, Phase 2 should focus on consolidating and strengthening the programmes already introduced in the participating colleges. These colleges have taken the lead in testing the dual model, but implementation remains at an early stage and the VET law has not yet been operationalised. Ensuring that these institutions are able to deliver high-quality dual VET independently is a necessary first step. This includes establishing strong and sustained partnerships with employers, ensuring that teaching staff are adequately trained and supported, and embedding mechanisms for assessment, feedback, and quality assurance. Expansion should not proceed until clear benchmarks have been achieved in these areas, and outcomes such as student competence, employment readiness, and private sector satisfaction can be measured and validated.

At the same time, Phase 2 offers a critical window to lay the foundations for scaling. The implementation of the VET law and the expected development of sub-legislative acts provide a structured opportunity to define national standards for curriculum development, in-company training, student assessment, and institutional responsibilities. Scaling should only proceed when the core elements of dual VET are functioning effectively. These include:

- A sustainable and operational financing mechanism, including cost-based budgeting models and apprenticeship stipends that are reflected in public budgets.

- A qualifications framework aligned with occupational standards and embedded in national quality assurance procedures.
- A sufficient pool of trained teachers and instructors, supported by professional development opportunities and clear role definitions.
- Mechanisms that ensure consistent private sector engagement, including formal cooperation agreements, structured feedback systems, and active coordination platforms.

The roadmap for expansion should be developed as part of Phase 2. It should define readiness criteria and prioritise regions and sectors where employer demand, institutional capacity, and support structures are already in place. This process must be led in collaboration with the VET governing body, working in close coordination with private sector partners and colleges. By taking this approach, Armenia can prepare for sustainable and inclusive scaling while preserving the quality and credibility of its dual VET system.

Strengthen the Role of Associations¹

The long-term sustainability of dual VET will depend on the organised and meaningful involvement of the private sector. Experience from countries with established dual VET systems, such as Switzerland and Germany, demonstrates that employer associations can play a central role in aligning dual VET with labour market needs. These associations contribute to curriculum development, coordinate apprenticeship placements, represent employer interests in dialogue with public authorities, and provide training and mentorship support to companies engaged in dual VET.

While Armenia does not have a long-standing tradition of employer associations, and many of the current sectoral organisations are still in the early stages of development, this should not be seen as a limitation. Rather, it highlights the importance of sustained, careful support for what is fundamentally an intergenerational investment. Building associations that are credible, representative, and capable of supporting VET reform will take time and persistence. During our focus group discussions, stakeholders repeatedly emphasised the need for long-term capacity development and noted the promising examples already emerging in different sectors. These examples show that success is possible, even in a system without deep historical roots in employer representation.

One promising pathway is to start empowering associations by assigning them clear and useful responsibilities. In the future, associations can be supported to offer employer training courses similar to those currently provided through MAVETA. These trainings were well received by participating employers. This was particularly true in rural areas where few other training opportunities exist. Enabling associations to take on the delivery of such courses would not only build their capacity but also provide a concrete incentive for employers to join. It would demonstrate the practical value of association membership and help position them as credible and relevant actors within the dual VET system.

This process could be jointly led by GIZ, which brings deep expertise in association development and private sector engagement, and the Ministry of Economy, which has both the mandate and interest to promote stronger economic coordination mechanisms. Involving the MoE in this way also ensures that it becomes an active participant in the development of the VET system and builds a sense of institutional ownership over its future direction and outcomes. At the same time, efforts should be made to support the financial and institutional sustainability of associations, including securing permanent staff and building organisational systems that will allow them to operate effectively and independently over time.

¹ Input with Serbia's example in the annex

Doing so will lay the foundation for long-term cooperation between the public and private sectors within the VET system.

Support and Amplify Grassroots Initiatives

Several partner colleges have initiated their own outreach and engagement activities, including after-school programmes, summer camps, and direct collaboration with local employers. These bottom-up efforts demonstrate local ownership, innovation, and a strong commitment to promoting VET in ways that are contextually relevant and community-driven. In the field, it was clear that MAVETA has played a catalytic role in motivating these colleges. The project's presence and focus on practical implementation have inspired staff to take initiative, deepen community ties, and raise the visibility of dual VET.

The project should be attentive to recognising when such grassroots initiatives emerge and ensure that they are not seen as isolated or peripheral. Instead, they should be systematically captured, validated, and incorporated into project planning. These initiatives represent important strategic entry points for institutional empowerment and offer lessons for the wider system. Targeted support should be provided to help scale promising models or replicate them in other regions, using mechanisms such as peer exchange, seed funding, and capacity-building workshops.

Integrating grassroots efforts into the broader reform agenda will help foster a culture of initiative and autonomy at the college level, while also strengthening the responsiveness and sustainability of the VET system. Supporting these activities also sends a clear message: that reform is not only directed from the top but grows through the leadership and creativity of those implementing it day to day. When such initiatives are recognised and amplified, they can become powerful engines of change, driving innovation from within the system itself.

Invest in public awareness and the visibility of Vocational Education and Training

Changing perceptions of dual vocational education and training in Armenia is a long-term challenge, but also a critical opportunity. As in many countries, VET continues to be perceived by many as a second-choice option. This is often not a reflection of its actual value, but rather a result of limited visibility. Young people and their families frequently lack access to relatable, evidence-based information about what VET offers, particularly its connection to employment, income, and meaningful careers. To shift this perception, MAVETA and its partners should treat visibility and awareness as a strategic investment. It should become a central component of VET system development rather than a peripheral activity. This means investing in sustained, high-quality communication that presents vocational pathways as credible, aspirational, and future-oriented.

International experience confirms that sustained investment in visibility and communication can significantly shift public perceptions of VET. For Armenia, the next step is to build on MAVETA's early awareness-raising efforts and develop a more structured, long-term communication strategy. This strategy should highlight student and graduate success stories, publicly recognise the achievements of VET students, and involve alumni, teachers, and employers as credible ambassadors of the dual system. Celebrating vocational pathways should become a visible and valued part of public life. Graduation ceremonies should be well-attended, covered by local media, and broadcast where possible to reach a wider audience. When students sign apprenticeship contracts, these moments should be marked with the same pride and visibility often reserved for university admissions or sports achievements. Simple, symbolic celebrations, such as contract-signing events, can help reinforce the message that pursuing VET is a respected and aspirational step toward a meaningful career.

These efforts, if pursued consistently and with creativity, can build the social recognition that dual VET needs to thrive. By placing vocational success in the public eye, Armenia can help foster a cultural shift where VET is not only better understood, but genuinely valued.

Involve Employers in the Selection of Apprentices

Despite growing participation, many employers remain hesitant about hosting apprentices due to concerns over student preparedness and uncertainty about their role in the training process. To address this, employers should be more actively involved in the selection of apprentices. When businesses participate in choosing their trainees, they are more likely to feel invested in the training process and take ownership of the outcomes. This could be facilitated through structured application procedures, where students apply directly to participating firms, or through the development of a dedicated digital platform that matches students and employers, similar to a job portal. Such tools would increase transparency, allow both sides to express preferences, and foster stronger relationships from the outset. During Phase 2, MAVETA and its partners should pilot and institutionalize these mechanisms, enabling a more balanced and trust-based collaboration between training institutions and the private sector.

Support the Creation of SME Training Alliances

In Armenia's agricultural sector, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) lack the capacity to independently deliver structured, high-quality work-based learning. This challenge is particularly evident in rural areas, where most employers operate on a small scale and face constraints such as limited time, financial resources, and training infrastructure. Based on MAVETA document analysis and qualitative data from field visits and focus groups, it is clear that many employers are currently unable to meet the full requirements of hosting apprentices. These limitations contribute to variation in the quality of training across companies and risk excluding smaller employers from meaningful participation in the system as it expands. This challenge has already been recognised in MAVETA reporting, which identifies the limited capacity among SMEs as a key bottleneck to expanding WBL. Project documentation also points to the potential value of shared training arrangements and inter-company models as a way to overcome these constraints.

To address these barriers, Phase 2 of the project should support the development of SME training alliances—networks of companies that collaborate to host apprentices, share training responsibilities, and coordinate with VET institutions. These alliances could be formed among peer SMEs or anchored by larger firms, or associations. By pooling resources and distributing training functions, these structures would allow smaller employers to offer apprentices access to high-quality, well-supported learning environments without taking on the full burden individually.

