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Evaluation Report

External evaluation of the ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative (ASTI), Phase 1 (2022-2026)

2 December 2025

Imprint

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External evaluation of the ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative (ASTI), Phase 1 (2022-2026)

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASTI	ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative
BCP	Business Chamber Partner
CAMFEBA	Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations
CAPEX	capitalisation of experiences
CLM	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar
DCT	Dual Cooperative Training
EQ	evaluation questions
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IAI	Initiative for ASEAN Integration
IBC	International Business Chamber of Cambodia
LDC	least developed country
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCEF	Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Federation
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NOSS	National Occupational Skills Standards
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
RECOTwin	Regional Cooperation on Labour Market Policy and TVET for a Twin Transition in ASEAN
RPL	recognition of prior learning
SDF	Skills Development Fund
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SFUVET	Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training
SOMED	Senior Officials Meeting on Education
STP	Standard Training Package
TBG1	Target Group 1
TBG2	Target Group 2
ToT	trainers of trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VELA	Vocational Education in Lao PDR
VSD	Vocational Skills Development
WBL	work-based learning

Executive Summary

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned an independent evaluation of the ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative (ASTI), Phase 1 (2022-2026). The evaluation was conducted between September and November 2025.

Evaluation approach

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the project against the OECD DAC criteria and provide lessons learned and forward-looking recommendations for the design and implementation of ASTI Phase 2.

These sources were used for the evaluation:

- **Document review**, covering design documents, progress reports, an internal reflection report, and other materials.
- **Data review:** The M&E framework provided key information for assessing targets; data was updated specifically for the evaluation.
- **Interviews:** Over 80 stakeholders were interviewed, both face-to-face during visits to Cambodia and Lao PDR (15-22 October 2025) and virtual with stakeholders in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Switzerland.
- **Online survey:** An online survey was distributed to 275 stakeholders, resulting in 112 responses (41% response rate).

Milestones of the evaluation were the kick-off meeting (12 September 2025), the submission of the evaluation concept (24 September), the validation workshop with SDC, ASEC and the ASTI team (31 October 2025), the submission of the draft report (14 November 2025), and the submission of the final report (3 December 2025).

Evaluation results

Relevance: ASTI is well aligned with ASEAN and national priorities on skills and employability, translating the ASEAN–Switzerland partnership into tangible national actions in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Its focus on work-based learning (WBL) and recognition of prior learning (RPL) responds to government strategies to enhance workforce readiness and diversify training pathways, and has gained broad stakeholder support for its practical, employer-led approach. Positioning business chambers and enterprises as lead implementers reflects a timely shift toward industry ownership as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar progress toward graduation from least developed country (LDC) status. However, the project's regional contribution remains more

potential than realised, and its added value is constrained by limited clarity on model design, funding responsibilities, and differentiation from existing schemes. While sector choices and the four targeted occupations in phase 1 are considered appropriate by most of the stakeholders, the emphasis on entry-level qualifications (VC and C1) may not fully address employers' skills needs. Overall, ASTI's rationale remains sound, but realising its relevance depends on demonstrating a credible proof of concept and aligning ambition with national capacities and labour market demand.

Coherence: ASTI operates in a crowded Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) landscape in Cambodia and Lao PDR, where multiple donor-funded projects — several Swiss-supported — already promote dual training, RPL, and private sector interaction. This environment offers scope for synergy but also risks duplication. Coordination remains largely ad hoc, with overlapping workstreams despite general alignment. In Cambodia, government leadership has improved, yet coordination still relies on informal exchanges; in Lao PDR, collaboration is fragmented and personality-driven. Links with key initiatives such as the Vocational Education Lao PDR (VELA) project remain weak, though the dual role of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) offers an entry point for stronger integration. Limited engagement with regional programmes like the Regional Cooperation on Labour Market Policy and TVET for a Twin Transition in ASEAN (RECOTwin) project has further constrained policy influence. Strengthening coherence will require building on existing mechanisms, deepening collaboration, and aligning with national systems rather than creating new frameworks.

Effectiveness: The project has made progress in developing key technical outputs — notably the RPL, assessment, and certification guidelines, as well as in building trainer and assessor capacity — but approval and operationalization remain pending. No training that evaluators would classify as ASTI-supported WBL had yet occurred. Implementation delays, coordination bottlenecks, and internal management challenges — including late MoU approval, staff turnover, complex consortium arrangements, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period — have slowed momentum and affected motivation among partners. Nevertheless, ASTI's practical, enterprise-oriented approach and the central role of Business Chamber Partners have led to ownership, institutional learning, and private-sector interaction. The project has also demonstrated aspects of "Swissness," primarily through the study visit of an ASTI-delegation to Switzerland in September 2025, though visibility and sustained Swiss engagement have remained limited. Gender and inclusion efforts are emerging but not yet systematic, with limited evidence of structured strategies or support mechanisms. Governance frameworks show progress through national consultation processes but still face coordination and implementation challenges.