International experience confirms that successful dual VET systems do not rely on universal company participation, but instead create enabling conditions for the firms that are best positioned to train. In Switzerland, around 40 percent of eligible companies provide apprenticeships, yet this is sufficient to sustain a strong and respected national system (State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, 2022). In Germany, participation rates range from 20 to 25 percent, with high-quality provision supported through robust coordination by chambers of commerce, training alliances, and national standards (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, 2020). These examples demonstrate that a relatively limited share of well-supported training firms can deliver substantial results, especially when combined with intermediary support and public-private cooperation. A particularly relevant model in this context is the concept of Supra-Company Training Centres, as implemented in countries such as Slovakia, which, like Armenia, has undergone a transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy. These centres are designed to meet the practical training needs of SMEs and the self-employed who cannot individually provide comprehensive in-company training. They deliver parts of the VET curriculum in specialised workshops or labs, train in-company instructors, and offer upskilling opportunities for employees in need of practical or advanced technical competencies. By centralising key training functions, such centres enhance quality, promote standardisation, and make participation in dual VET more feasible and attractive for smaller businesses.

In the Armenian context, associations should be actively involved in the development and facilitation of these training alliances. Over time, they could assume responsibility for organising and coordinating

these structures, ensuring their sustainability and integration into the broader VET system. Associations can be positioned to maintain regular dialogue between SMEs, VET institutions, and national bodies, and can serve as a stable intermediary that supports quality, responsiveness, and continuity.

Given these international models and local constraints, MAVETA should also support a more detailed analysis of employer willingness to participate in such collective arrangements. This analysis should identify regions and sectors where pilot initiatives could be launched and clarify what forms of technical and financial support are necessary to make them viable. By enabling agricultural SMEs to participate through shared structures, Armenia can reduce disparities in training quality, expand access for rural youth, and promote more inclusive and sustainable forms of employer engagement. This approach offers a pragmatic and scalable solution that aligns system quality with the realities of the agricultural economy, while laying the foundation for long-term private sector participation in collaboration with intermediary actors whose institutional capacity can be gradually developed and strengthened over time.

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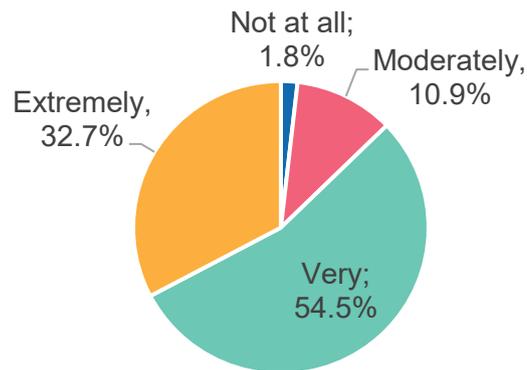
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8 Appendix

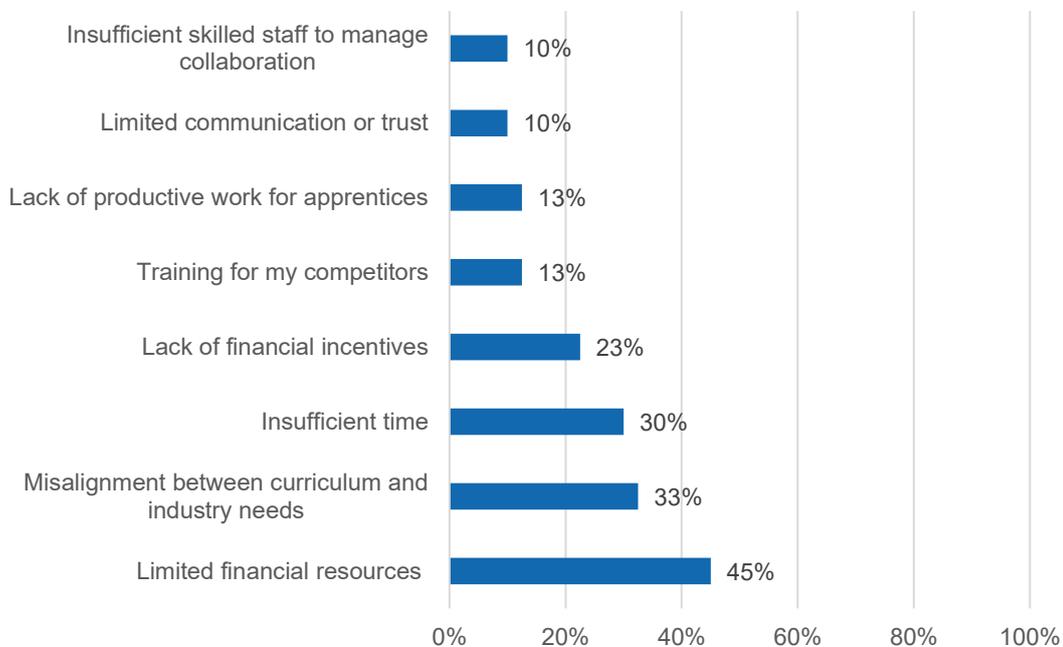
Graphs

Figure 1: How has the project enhanced your institution's capacity to deliver labour market-relevant knowledge?



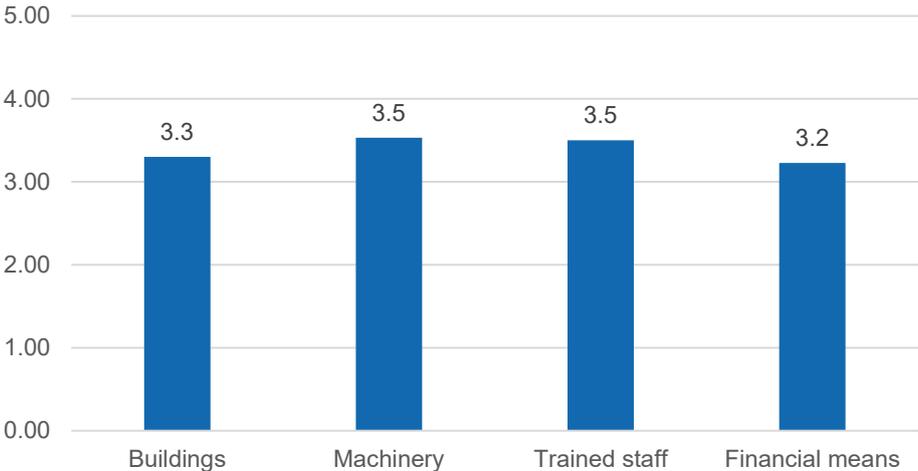
Note: N = 55. This question was addressed exclusively to VET institutions. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Figure 2 : What are the main challenges preventing greater collaboration with VET institutions?



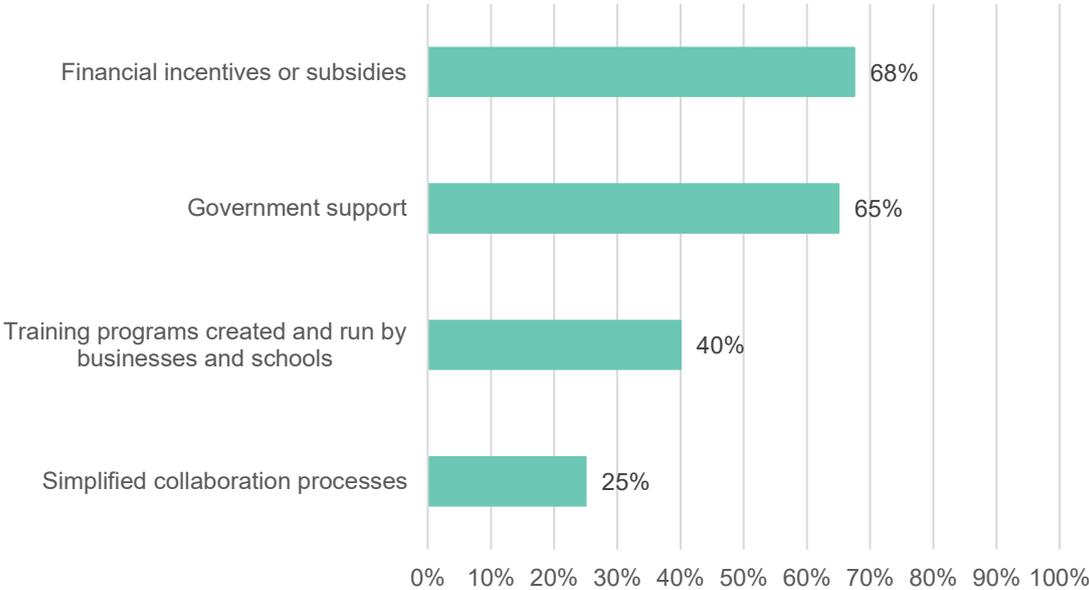
Note: N = 40. This question was addressed exclusively to the private sector. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Figure 3: Does your organization have sufficient capacity to support apprentice training with regards to the following?



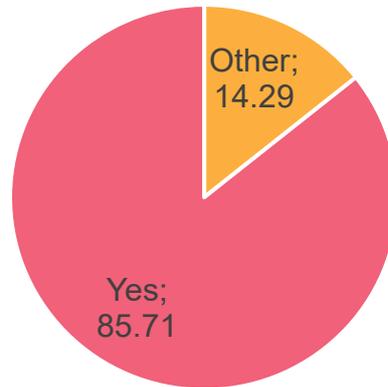
Note: N = 35. This question was addressed exclusively to private sector institutions. Respondents were allowed to rate each item individually on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Figure 4: What types of support would encourage your organization to engage more actively in the dual education system?



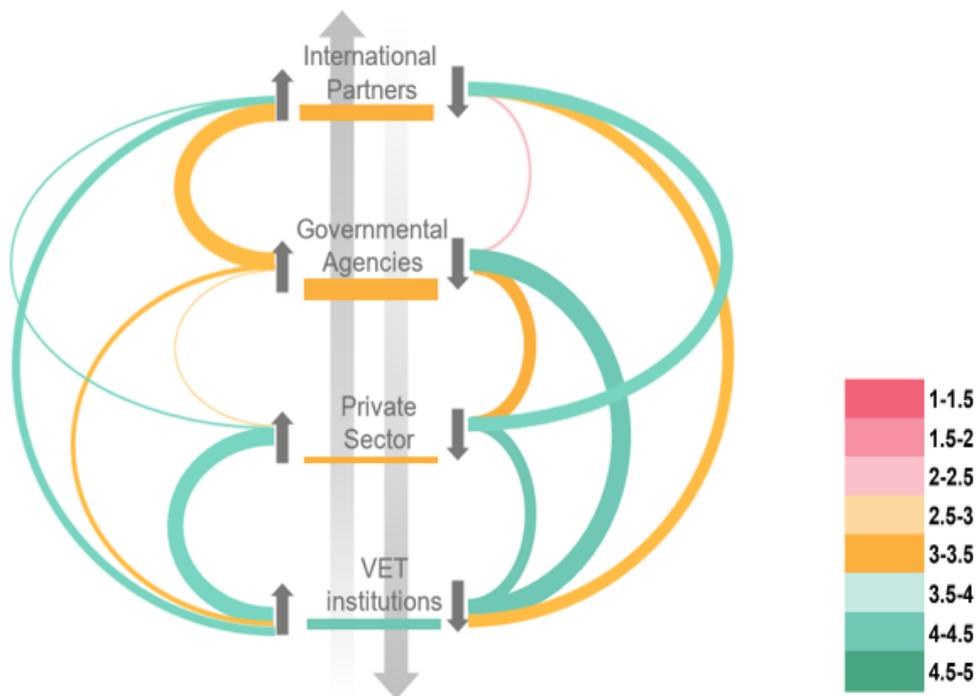
Note: N = 40. This question was addressed exclusively to private sector institutions. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Figure 5: Have the project's activities contributed to systemic improvements in dual education?



Note: N = 40. This question was addressed exclusively to the government and international partners. Respondents could choose between yes, no or other.

Figure 6: Stakeholder Collaboration



Note: N=120 individual respondents. Line thickness represents relation load (product of relations' adjacency and reported intensity), and color is satisfaction according to the scale shown in the bottom-right corner. Relations flow up the chart on the left and down the chart on the right. Vertical order is not a precise representation of hierarchy. Within-group relations are shown as horizontal bars below the name of each actor group.

Table 3 : How effectively does the current regulatory support the implementation of work-based learning?

Actors	Mean
Private Sector Representatives	3.82353
Government & International/Implementing Partners	3.05556
Sector Associations/Unions	4.5
VET Institutions (Director, Teacher, Dual Responsible, Administrator)	3.91379
Average of all actors	3.758929

Note: N = 112. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 4: Does the VET reform have sufficient political support?

Actors	Mean
Private Sector Representatives	3.645161
Government & International/Implementing Partners	3.473684
Sector Associations/Unions	4.5
VET Institutions (Director, Teacher, Dual Responsible, Administrator)	4.087719
Average of all actors	3.862385

Note: N = 112. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 5: Has the project created a sustainable platform for ongoing cooperation between VET institutions and local businesses/associations?

Actors	Mean
Private Sector Representatives	3.9375
Government & International/Implementing Partners	3.473684
Sector Associations/Unions	4
VET Institutions (Director, Teacher, Dual Responsible, Administrator)	4.089286
Average of all actors	3.93578

Note: N = 118. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 6: How effective are the lines of communication between steering platforms and the involved individuals in the project?

Actors	Mean
Private Sector Representatives	4.181818
Government & International/Implementing Partners	3.833333
Sector Associations/Unions	4
VET Institutions (Director, Teacher, Dual Responsible, Administrator)	4.321429
Average of all actors	4.192661

Note: N = 118. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 7: How effective were the project's governance and management structures in addressing risks and issues efficiently?

Actors	Mean
Private Sector Representatives	4.166667
Government & International/Implementing Partners	4.151515
Sector Associations/Unions	3.761905
VET Institutions (Director, Teacher, Dual Responsible, Administrator)	4.5
Average of all actors	4.310345

Note: N = 118. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 8: Did the VET stakeholder platform contribute to project results and support policy dialogue?

Average of all actors	4.238095
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Note: N = 118. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Table 9: Have the project's activities sufficiently addressed gender equality and inclusion?

Actors	Mean
Private Sector Representatives	4.15625
Government & International/Implementing Partners	3.714286
Sector Associations/Unions	4
VET Institutions (Director, Teacher, Dual Responsible, Administrator)	4
Average of all actors	3.991071

Note: N = 118. This question was addressed to all the stakeholders. Respondents rated the item on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Field Report

Goals of the mission

The mission aimed to assess the current state of MAVETA and identify areas for improvement in the Second Phase. A pre-mission survey helped pinpoint key gaps, which we then verified on-site. During the initial meeting with SDC, we refined the mission's focus around six key questions:

1. Should existing programs or institutions be expanded to improve educational opportunities? Should we keep the Veterinary professions?
2. Do stakeholders share a common mindset, particularly at the operational level? Is a simpler structure needed?
3. What are the specific roles of each party?
4. How do Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 connect?
5. What is the project's financial situation?
6. What challenges do VET institutions face, such as low teacher wages and transportation issues?

Meetings

Donors and Implementation Partners

HEKS plays a **leading role in the initiative by subcontracting and coordinating efforts across various actors**. One of the key takeaways from the discussion was the significant role that **unions and associations** play in shaping the success of the initiative. However, challenges in ensuring **effectiveness and resource availability** were noted. Additionally, GIZ was identified as having a more prominent role in developing associations, given their expertise in other sectors.

SDA, on the other hand, is primarily responsible for **fieldwork and coordination**. A major challenge highlighted was the **private sector's lack of awareness of the cost-benefit** of participation in WBL programs. There is a strong desire to **establish a sustainable WBL system** beyond MAVETA, incorporating inter-company training centers and student rotation among firms. However, **seasonality** in the field, along with **logistical challenges** such as transportation, remains a significant obstacle to implementation.

ADA plays an essential role in **funding key initiatives** within the project. While long-term commitments are still under discussion, there is recognition of the importance of sustained donor engagement to ensure the project's success. A **problem with the financial reporting and audit delays** have posed some challenges, particularly given the project's complexity, but efforts are being made to streamline these processes. The potential involvement of local auditors could help improve efficiency and transparency. Additionally, ADA acknowledges the **value of stronger inter-ministerial communication and enhanced project connectivity**. Given Armenia's small and interconnected landscape, **fostering collaboration between various VET initiatives** could significantly amplify the impact of donor contributions and lead to a more cohesive development approach.