Efficiency: Project efficiency has been constrained by slow disbursement, administrative bottlenecks, and limited staffing relative to the project's ambitions. By mid-2025, expenditure stood at 43% of the budget, reflecting both the delayed start and continued implementation lags, especially in terms of rolling out pilots. External factors – such as protracted approvals and coordination hurdles – combined with internal challenges, including unclear roles, high turnover, and differing partner procedures, have slowed delivery and reduced flexibility. While collaboration and commitment within the teams are widely praised, lean structures have stretched capacity and affected quality assurance, M&E responsiveness, and regional learning. As implementation

accelerates, efficiency will depend on streamlining decision-making, strengthening management systems, and ensuring pilots generate credible evidence.

Impact: ASTI's impact to date remains limited and largely prospective, with tangible benefits yet to materialise. The project's overall goal — improving career opportunities for unemployed youth and low-skilled workers — is unlikely to be fully achieved within the current phase, given delays in implementing WBL. While some progress has been made in developing the necessary foundations — such as guidelines, curricula, and strengthened institutional capacities — these upstream achievements have not yet translated into measurable improvements in employment, income, or continued training for target groups. The project's contribution to regional and sub-regional learning has also been modest, with ASEAN-level collaboration and knowledge exchange developing more slowly than envisioned.

Sustainability: Private sector interaction in ASTI remains largely goodwill-based rather than business-driven, raising concerns about long-term sustainability. Most firms participate out of CSR commitments, government and buyer expectations, or reputational motives rather than strategic investment in skills development, and a few larger employers view ASTI as a strategic opportunity to test lower-level talent pipelines. Financial contributions remain limited to immediate training costs, with little willingness to fund system functions such as certification or coordination, which are still viewed as public responsibilities. Uncertainty also persists over future financing, as mechanisms like Cambodia's Skills Development Fund and Lao PDR's TVET Fund remain underdeveloped. Institutional ownership among business chambers and sector skills councils is growing but fragile; both require continued technical assistance, dedicated staff, and clearer mandates to assume sustainable coordination roles in the next phase.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Accelerate implementation of WBL and RPL

- **Rationale:** With less than a year left, ASTI must demonstrate that its WBL and RPL models can deliver measurable results in employability, productivity, and income. Acceleration is critical to validate feasibility and generate evidence for a second phase.
- **Possible actions:** Set time-bound milestones to strengthen accountability and enable course correction, realign targets and resources to prioritise proof-of-concept delivery and scale back nonessential activities, mobilise the organisational strategic and technical support teams to resolve bottlenecks and speed implementation, and consider a short (up to 4-month) no-cost extension to consolidate results and document evidence.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen evidence generation and generate credible proof of concept

- **Rationale:** ASTI's M&E system remains largely output-focused, requiring stronger data, verification, and feedback mechanisms to generate credible evidence on outcomes and inform scale-up decisions.

- **Possible actions:** Define “proof of concept” with clear results and indicators, pilot while finalising tools and use early results to refine approaches, strengthen M&E systems and data collection for credible evidence, and assess costs and benefits to identify sustainable incentive and cost-sharing mechanisms.

Recommendation 3: Design a second phase with a smaller, deeper, and evidence-driven focus

- **Rationale:** Phase 1 spread resources too thinly. A second phase should deepen impact in fewer areas, strengthen institutional mechanisms, and build sustainability.
- **Possible actions:** Re-scope objectives and partner roles based on Phase 1 lessons, if proof of concept is achieved scale up in one sector and institutionalise mechanisms (cost-sharing, incentives, policies), and if not, adapt the model or reposition ASTI as a regional learning platform.

Recommendation 4: Clarify and operationalise ASTI’s regional ambitions for Phase 2

- **Rationale:** ASTI’s regional dimension has been conceptually important but practically underdeveloped. Defining Switzerland’s ambition for ASTI’s regional engagement will guide realistic Phase 2 planning.
- **Possible actions:** Clarify Switzerland’s regional objectives, outcomes, and comparative advantage, map regional partners and initiatives for collaboration, establish an operational approach (e.g., liaison officer or embassy leadership in Jakarta), and promote visibility through a capitalisation of experiences (CAPEX) initiative and regional learning event.