GIZ has played a **significant role in Outcome II and is now expanding its involvement to Outcome I**, particularly in **developing associations**, leveraging its experience in sectors like textiles within the Armenian landscape. Over the past three years, efforts have been dedicated to passing the VET law on, highlighting the need for further **development of sub-legislative frameworks**. The **resumption of**

bilateral relations with Germany and Germany's 2022 decision to designate Armenia as a transformation partner have further strengthened collaboration. Additionally, discussions have emphasized the **role of local authorities** like the municipalities, acknowledging that education topics in Germany are often better managed at regional or federal levels, which presents both challenges and opportunities

The **Izmirlian Foundation** plays a **limited role as a donor** while supporting initiatives aimed at sustaining dual Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Armenia. Although it operates separately, Vanand Agro is also part of the foundation, despite the two having distinct boards. A key aspect of this approach is ensuring that an **Armenian local body takes the lead in driving** the sustainability of dual VET over time. By **fostering local ownership and leadership**, the foundation contributes to strengthening the long-term viability of vocational education, ensuring it aligns with the country's economic and workforce development needs.

The **focus group with SDA, GIZ, HEKS, and HAFL** highlighted challenges in the dual VET system's coordination. The **Steering Committee**, meant to guide the program, primarily **serves as a reporting body**, with infrequent meetings causing delays. **Stronger Ministry ownership is needed** to align projects with national priorities; without it, implementers must adapt accordingly. Until clear obstacles arise, discussions should be elevated to the donor level. **Strengthening private sector involvement and appropriate compensation structures** is key to sustainability. While the Steering Committee addresses macro-level needs, micro-level concerns remain overlooked, requiring ongoing dialogue and collaboration.

Government Actors

The **NCVETD** plays a crucial role in **bridging the gap between the private and public sectors** by **developing and refining educational standards and curricula**. In addition to producing manuals and conducting monitoring and evaluation, the center assesses trends in college development over the past three years. It also **engages in public outreach**, representing Armenia at international forums and publishing a vocational education journal that summarizes key ministry-level events. NCVETD has a **strong partnership with GIZ and has recently collaborated with SDA**.

The interview with the **Ministry of Economy (MoE)** highlighted its **limited engagement, currently confined to the Steering Committee**. While the Ministry expressed **interest in greater involvement**, it emphasized the **need for the project to scale up to justify resource investment**. A key concern is **bridging the gap between vocational training and labor market demands**, given the strong private sector demand for skilled professionals. Additionally, addressing the historical stigma against vocational education is crucial. **Strengthening collaboration between the public and private sectors** is essential to enhance the perception of vocational training and ensure graduates are well-prepared for industry needs.

The **Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MoESCS)** and the **VET Department Head** emphasized that **MAVETA is the biggest and most significant ongoing project within Armenia's VET system**. Currently, **two separate structures exist—the National Training Fund and the National Center for VET Development—though the Ministry plans to merge them**, ensuring their functions continue within the newly established entity. **Collaboration** remains key, with GIZ providing regulatory support and SDA implementing targeted projects in agricultural schools. Additionally, several educational institutions outside MAVETA are still actively engaged in agricultural initiatives, highlighting the broader reach of vocational education efforts in Armenia.

The **local authority in Goris** plays an indirect role within the MAVETA project. The office has, in general, primary **focus on tourism and agriculture**. A key priority is **branding** the region from an

agricultural standpoint while adapting to significant economic changes as the state builds a new economic structure. **Practical work opportunities** are essential to this transformation, ensuring that vocational training aligns with emerging needs. However, a **major challenge remains the lack of an agricultural market in Goris**, making it difficult for farmers to commercialize their products. As most farmers engage in self-sustaining production, efforts to improve marketing strategies and expand market access are crucial for long-term economic growth.

VET institutions

ANAU Sisian has greatly benefited from the MAVETA project, which provided a significant opportunity for collaboration across educational institutions in six professions. Through this collaboration, a **strategic mindset was developed**, extending beyond colleges to include the value chain, other sectors, and relevant ministries. The project helped **establish a strong nexus between educational institutions and the private sector**, addressing challenges and finding solutions together. With MAVETA's support, the **curricula were localized and adapted to fit the local educational context**. Additionally, the **establishment of a smart agricultural farming center is a notable achievement**. While some students pursue university degrees, others opt for vocational programs. MAVETA also **contributed infrastructure support**, enhancing the college's capacity. The collaboration extended to partners such as WFP, GIZ, the Armenian Support Fund, and international entities from Japan, Iran, and France. These partnerships **enable training for competitive students, short-term programs for farmers and startups, and summer camps that attract around 300 participants**, promoting agricultural professions through hands-on activities.

Goris College has made significant strides in **increasing collaboration with the private sector**, growing from just four employers to 25 partners this year. The college currently has 118 students enrolled in its dual education program, with **graduates securing jobs** that highlight the real impact of the program. Some students are already working part-time while continuing their studies. The college has also responded to **market demand by proposing an orcharding program**, a suggestion solidified by discussions with employers who expressed a preference for graduates in this field. However, a challenge lies in **small-scale farms' limited capacity to take on apprentices** due to their already maximized workforce. The college is also facing issues with its current building, but a new facility is set to be renewed by 2026. In terms of cooperation, **Goris College works closely with SDA and collaborates with SDC and European partners. Continuous professional training for teachers** is a priority, especially as the college actively participates in reaccreditation efforts to ensure high educational standards.

One to One Meetings with Employers

The interview with **SisAlp** highlighted the participant's experience with the MAVETA project, focusing on dual education, curriculum development, and student mentorship. He emphasized the importance of aligning theory with practical training, acknowledging challenges like skill gaps and student motivation. He collaborates with schools and industry partners to offer apprenticeships, ensuring relevant experience. **Hiring interns is limited to the high season**, allowing for better supervision and meeting demand. While selection processes and training structures are evolving, he values refining placements and maintaining high educational standards.

The **veterinarian** participant, a third-year veterinary student, **runs a ranch** where he provides hands-on experience to apprentices, mainly from a college in Goris, by offering them necessary books and tasks. While he operates the ranch, with apprentices helping in various tasks, he is **optimistic about future support from MAVETA**, particularly in acquiring an artificial insemination toolkit. Despite working at the ranch for just over two years, he has not previously collaborated with the college but now contributes to shaping the veterinary curriculum. He also manages both public and private veterinary services and believes there's a **growing demand for veterinarians in the region due to an aging**

workforce. Challenges include **road access to his ranch and limited government support**, although he does receive subsidies for vaccinations. He **participates in MAVETA programs and hosts apprentices**, enjoying the process and planning to continue beyond the project's conclusion.

The interviewed **employers** has been involved in the MAVETA project for two years, **benefiting from its training sessions and exchange visits**, particularly in Stepanavan. He operates a 30-year-old family farm with 85 cows, including 45 milking cows, and is looking forward to future apprenticeships, although none have been hosted yet. He collaborates with local colleges and anticipates receiving apprentices. **Despite challenges with low pay and the demanding nature of farm work, he plans to pay apprentices when they arrive.** The farm has **not received government support**, and he finds it **difficult to hire employees**. He has a steady customer base, but **milk prices are low**, making expansion difficult. The lack of regulation in the sector is a concern, and although he has heard of agricultural expos, he hasn't participated. He believes **collaboration among farmers** could be beneficial but is unsure of how to organize it.

The last employer we interviewed is actively engaged in the **Tractor Driver module**. He is deeply engaged in the field of agricultural machinery, blending practical experience with formal education as he works to expand his knowledge. He owns a **substantial amount of machinery**, providing services to local farmers, and plays a key role in supervising apprentices from a local college. His collaboration with the college centers on providing students with hands-on training using modern machinery, though he believes the curriculum needs updates to better reflect emerging technologies. As he studies to become an instructor, he is dedicated to mentoring students, helping them acquire skills through practical experience. Once he completes his education, he plans to contribute to curriculum development. He views the dual education system as an essential way to equip the next generation of agricultural workers with the skills they need. His current involvement in the MAVETA project focuses on **supervising students and making machinery available for their training**.

Focus groups

1st: ANAU

The **two students** who participated—a VET student and a milk and dairy technologist—highlighted their **motivation** for joining the MAVETA program, citing **family roots** in their respective fields, **labor market needs**, and **scholarship** opportunities. Their practical training is largely shaped by **seasonal labor demands and employer schedules**, with veterinarians sometimes requiring assistance late at night for specialized cases. They emphasized the **advantages of the dual education model**, as it allows them to **earn an income** while gaining hands-on experience. Looking ahead, both students expressed interest in **pursuing higher education** to further their careers.

Parents expressed appreciation for the MAVETA program, highlighting the value of **early exposure to the workplace**. They observed that this experience not only equips their children with practical skills but also fosters a **greater sense of responsibility** and independence, preparing them for future careers.

Employers noted that before MAVETA, there **was no formal cooperation** between colleges and businesses for student training. A **regional cooperative** provides agricultural services with limited specialist staff, relying more on experience than formal qualifications. While their MAVETA participation has been **limited due to seasonal demands**, they see value in training students and continuously assessing their skills. They can supervise apprentices and support instructor retraining as modernization progresses. **Strong collaboration exists between teachers and instructors**, and **hosting students one or two days a week is manageable**, with **financial support available**. However, they have **no**

formal ties with the government, especially they highlighted the lack of collaboration with the Ministry of Education

Teachers have been actively involved in MAVETA **workshops and courses**, with some even visiting Switzerland to enhance their expertise and apply new insights locally. They now have a **clearer understanding of dual VET** and emphasize the **need for frequent curriculum updates** and **repeated teacher training**. While theoretical lessons remain largely unchanged, practical training has **increased their workload**, as they must mentor students and track their progress at companies—**without additional compensation**. **Student-employer matching** is primarily based on **location to ease transportation challenges**, ensuring smoother participation in the program.

The discussion also highlighted how the **rotation system functions within MAVETA**. Students are assigned to different firms based on their study modules to complete their apprenticeship hours. Their program is structured into modules, ensuring diverse **practical exposure and cost-sharing process** among the companies. **Progress is monitored** through a diary where students document their tasks, which is then reviewed by the school's Dual Department. Practical evaluations are first assessed by VET instructors and later verified by the department. Instead of a fixed final exam, continuous assessment ensures competency development throughout the program.

2nd: Goris State College

The **two students** we interviewed are in their second year of the MAVETA program, **studying in farming, milk, and dairy technology**. Both will **begin their apprenticeships in March**, gaining practical industry experience. The **gender ratio** in the program appears **fairly even**, though there may be slightly more boys. Looking ahead, they are considering either further education or entering the workforce, depending on the opportunities available.

The **parents** we spoke with are **highly motivated and supportive of their children's participation** in the MAVETA program. Their encouragement is largely driven by the program's clear objectives, which provide a structured path toward skill development and future employment. Knowing that their children are gaining practical experience and valuable industry knowledge reassures them about their prospects.

Employers have collaborated **with the college for many years to host apprentices**, with the selection process being managed by the institution. They follow a **rotating schedule** to give different students the opportunity to gain experience. Upon arrival, apprentices spend their first two days observing different departments before being placed according to their completed coursework. For example, those who have studied curd and cottage cheese production are assigned to related tasks. One employer, who has worked with MAVETA and hosted around twelve apprentices, ensures **there are adequate facilities and space for learning**. Their medium-sized firm, the largest in the region, employs 52 people and sources milk from 2,700 farmers.

Recently, **teachers** received specialized training in laboratory work, which proved **highly beneficial in enhancing their practical skills**, particularly in cheese-making. The introduction of the dual system initially led to an increase in class hours, but over time, some teachers have experienced a **reduction in workload and income**. Part-time teachers have been affected, with some **struggling to maintain a sufficient number of teaching hours to earn a sustainable wage**.

3rd: Unions

The focus groups with Unions included: Cheese foundation, Wine Foundation, ICT association (not part of MAVETA) and Chef Association. They highlighted two interconnected challenges. First, **the government does not understand the role of associations** or unions and therefore it **is not regulated**. While the Wine Foundation receives government funding and works closely with education programs, others, like the Cheese Foundation, ICT Association, and Chef Association, operate on short-

term projects with varying motivations (e.g., individuals' personal interests). Therefore, these are not systematic. Second, **businesses are hesitant to join**, often viewing associations as service providers rather than collaborative partners. The hesitation stems from the fact that the role of the associations is unregulated. In addition, they mentioned the barrier to train the VET instructors to successfully carry the dual VET system.

4th: Other VET initiatives

The focus group on **other VET initiatives** highlighted key challenges, including differing mindsets about vocational education and a **lack of legal oversight for short-term programs** under five months. Many private centers bypass regulations by offering multiple short courses instead of structured long-term training. While a **VET stakeholder platform** exists to connect initiatives, **employer engagement remains a challenge** due to the **low reputation of VET graduates**. There is also a **broader misunderstanding around dual VET** itself, as it is often mistaken for short-term skill courses rather than comprehensive professional education. Strengthening private sector involvement and improving public perception are crucial for VET's long-term success.

Stakeholder Survey

Section 1: Respondent Information

Which of the following best describes you? (Filter for survey logic):

- Employer / Private Sector Representative / VET-Instructor / Sector Associations
- VET Institution Representative (Director, Teacher, DUAL Responsible, Administrator)
- Government/Policy Representative
- International Partner

Gender:

- Male / Female / Prefer not to say

Region (Marz):

- Yerevan / Syunik / Lori / Tavush / Armavir

Section 2: Outcome 1: Developing a Dual A-VET System

For Employers / Private Sector Representatives/ VET-Instructor / Sector Associations

Are you involved in any of the following activities? (Check all that apply)

- Hosting apprenticeships (if yes: Were you hosting apprenticeships before the MAVETA project?)
- Contributing to curriculum development
- Supporting the implementation of dual VET
- Providing mentoring/training
- Hiring VET graduates
- No involvement

To what extent has your organization been involved in developing curricula for agricultural training programs under the MAVETA project?

- Likert scale: Not involved / Slightly involved / Moderately involved / Very involved

How well do the skills of typical new graduates align with your organization's skill requirements?
Likert scale 1 to 5

- Math skills (Very poor to Very good)
- Digital/technology skills (Very poor to Very good)
- Local language(s) (Very poor to Very good)
- Foreign language(s) (Very poor to Very good)
- Job-related knowledge (theory) (Very poor to Very good)
- Job-related skills (practice) (Very poor to Very good)
- Soft Skills (communication, teamwork, etc.) (Very poor to Very good)

How important are the following skills for your graduates?

- Math skills (Not at all to Extremely important)
- Digital/technology skills (Not at all to Extremely important)
- Local language(s) (Not at all to Extremely important)
- Foreign language(s) (Not at all to Extremely important)

- Job-related knowledge (theory) (Not at all to Extremely important)
- Job-related skills (practice) (Not at all to Extremely important)
- Soft Skills (communication, teamwork, etc.) (Very poor to Very good)

Where do you think these skills can best be learned?

- Math skills (In school/college, At work, I don't know)
- Digital/technology skills (In school/college, At work, I don't know)
- Local language(s) (In school/college, At work, I don't know)
- Foreign language(s) (In school/college, At work, I don't know)
- Job-related knowledge (theory) (In school/college, At work, I don't know)
- Job-related skills (practice) (In school/college, At work, I don't know)
- Soft Skills (communication, teamwork, etc.) (In school/college, at work, I don't know)

Does your organization have sufficient capacity to support apprentice training with regards to the following: Lickert Scale 1-5

- Buildings (Not at all to Very good)
- Machinery (Not at all to Very good)
- Trained Staff (Not at all to Very good)
- Financial means (Not at all to Very good)

Can apprentices carry out productive work in your company?

- Yes / No / Partially (Explain briefly)

What are the main challenges preventing greater collaboration with VET institutions? (Select all that apply)

- Insufficient time
- Limited financial resources
- Misalignment between curriculum and industry needs
- Limited communication or trust
- Lack of financial incentives
- Training my competitors
- Lack of productive work for apprentices
- Insufficient skilled staff to manage collaboration
- Other (Specify)

What types of support would encourage your organization to engage more actively in the dual education system? (Select all that apply)

- Financial incentives or subsidies
- Training programs created and run by businesses and schools
- Simplified collaboration processes
- Government support (policies, infrastructure, technical support)
- Other (Specify)

In the future, how important are the following reasons to potentially start training your own workers? Likert scale 1-5.