Recommendation 5: Actively collaborate with other WBL and RPL initiatives

- **Rationale:** Coordinating with other WBL and RPL actors, including but not limited to initiatives led or supported by development partners, will prevent duplication, enhance coherence, and leverage limited resources.
- **Possible actions:** Map complementary initiatives and identify strategic partners, engage key actors for dialogue and coordination, and build long-term partnerships for joint action and potential co-financing in Phase 2.

1. Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned our team to conduct the evaluation of the ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative (ASTI), Phase 1 (2022-2026). The objectives of the final evaluation are twofold:

- Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the ASTI Phase 1, and
- Provide lessons learned and forward-looking recommendations for the design and implementation of ASTI Phase 2.

The report presents the evaluation team's approach (Chapter 2), key findings (Chapter 3), conclusions (Chapter 4), and recommendations (Chapter 5).

We would like to thank all interviewees and survey participants for their valuable contributions to this evaluation. Our gratitude also goes to SDC and the ASTI team for their support and for their openness and constructive engagement in discussing the evaluation results.

2. Evaluation approach

The evaluation was guided by the OECD DAC Standards (including the Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, "Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully", and "Protection of people involved in evaluation" guidelines) as well as SDC guidelines for evaluations.

A mixed methods approach was applied, with the following key components:

- **Document review:** Design documents, progress reports, the internal reflection report, and other project documents were reviewed to find answers to the evaluation questions and to contextualise the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- **Data review:** The M&E framework was an important source of information and was used to assess target achievement. The data was updated in October 2025 specifically for the evaluation.
- **Interviews**: We interacted with more than 80 stakeholders, both face-to-face during the country visits to Cambodia and Lao PDR between 15 and 22 October 2025, and virtual with stakeholders in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Switzerland. The interviewees (see Annex 3) were suggested by SDC and the ASTI team.
- **Online survey:** An online survey was distributed to 275 stakeholders, resulting in 112 responses (a 41% response rate), including 34 women, 77 men, and one respondent who preferred not to disclose their gender. Among the respondents, 30% were from Cambodia, 66% from Lao PDR, 3% from the regional level, and 1% from Myanmar. To

encourage participation, reminders were sent via email and WhatsApp / Telegram messages. The contact list was provided by the ASTI team.

- **Validation**: Opportunities for participation and feedback were provided through a debriefing with SDC at the end of the country visit, an online validation workshop with SDC, ASEC, and the ASTI team on 31 October 2025, and the review of the draft evaluation report.

The evaluation was implemented in accordance with the inception report; meetings took place as planned apart from minor deviations (e.g., institutions represented by different team members than originally planned, number of focus group participants). The following **limitations** should be kept in mind when interpreting the evaluation results:

- Given the status of the implementation, much of the discussion focused on planned rather than actual work-based learning (WBL) and recognition of prior learning (RPL) implementation. *Mitigation*: Focused questions on existing experiences and next steps.
- Conceptual ambiguities and parallel initiatives made it hard to discuss issues concretely. *Mitigation*: Explored stakeholders' own interpretations and compared them with the project's design. Distinguished ASTI's activities from other similar initiatives to clarify its specific contribution.
- Difference between reported and observed training data suggest there might be differing interpretation how to count participants, as well as overlaps with other initiatives. *Mitigation*: Documented in the effectiveness section, and part of the recommendations.
- Limited engagement with beneficiaries (two RPL participants in Lao PDR and one WBL participant in Cambodia). *Mitigation*: Although additional RPL participants were invited to join the focus group discussion, it was not feasible to adjust participation at the last minute. However, given the stage of implementation, this limitation does not significantly affect the overall findings.
- As with other evaluations, some interviewees might have been hesitant to speak critically due to partnerships, funding sensitivities, or the general meeting culture. *Mitigation*: Ensured anonymity, triangulated perspectives, and emphasised the evaluation's learning purpose.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our data, gathered from diverse sources and perspectives, provides a solid foundation for this review. We adhered to **ethical guidelines** by implementing measures for informed consent, ensuring anonymity, and maintaining data security in the following ways:

- Interview, survey, and focus group participants received information on the purpose of the mid-term review, their involvement, and their rights.
- Participants received a generic link to the survey to prevent any possibility of identifying individual respondents; the survey included options to opt-out and delete responses.
- Recordings, transcripts, and other memos and contact information were deleted upon completion of the review.