- It's the only way we can get workers with the right skills (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- We have specific production technologies/equipment/procedures (Not at all important - Extremely important)

- It helps us keep up with rapid technological change (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- It helps us save on recruitment costs (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- It lets us take a "try before you buy" approach or establish probation periods (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- College/school graduates do not meet our needs (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- We need to replace retiring skilled workers (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- We struggle to bring skilled workers into our region from across the country (Not at all important - Extremely important)

Are there any factors that would help or encourage your company to expand or set up a training program? Likert scale 1 to 5.

- Selecting the apprentices ourselves and employing them for the entire training period
- Increased working hours at our company
- Practical exam in the company must be passed as a minimum requirement for obtaining the professional certificate
- Close collaboration with a local school/college to recruit trainees (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- Close collaboration with a local school/college as part of a new program in our industry (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- A program where we at least break even financially (trainee productivity, saved recruiting costs) (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- Prevention of trained worker poaching by our competitors (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- Collaboration with other companies to develop/implement the program (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- External financial support (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- Support from other companies and/or trade/sector associations (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- State- or nation-wide qualification standards we could use to design and assess our program (Not at all important - Extremely important)
- Community/consumer recognition of training as a social contribution (Not at all important - Extremely important)

Various barriers prevent companies from offering training programs. How applicable are the following barriers to training in your company? Likert scale 1 to 5.

- It's too expensive (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We don't have enough time (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We are not sure how to set up a good training program (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Collaborating with colleges is difficult (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We are afraid other companies would poach our trained workers (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We are too small and/or do not have the staff to run a training program (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We are satisfied with the skills of school/college graduates to meet our needs (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We are satisfied with the availability of skilled workers on the labour market to meet our needs (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- We have outsourced training (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Potential trainees are too young (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Technological change moves too quickly for training to be worthwhile (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Our trade union context prevents us from training workers (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)

Do you believe this project has the potential to be scaled to other VET fields?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Have you heard about the VET stakeholder platform established as part of the MAVETA project?

- Yes
- No

Do you think the purpose of the VET stakeholder platform is clear?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not at all clear, 5 = Very clear)

Is the VET stakeholder platform effectively achieving its goals?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not at all effective, 5 = Very effective)

For VET Institution Representatives (Director, Teacher, DUAL Responsible, Administrator)

These questions help us confirm basic details on your institution. Please answer to the best of your knowledge.

Please enter the total number of students in your institution:

- Open-ended

Please enter the total number of students attending MAVETA courses:

- Open-ended

How many women attend MAVETA courses?

- Open-ended

How many refugees or members of other marginalized groups attend MAVETA courses?

- Open-ended

To what extent do you think MAVETA has affected the lives of the participants?

How many students have secured an apprenticeship contract with a company?

- Open-ended

How many of them are women?

- Open-ended

How many of them are refugees or members of other marginalized groups?

- Open-ended

Which agriculture-related programs does your institution offer? (Choose all that apply):

- Veterinary Specialist
- Milk and Dairy Technologist
- Farmer
- Milk Farm Management
- Agricultural Machinery
- Fruit and Nut Orchard Worker
- Tractor Driver
- Other (Name, duration, school based or dual programm)

How actively does your institution collaborate with private sector employers?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very actively)

What challenges do you face in engaging with private sector employers? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of employer interest
- Limited financial resources
- Lack of private companies relevant to the professions
- Insufficient staff for collaboration
- Misalignment between curriculum and employer needs
- Limited awareness of dual VET benefits among employers
- Lack of legal or regulatory frameworks to formalize partnerships
- The low reputation of VET-college education
- Low student motivation
- Other (specify)

How has the project enhanced your institution's capacity to deliver labour market-relevant knowledge?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very significantly)

Various barriers prevent schools/colleges from transitioning to a dual VET system? How applicable are the following barriers to your institution?

- Reduced teaching hours for teachers (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Adjusting schedules and educational plans (e.g., balancing theoretical lessons at the college with work hours in companies) (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Adapting learning content (e.g., shifting more content to be delivered in companies) (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Developing examination schemes, grading systems, and certification processes (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Promoting the college to attract additional students to compensate for reduced in-class lessons (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Uncertainty about whether dual VET is legally permitted (Not at all applicable - Extremely applicable)
- Other (Specify)

How would you rate the quality of the following resources at your institution for delivering labour market-relevant knowledge and skills? Likert scale 1 to 5.

- Facilities (e.g., classrooms, workshops, labs) (Very Poor to Excellent)
- Equipment (e.g., tools, machinery, digital-technology) (Very Poor to Excellent)
- Teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, digital content, training guides) (Very Poor to Excellent)
- Access to industry-specific resources (e.g., internships, field visits, lecturers, partnerships) (Very Poor to Excellent)
- Teachers' qualifications and expertise (Very Poor to Excellent)
- Organisational capacity of administrative staff (Very Poor to Excellent)

For Government/Policy Representatives & International Partners

To what extent was the design of the project appropriate for achieving its goals in the following areas? Likert scale 1 to 5.

- Higher productivity in the targeted regions (Not at all appropriate to Extremely appropriate)
- Increased incomes for participants in the targeted regions (Not at all appropriate to Extremely appropriate)
- Enhanced self-employment opportunities in the targeted regions (Not at all appropriate to Extremely appropriate)

How effective is the dual A-VET system in aligning with Armenia's VET reform priorities?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not effective, 5 = Very effective)

Did the VET stakeholder platform contribute to project results and support policy dialogue?

Likert scale: Not at all - Completely

What additional policy measures could strengthen private sector involvement in work-based learning?

- Open-ended

Have the project's activities contributed to systemic improvements in dual education?

- Yes / No / Partially (Explain briefly)

Section 3: Outcome 2: Enhancing the Regulatory Framework for WBL

For All Stakeholders

How effectively does the current regulatory framework support the implementation of work-based learning?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not effectively, 5 = Very effectively)

What are the key barriers to operationalizing the dual VET law and related policies? (Select all that apply)

- Insufficient stakeholder awareness
- Limited financial resources
- Misalignment between policy and practice
- Lack of qualified professionals (teachers, management staff and instructors)
- Lack of coordination among stakeholders
- Limited student interest in most agricultural professions
- Other (Specify)

How effective has the project been in addressing gender equality and inclusion, including the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups?

Likert scale: (1=Not at all effective,– 5=Very effective)

How can the regulatory framework be improved to better support dual education?

- Open-ended

For Employers / Private Sector Representatives/ VET-Instructor / Sector Associations

Are you aware of policies or incentives to encourage private sector participation in VET?

- Yes / No (Explain briefly)

What government support would make work-based learning more feasible for your company?

- Open-ended

For VET Institution Representatives(Director, Teacher, DUAL Responsible, Administrator)

Does your institution have adequate resources to implement the dual VET law effectively?

- Yes / No / Partially (Explain briefly)

What additional training or capacity building would help your institution align with the regulatory framework?

- Open-ended

For Government/Policy Representatives & International Partners

How well are stakeholder platforms facilitating policy dialogue and cooperation for work-based learning?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very well)

What strategies could strengthen stakeholder collaboration in advancing the regulatory framework?

- Open-ended

Section 4: Governance and cross-cutting issues

For All Stakeholders

How effective were the project's governance and management structures in addressing risks and issues efficiently?

- Likert scale: 1=Not effective, 5=Very effective

To what extent do the involved individuals in the project know whom to contact when they face challenges or problems within the project?

- Likert scale: 1=Not at all, 5=Very well
- Open-ended: "What improvements would make the lines of communication more effective?"

How effective are the lines of communication between steering platforms and the involved individuals in the project?

- Likert scale: 1=Not effective, 5=Very effective

How long does it typically take to identify and contact the appropriate person when a challenge arises?

- Open-ended

c (Choose all that apply)

- VET Institutions (principals, teachers, technical supporters)
- Employer / Private Sector Representative / VET-Instructor / Sector Associations
- Government Agencies
- International Partners
- Other (Specify)

How often do you collaborate with these partners within the MAVETA project?

- VET Institutions (principals, teachers, technical supporters) (Very infrequently to Very frequently)
- Employer / Private Sector Representative / VET-Instructor / Sector Associations (Very infrequently to Very frequently)
- Government Agencies (Very infrequently to Very frequently)
- International Partners (Very infrequently to Very frequently)
- Other (Specify) (Very infrequently to Very frequently)

How satisfied are you with your collaboration with these partners?

- VET Institutions (principals, teachers, technical supporters) (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied)
- Employer / Private Sector Representative / VET-Instructor / Sector Associations (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied)
- Government Agencies (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied)
- International Partners (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied)
- Other (Specify) (Very dissatisfied to Very satisfied)

How well do Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 complement each other in working toward MAVETA's overall goals?

Outcome 1: The A-VET system equips professionals and graduates with market-relevant skills, enabling them to secure decent incomes and contribute to innovation in the agricultural sector.

Outcome 2: The dual VET system functions effectively through coherent policies, strong institutions, and collaboration between the public and private sectors.

- Likert scale: Not at all - Very well

Has the project created a sustainable platform for ongoing cooperation between VET institutions and local businesses/associations?

- Likert scale: Not at all - Completely

Does the VET reform have sufficient political support? If not, what could foster greater support?

- Likert scale: Not supported - Fully supported
- Open-ended

Are you aware of any other initiatives that promote VET?

- Yes

- No
- I do not know

Are there any synergies between MAVETA and these other VET initiatives?

- Open-ended

Have the project's activities sufficiently addressed gender equality and inclusion?

- Likert scale: (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very significantly)

What actions could improve inclusivity and participation from marginalized groups in dual VET programs?

- Open-ended

How well does the MAVETA project address the needs and demands of Armenia for VET reform?

- Likert scale: Not at all – Completely

Has the project created any unintended effects on existing programs or policies (e.g., supplementing or undermining their impact)?

- Open-ended

Input on Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Serbia (CCIS) for MAVETA review

The Government of Serbia has introduced dual vocational education and training (VET) at secondary level in 2018, resulting in 8'000 youths currently enrolled in formal dual apprenticeships. Switzerland expanded its advisory support and technical assistance provided since 2018 to the Serbian Ministry of Education to strengthen its dual VET system, and jointly with Austria, currently support the Serbian private sector in delivering labor-market oriented apprenticeships in line with the law on dual education.

While the primary responsibility for dual VET remains with the Ministry of Education and the Government Office for dual VET and NQF, the Law on dual education (LDE) assigns specific responsibilities to the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIS) and its regional offices, to companies, schools, and the regional school administrations (RSAs), and the LDE stipulates institutional partnership between the Ministry and the Chamber of Commerce.

CCIS takes on important tasks in dual VET, including recruitment and accreditation of companies according to Ministry of education rules, training and licensing of company instructors, and enforcing provisions of the LDE such as payment and insurance of students, existence of contracts between schools and companies, companies and students, and respect for occupational health and safety standards. It has been supported in its tasks by the Austrian chamber of commerce and Institut für berufliche Weiterbildung (IBW) Austria, with financial support from ADA, and has generally very close ties to the Austrian chamber of commerce, as it has copied the mandatory membership model of WKÖ. Under the current SDC project, CCIS will be strengthened in its institutional role, and in particular the regional chapters of the CCIS will require additional capacity building to meet the expectations of its member companies with regard to dual education.

In the period 2019-2022, CCIS has started to develop the necessary capacities for performing its role as stakeholder in dual VET as per the law. CCIS has established the expert team for dual VET, it has developed the accreditation process, and it has developed and implemented an approach to the training of in-company instructors.

The current SDC-ADA Dual VET Project Serbia (2023-2027) will attempt to further strengthen the private sector role and participation in dual VET, including further developing the respective infrastructure and human resources. Substantial investments will be done into PR campaigns, in order to raise the awareness on dual VET within the target groups, that would also include the organization of the first Serbian Skills competition and Serbia joining the World Skills Europe family. Another important focus of the project is on adapting curricula to the specific requirements of dual VET, and on the cooperation between public institutions, namely the Institute for the Improvement of education, and private sector stakeholders for the development and rolling-out of curricula for dual VET. SFUVET and IbW will provide expert support in this area to the CCIS.

Training companies more generally (all are members of the CCIS, it is mandatory membership in Serbia) are enablers and a key target group in the SDC project. The companies' main reason not to enter into dual in greater number is cumbersome administration related to the accreditation, and the net costs. This is related to their inability to influence the choice of apprentices, the insufficient time spent in-company by apprentices, and the low retention rates. They need to be better organized in training alliances, as individually companies often cannot take on a sufficient number of apprentices to justify the formation of a class in the VET school. Convincing companies that the reforms are effective, and more adapted to their needs, will be a key deliverable of the communication activities of the SDC project.

Implementation Timeline for Recommendations for Phase II

Recommendation	Step	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Clarify and simplify the steering structure to improve coordination and prepare for national ownership	Form Strategic Alignment Group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (ideal end of Phase 1)			
	Capacity-building of public institutions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Transition to public ownership		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Formation of the three-tier coordination structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

Anchor Dual VET in National Strategies, Legal Frameworks, and Financing	Plan sub-legislative framework	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Adopt framework			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	VET governing body setup	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
	Sustainable financing model	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Colleges independently deliver high-quality dual VET			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Build Standards Before Scaling: Phase 2 as a Foundation for Quality and Expansion	Lay foundations for scaling		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Empower associations with clear roles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Strengthen the Role of Associations	Associations to take on the delivery of capacity-building course for employers		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Support the financial and institutional sustainability of associations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Outreach and engagement activities, including after-school programmes, summer camps,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Support and Amplify Grassroots Initiatives	Sustained investment in visibility and communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Invest in public awareness and the	Businesses participate in	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

visibility of Vocational Education and Training	choosing their trainees				
Involve Employers in the Selection of Apprentices		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Support the Creation of SME Training Alliances	Development of SME training alliances— networks of companies that collaborate to host apprentices, share training responsibilities, and coordinate with VET institutions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Management response to the External Review: Modernizing Agricultural Education and Training in Armenia (MAVETA), Phase I, 2022 - 2025

The Management Response (MR) outlines the SDC's stance on the recommendations of the 'External Review: Modernising Agricultural Education and Training in Armenia (MAVETA), Phase 1 (2022–2025)'. It was discussed with all co-financing and implementing partners of the project, as well as thematic colleagues at the SDC Head Office and in the region.

Assessment of the review

The review was conducted by the Chair of the Education Systems Team at ETH Zurich, Switzerland, based on an approach paper by SCO Armenia. The review process was very well managed and included the close involvement of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Armenia, including the Deputy Head of Mission/Deputy Regional Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office South Caucasus (Ursula Läubli) and the Senior National Programme Officer (Artur Pokrikyan).

The main objective, which the evaluators met, was to assess the implementation of MAVETA Phase 1, focusing on its potential systemic impact, governance, private sector engagement in dual VET, demand-related aspects of agricultural VET, and the efficient use of resources. SDC appreciates the comprehensiveness of the well-written, structured external review report, as well as the sound analysis of the key elements of MAVETA Phase 1's performance.

We acknowledge and appreciate the very thorough review and its quality conducted by the team, which provided valuable insights into the implementation and potential impact of MAVETA Phase 1. Overall, the review provides a balanced and constructive assessment of the project. We value the review team's expertise in identifying both achievements and areas for improvement, and their recognition of the project's relevance. The analysis and resulting recommendations in the report are considered useful for strengthening the strategic orientation, effectiveness and efficiency of the next phase of MAVETA.

Main findings

Overall, the review confirmed some of our initial impressions and emphasised important new aspects, particularly the urgent requirement for local stakeholders to assume a greater sense of ownership and for the project to adopt a facilitation role. MAVETA's interventions must be designed in a way that complements, rather than substitutes for, the expected roles of local actors. A leaner governance structure for the project will make it easier to achieve results and respond quickly to changes in the context.

The external review team provided two groups of recommendations: one relating to immediate action for the remainder of Phase 1, and the other relating to strategic priorities for Phase 2. SCO Armenia and its partners are fully committed to addressing these recommendations and ensuring that the project continues to evolve and contribute meaningfully to Armenia's vocational education landscape in a more streamlined way.

These recommendations were discussed with the implementing partners during a workshop on 23 April 2025, which also provided a basis for identifying the measures outlined below. The recommendations relating to immediate action for the remainder of Phase 1 (until August 2025) are also considered in the measures (references to the review report are provided).