3. Findings

This chapter presents the findings related to the 16 evaluation questions (EQs, see Annex 2), structured around the six DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The findings in each section are derived from the mix-method approach described in the section above. The discussion focuses primarily on Cambodia and Lao PDR, as well as the regional dimension, where project activities and resources are concentrated. Insights on Myanmar are summarised separately in a dedicated section in Section 3.6.

3.1. Relevance

This section assesses how well ASTI responds to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and partners in CLM (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar) countries, as well as regional partners at the ASEAN level (EQ 1); whether it focuses on the right sectors and occupations (EQ 2); and the extent to which the project has remained relevant amid ongoing political, economic, and social changes (EQ 3). It further discusses how clear and consistent ASTI's work-based learning (WBL) approach is, and the added value it provides (EQ 5).

The project builds on the ASEAN–Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Partnership, translating the regional cooperation into concrete national actions on skills and employability. As confirmed by the ASEAN Secretariat, ASTI has become one of the largest Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) projects in education, reinforcing ASEAN's commitment to close the gaps between and within Member States. While most interviewees and 79% of the survey participants (see below) agreed that ASTI aligns with ASEAN priorities, views differed on its regional ambitions. Some saw ASTI as a flagship for scaling WBL models across ASEAN; others regarded it primarily as a CLM-focused platform for learning and dialogue. This reflects design ambiguities, such as gaps between the ProDoc narrative and LogFrame targets, and highlights that ASTI's regional dimension is still largely unrealised.

The project aligns closely with Cambodia and Lao PDR's ambitions to increase youth employability and strengthen vocational training systems. In both countries, it directly responds to government objectives of improving workforce readiness and diversifying training pathways. In Cambodia, ASTI contributes to the human resource development pillar of the Pentagon Strategy (Phase 1, 2023-28) and supports the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT)'s targets for expanding certification coverage. In Lao PDR, it aligns with the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the forthcoming Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Development Plan 2026–2030, both of which emphasise employability and lifelong learning.

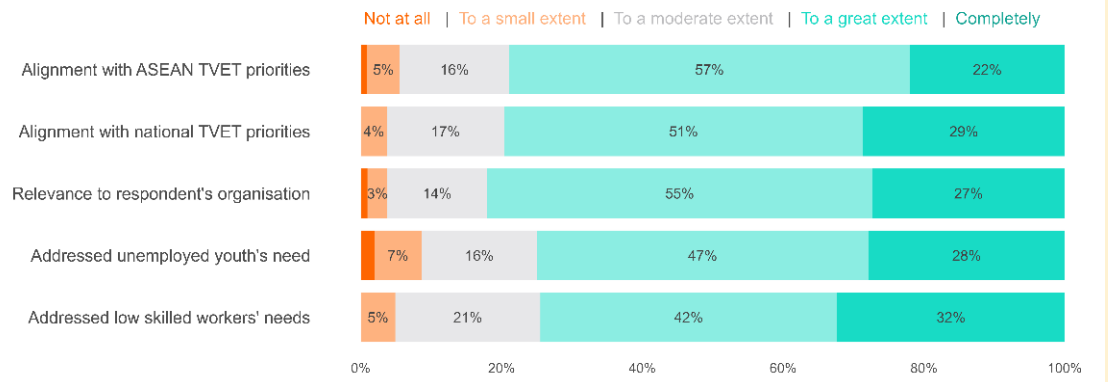
The project's central idea to skill and upskill NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and low-skilled workers through short, practical WBL and RPL resonates widely with stakeholders. Across institutions and private sector partners, there is strong endorsement of ASTI's focus on hands-on, short-term and company-led learning, and competency-based

certification. In Lao PDR, employers described WBL as more effective than conventional school-based instruction and appreciated that learners start *"at the workplace from the very beginning"*, while the RPL component was valued for recognising the skills of experienced but uncertified workers. One college noted that the model *"fits well with our goal to send students for hands-on training at the workplace,"*. Similar endorsement emerged in Cambodia, where companies view structured workplace learning and certification as a way to tackle persistent gaps in job-readiness, and are ready to pilot C1-level entrants if short bridging modules and clear certification pathways are in place.

Development partners and governments across two countries regard the private sector–led design as particularly relevant for sustainability. ASTI's approach, which positions employers and business chambers (Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations CAMFEBA, International Business Chamber of Cambodia IBC, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry LNCCI) as lead implementers, is seen as a promising shift towards industry ownership. If successfully implemented, this approach would be especially timely as CLM countries move towards graduation from least developed country (LDC) status, signalling the gradual transition from donor-funded to industry-financed skills ecosystems.