Of the eight recommendations for the strategic priorities of Phase 2, three are 'fully agreed' (green) and five are 'partially agreed' (orange) – see the table below. The SDC agrees to seize this opportunity to improve its results achievement by taking specific measures in line with the recommendations.

1. Streamline the steering structure to strengthen coordination and policy engagement	Green			
2. Anchor dual VET in national strategies, legal frameworks, and financing	Orange			
3. Build standards before scaling: Phase 2 as a foundation for quality and expansion	Orange			
4. Strengthen the role of associations	Green			
5. Support and amplify grassroots initiatives	Orange			
6. Invest in public awareness and the visibility of VET	Green			
7. Involve employers in the selection of apprentices	Orange			
8. Support the creation of SME training alliances	Orange			
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Fully agree</td> <td>Partially agree</td> <td>Disagree</td> </tr> </table>		Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree		

Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

Recommendation 1		
Streamline the steering structure to strengthen coordination and policy engagement		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: Recognising the valuable contribution of HEKS/EPER in Phase 1, which enabled the consolidation of Swiss expertise on the ground, the SCO Armenia informed HEKS/EPER in April 2025 that it would not be playing an operational role in Phase 2. Instead, one implementing partner, GIZ, will take on the overall leadership of the implementation in cooperation with the local NGOs SDA and HAFL. These changes will enable a more agile and streamlined implementation in Phase 2, as well as facilitating greater synergy between the BMZ/GIZ and SDC-supported VET initiatives, thereby advancing VET reform and uptake. The policy dialogue will also be strengthened and institutionalised, with the specific format to be defined during the ProDoc elaboration process based on needs and objectives.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Revision of project governance structure according to the implementation modality based on lessons learned and consultations.	<u>SDC/GIZ/HAFL/SDA</u>	Until August 2025
b) Revision of stakeholders and project partners based on the Phase 2 ProDoc, and clear definition of the roles and responsibilities allowing for better articulation at all levels (micro-meso-macro).	<u>SDC/GIZ/HAFL/SDA</u>	Until August 2025
c) Clarification of the MAVETA Phase 2 co-funding setup and the involvement of different partners (BMZ, ADA, Izmirlian Foundation, HEKS/EPER, etc.).	<u>SDC</u>	Until August 2025
d) Foster a unified vision for dual VET as a basis for a more streamlined implementation. (<i>External Review, Phase 1 recommendation 1</i>)	<u>SDC/GIZ with involved stakeholders</u>	Until August 2025

Recommendation 2		
Anchor Dual VET in National Strategies, Legal Frameworks, and Financing		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: The newly adopted VET law is fundamental to the further integration of work-based learning into VET, providing a strategic roadmap. Although the VET body's role at ministry level is limited, Phase 2 must focus on fully establishing and capacitating the new VET body, as foreseen, to coordinate across all other levels. A sustainable financial and operational model involving co-financing, co-steering and co-design mechanisms with ministries, state agencies, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders should be developed to ensure long-term financial commitment and the institutionalisation of dual VET.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Support the establishment and capacity development of the new VET body, which will coordinate and engage with stakeholders at different levels. An important measure is to lay the groundwork for the enhanced government ownership required in Phase 2, with a view to ensuring the project's sustainability at the end of the project. (External review, Phase 1 recommendation 2).	<u>GIZ/HAFL</u>	Until August 2025, Phase 2
b) Continue working on the development and institutionalization of sustainable financing models in VET.	<u>GIZ</u>	Phase 2
c) Continue working on developing and adopting the sub-legislative and regulatory framework in a participatory and inclusive manner that implements the new VET law. (External Review, Phase 1 recommendation 3, Teacher roles and incentives)	<u>GIZ/HAFL/SDA</u>	Phase 2
d) Develop and pilot interventions that promote gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), paying attention to structural barriers and programme quality. Elaborate on these interventions in the ProDoc. (External Review, Phase 1 recommendation 4)	<u>GIZ/HAFL/SDA</u>	Until August 2025, Phase 2

Recommendation 3		
Build Standards Before Scaling: Phase 2 as a Foundation for Quality and Expansion		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: While we agree on the need to strengthen existing dual VET programmes, we believe that limiting Phase 2 to the current colleges only may hinder broader progress. Fast-growing sectors require expansion to meet evolving market needs. While strengthening current programmes is important, a more balanced approach that includes targeted expansion in high-demand sectors will ensure sustainable growth and responsiveness to labour market trends.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Conduct an effective analysis of market trends in agriculture and develop a balanced implementation strategy for Phase 2, taking into account the importance of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), green skills and digitalisation.	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Until August 2025
b) Based on the Phase 1 pilots, improve the implementation of the existing curricula by adjusting the modules and teaching methods according to the defined quality	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Phase 2

benchmarks. (External Review, Phase 1 recommendation 3, PET-level programmes, and recommendation 5)		
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Recommendation 4		
Strengthen the role of Associations		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: We agree that strengthening sectorial associations is essential for the sustainability of dual VET. MAVETA 2 can benefit from the experiences of BMZ/GIZ in working with associations to strengthen them in other VET curricula. Empowering associations to handle tasks such as curriculum development and training would enhance their credibility and engagement. However, we recognise that building effective associations comes with sustainability risks and requires long-term support to ensure they can operate independently. However, there are legal restrictions regarding the recognition of alliances as formal partners of dual VET, meaning they cannot sign contracts or engage in other formal processes required for hosting apprentices. Based on the enhanced experience of working with associations in Phase 2, the need for legal changes will become clearer.</p>		
Measure	Responsibility	Timing
a) Prioritise the project's facilitation role strategically at the meso level by strengthening associations to implement their core functions for members, and by engaging in VET with systemic cooperation mechanisms in place.	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Phase 2

Recommendation 5		
Support and Amplify Grassroots Initiatives		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: We agree that recognising grassroots initiatives is essential for fostering local ownership and innovation in VET. Self-initiated efforts by colleges and the private sector, such as innovation groups, after-school programmes for pupils and summer camps, should be supported by empowering college management to systematically capture and integrate such initiatives into their strategies, in collaboration with local stakeholders. The project can support these initiatives in a facilitative way.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Consider establishing a systematic and sustainable mechanism to enable colleges, the new VET body and other stakeholders to support and promote grassroots initiatives.	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Phase 2

Recommendation 6		
Invest in public awareness and the visibility of Vocational Education and Training		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: We fully agree with the recommendation to prioritise raising the visibility and awareness of dual vocational education and training (VET) in Armenia in order to transform perceptions of it. It is crucial to change public views of VET as a second-choice option, and investing in sustained, high-quality communication will play a key role in this shift. Highlighting student success stories, publicly celebrating achievements, and holding symbolic events such as apprenticeship contract signings will help to establish VET as a respected and aspirational career path. Such initiatives will be integral to fostering a cultural shift that values vocational education and ensures its long-term success.</p>		

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Continue to raise public awareness and communicate more effectively and coherently at all levels.	<u>GIZ</u>	Phase 2
b) Empower and support engaged actors to take over the role of promoting VET.	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Phase 2

Recommendation 7		
Involve Employers in the Selection of Apprentices		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: We agree with the recommendation to involve employers more actively in selecting apprentices, as this can encourage greater investment in training and improve outcomes. Piloting the private sector's involvement in student selection through structured application procedures or a digital platform could strengthen collaboration and be a valuable engagement mechanism. However, we acknowledge that this approach could leave some students without apprenticeship opportunities if businesses do not have the capacity or willingness to host them, given the structural gaps. Additionally, legal limitations that should be addressed within policy dialogue efforts with the government must be considered.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Develop sustainable and scalable mechanisms for the private sector engagement in VET that also support the student mobility and further specialization in skills development.	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Phase 2

Recommendation 8		
Support the Creation of SME Training Alliances		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
<p>Comment: We agree with the assessment that capacity limitations in Armenia's agriculture sector do not allow for the implementation of high-quality work-based learning. However, developing sustainable SME training alliances can be challenging, as small enterprises often lack the necessary capabilities and are usually not interested in being included in such partnership mechanisms. Furthermore, legal restrictions prevent engagement with informal alliances as official VET partners.</p>		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Conduct further assessment to understand the relevance of SME Training Alliances and suggest other alternative mechanisms (e.g., intercompany training centres).	<u>GIZ/SDA/HAFL</u>	Phase 2

LAU/POKAR, Yerevan 6.6.2025