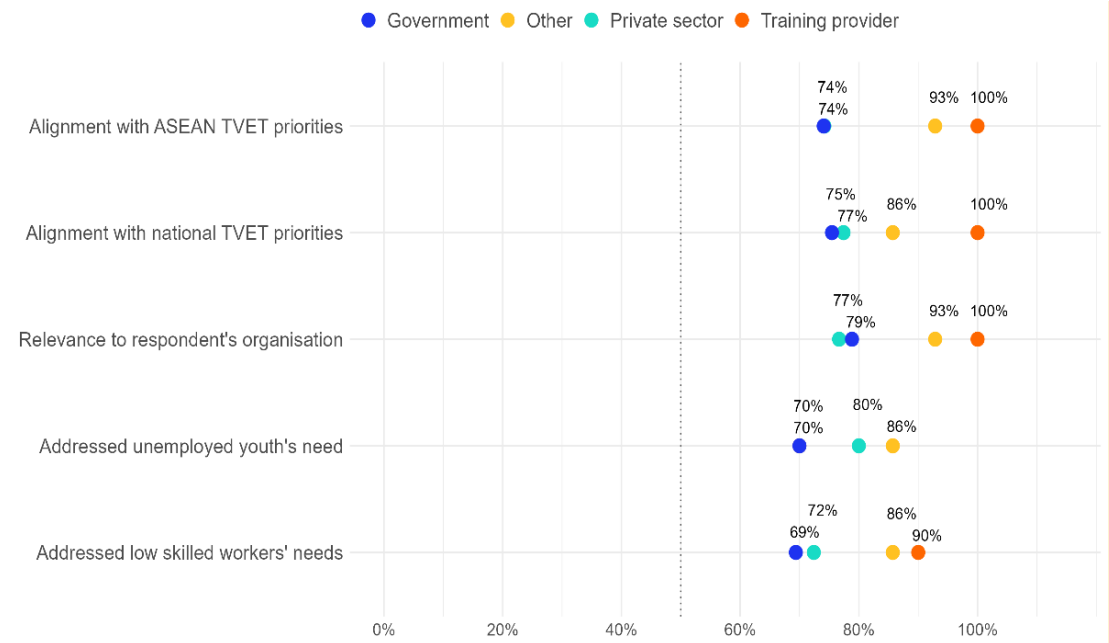
Survey: Most respondents consider the project highly relevant.

When responses of "to a moderate extent" are considered part of the more critical perspectives – which appears appropriate given the cultural context – three out of four survey participants rated the project's relevance as high, with minimal variation across sub-questions (see below). Training providers expressed particularly strong satisfaction, while government and private sector respondents remained positive though somewhat less enthusiastic. Ratings in Cambodia were typically higher than in Lao PDR, with differences ranging from 0 to 15 percentage points. Survey participants noted that limited enterprise readiness, weak teacher capacity, low literacy, and distrust in formal education remain key hurdles for implementing training models in Lao PDR. Regional respondents tended to be more critical in their assessments (see additional survey results in Annex 5).



Note: Based on responses from 109, 108, 106, 104, and 102 participants, respectively.

Share of respondents selecting "to a great extent" or "completely", across stakeholder groups:



Note: For Government, based on responses from 54, 53, 52, 50, and 49 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 14 participants. For Private sector, based on responses from 31, 31, 30, 30, and 29 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 10 participants.

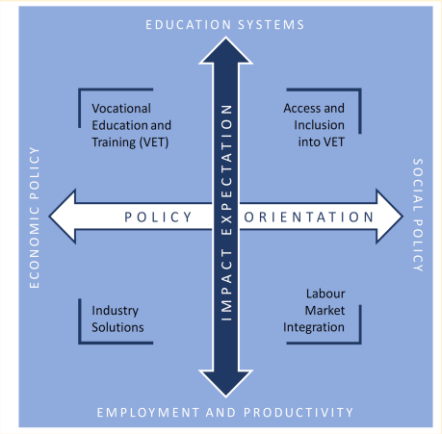
Despite the interest, ASTI's WBL and RPL approaches lack clarity for many interviewees. In Lao PDR, uncertainty primarily concerns the model's distinctiveness and design. Many stakeholders indicated that they are (or at least were, initially) uncertain how ASTI's WBL differed from existing Dual Cooperative Training (DCT) schemes already implemented nationwide under the VELA project[1]. Funding responsibilities are another major source of ambiguity. Many companies remain unsure whether trainee allowances, insurance, or material costs will be covered by the project, the state, or enterprises themselves.[2] In Cambodia, uncertainty centred more on the project's added value, as companies and chambers indicated that WBL was not new, and that ASTI's version risked overlapping with existing schemes such as internships, apprenticeships, and short-term industry placements facilitated through other donor projects or the Skills Development Fund (SDF), unless it brought clearer certification, stronger quality assurance, or longer-term workforce benefits.

[1] The VELA project (Vocational Education in Lao PDR, 3 phases, 2013-2027), implemented by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), supports the Government of Lao PDR in introducing the Dual-Cooperative Training approach to develop a skilled work force that meets the needs of the labour market.

[2] A majority of survey participants (67%) agreed that ASTI's WBL approach is clear and consistent ("to a great extent" or "completely"). Responses varied across groups: 56% among private sector representatives, 68% among government, 77% among other respondents (mainly project team members), and 78% among training providers. The difference from interview findings may reflect differing interpretations of the question - such as focusing on "clarity" versus "consistency," or on the concept versus its implementation.

The approaches still require a solid proof of concept. While the project's ambition and ideas are well received, tangible results remain limited. Four years into implementation, national WBL guidelines in Lao PDR and Cambodia are still being finalised and endorsed, and most activities remain in preparatory or pilot phases. As of October 2025, interest had translated into commitments from 25 companies in Cambodia and 10 in Lao PDR, but no full pilot cycle had been completed. Some private-sector respondents described the model as promising but "still theoretical," while others emphasised the need for rapid demonstration pilots to show measurable benefits for companies and learners. This is especially important given that lessons from similar initiatives – such as DCT programmes – have not been systematically reviewed or used to inform pilot design.

SDC's VSD Typology Tool and ASTI's approach



The SDC's Vocational Skills Development (VSD) Typology Tool is designed to guide SDC projects in defining focus areas, select partners, and set realistic expectations for outcomes.[3] It distinguishes between *policy orientation* and *impact expectations*, creating four quadrants – while noting that many projects, like ASTI, engage across several. The typology's view of private sector roles is especially relevant: firms rarely have a vested interest in *labour market integration* unless facing labour shortages, whereas in the *industry solutions* quadrant, private sector interaction is strongest and focused on skilled or specialist workers.

During ASTI's design, private sector and learner motivations do not appear to have been systematically examined. The appraisal report treated employer engagement largely as an assumption, offering no empirical evidence or reference to lessons from similar initiatives in the region. While the ProDoc and Inception Report acknowledged potential challenges, they proposed addressing these mainly through communication and demonstration of benefits (including a Cost-Benefit Analysis). However, there is not enough discussion of whether these benefits would in fact outweigh the costs — an essential consideration for convincing companies and learners to participate.

This matters because ASTI spans two quadrants of the typology: labour market integration and industry solutions. While this dual focus – combining inclusion and skills upgrading – is conceptually attractive, it leaves open key questions about how these objectives can be effectively balanced within a single intervention.

Interviews suggest that ASTI's additionality remains uncertain. There is limited evidence of unmet demand for entry-level skills, the project's focus. Employers in both Cambodia and Lao PDR reported greater shortages at intermediate and advanced levels. Many medium and large companies, the main partners of ASTI in both countries, already provide basic on-the-job training and view entry-level courses as marginally beneficial unless they meet immediate operational needs. Consequently, ASTI's entry-level WBL model seems to offer limited added value unless it complements, not duplicates, their existing training systems or fills concrete skill gaps. Much of

[3] SDC (2019): VSD Typology: Orientation and Impact of Vocational Skills Development. Download: www.sdc-economy-education.ch/dam/en/sd-web/mDbcHuQjBLwT/EE-VSD-Typology-SDC_EN.pdf.

ASTI's upskilling activity centres on formal recognition of existing skills rather than actual skill advancement, and it is often unclear what concrete benefits companies or workers gain. For NEETs, participation typically leads to entry-level, low-wage jobs they might have obtained without project support.

The project's sectoral focus is appropriate, reflecting labour market trends and national priorities. Most interviewees and survey participants (66%-80%) believe the choice of five pilot sectors (warehousing, construction, manufacturing, automotive, retail) aligns well with national industrial strategies and workforce demand. These sectors offer tangible job prospects and strong private-sector interest. Within these, ASTI has rightly concentrated Phase 1 on four feasible occupations (air-conditioning, electrician, automotive technician, customer service) out of the original seven. The inclusion of forward-looking areas such as EV technology was praised as helping prepare for the country's transition to greener industries. However, as explained above, while ASTI is intentionally targeting entry-level certifications (VC and C1) to suit NEET youth and low-skilled workers, several interviewees questioned whether limiting training on VC/C1 level sufficiently meets employer needs. In addition, the project's occupational scope remains male-dominated.

Finally, the design process could have benefited from more thorough scoping, both before (scoping phase) and after (inception phase) launch, to better align ambitions with context and resources. Interviews across Cambodia and Lao PDR showed that the project entered implementation without a clear understanding of existing training ecosystems or overlapping TVET initiatives. Stakeholders also warned that the simultaneous push for piloting, systematisation, and scaling risked overstretching teams and weakening the project's evidence base ahead of Phase II. Consequently, the project's ambitious scope has outpaced its available capacities, leaving insufficient time and evidence to consolidate lessons before adapting and moving toward system-level reform.

3.2. Coherence

This section covers external coherence, i.e. the extent to which ASTI is coherent with and complementary to other interventions, specifically SDC projects in CLM countries and the Regional Cooperation on Labour Market Policy and TVET for a Twin Transition in ASEAN (RECOTwin) project (EQ 4).

TVET and skills development are dynamic fields in Cambodia and Lao PDR, with past and ongoing initiatives that already promote dual training, RPL and interactions and partnerships with the private sector. Among them are several Swiss-funded projects (STAF and VTESS in Lao PDR; SDP and DEY in Cambodia; PROMISE regionally), all combining piloting activities with ambitions for systemic reform. This environment provides both opportunities for collaboration and risks of duplication.

In both countries, the same government bodies, chambers, and established companies engage across initiatives, creating both synergy and saturation. In Cambodia, development partners acknowledged improved government leadership compared with a decade ago, yet

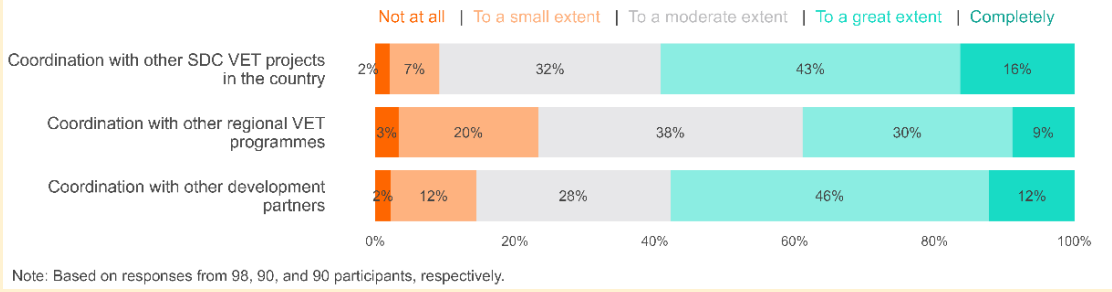
coordination still relies on ad hoc meetings and informal exchanges. Interviews pointed to a persistent gap between alignment in principle and coordination in practice: the same partners meet in multiple forums but continue to run parallel workstreams, often developing similar curricula, assessment models, and quality assurance tools. Interviewees reported being informed about ASTI's work and having participated in workshops. Still, exchanges between projects also tend to be primarily informational. One development partner observed that ASTI, though part of existing platforms, had not engaged other agencies early enough, resulting in "*missed opportunities for upstream collaboration*" and the loss of potential synergies with ongoing initiatives on apprenticeships, RPL, and sector skills councils.

In Lao PDR, the situation is more fragmented. The formal TVET Working Group remains inactive for the time being (although there are hopes to reactivate it, as mentioned in the TVET Development Plan 2026-2030). Despite SDC's strong leadership in pushing partners to "avoid duplication" and share tools, coordination between Swiss-funded projects has been largely informal and personality-driven. Interactions between ASTI and other projects have so far been minimal and project visibility is low. The lack of coordination with the VELA project – long active in promoting DCT and collaborating with LNCCI – is particularly concerning. However, LNCCI's dual role as ASTI's lead counterpart and host of the DCT Service Centre, represents a valuable bridge that could be leveraged more strategically in the future. Risks of duplication are evident, such as the production of new PPP guidance despite the recent release of an Education-Enterprise Engagement manual under the SDC co-funded STAF project, or one stakeholder observing that *"there are three development partners working on quality assurance from different angles"*. Still, emerging developments in Lao PDR show promise: growing interaction with other projects suggests a move toward more coordination.

Expectations that ASTI will produce universally applicable guidelines appear unrealistic. Stakeholders valued the idea of a shared regional framework but doubted its practicality given divergent systems, capacities, and incentives. In Lao PDR, the DCT system already provides a well-established framework for dual training, and there was some scepticism of creating new guidelines instead of adapting existing ones. Similar concerns emerged in Cambodia, where multiple projects have produced overlapping training models and materials, leading to fatigue among implementing agencies. The overarching message is that ASTI's success will depend less on producing new frameworks and more on aligning with existing systems, coordinating with parallel efforts, and demonstrating added value through practical, context-specific implementation.

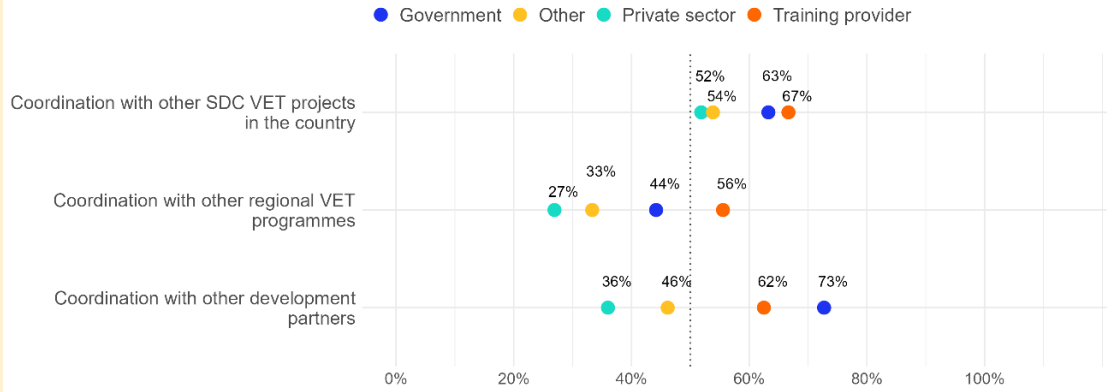
Survey: Roughly half of respondents believe coordination is taking place.

Both positive and critical perspectives are represented in equal proportions (particularly when responses rated "to a moderate extent" are interpreted as the critical voices). Coordination efforts at the national level are viewed more favourably than those at the regional level. In addition, notable differences emerge across stakeholder groups: respondents from the private sector and other stakeholders (mainly the project team) are more critical compared to government representatives and training providers. Cambodian stakeholders also tend to be more positive than their counterparts in Lao PDR, with differences ranging from 5 to 14 percentage points.



Note: Based on responses from 98, 90, and 90 participants, respectively.

Share of respondents selecting “to a great extent” or “completely”, across stakeholder groups:



Note: For Government, based on responses from 49, 43, and 44 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 13, 12, and 13 participants, respectively. For Private sector, based on responses from 27, 26, and 25 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 9, 9, and 8 participants, respectively.

At the regional level, coordination with RECOTwin is minimal.[4] While both projects share similar goals on TVET and employment policy, interaction between RECOTwin and ASTI has so far been limited to informal exchanges and brief meetings at ASEAN events. Unlike RECOTwin, which holds regular coordination with regional programmes supported by Korea, JICA, the EU, and Australia, ASTI has yet to establish systematic collaboration with regional initiatives and partners. Although now formalised under the Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOMED), ASTI has not fully leveraged this position to strengthen its visibility, influence, or access to complementary resources. This has meant missed opportunities to align funding, technical expertise, and policy dialogue with other regional initiatives working on skills and employment.

[4] The RECOTwin project (Regional Cooperation for TVET Teacher Education in ASEAN, 2015–present), implemented by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), strengthens regional collaboration among ASEAN countries to enhance the quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teacher education. The project promotes knowledge exchange, joint research, and institutional partnerships between universities and TVET institutions, supporting the development of competent TVET teachers and contributing to regional integration in skills development.

3.3. Effectiveness

Under effectiveness, we discuss the extent to which ASTI is on track to achieve its planned outputs and outcomes (EQ 7); identify key success factors and challenges, and how these can be leveraged or addressed in the next phase (EQ 8); and evaluate how effective ASTI's implementation modalities, specifically through Business Chamber Partners (BCP), have been in achieving the set objectives (EQ 9). We also examine the extent to which ASTI has showcased Swissness and contributed to SDC's visibility (EQ 10); how far ASTI has positioned itself as an ASEAN-level initiative beyond national interventions (EQ 6); and to what extent the project has achieved its intended results on gender equality, Leave No One Behind (LNOB), and good governance (EQ 11).

Target achievement

Figure 1 summarises the project's progress to date by comparing current achievements (as of October 2025) with the overall phase targets. At the time of evaluation, approximately 80% of the phase duration (September 2022 – August 2026) had elapsed. Assuming linear implementation — while recognising this as a simplification, yet a useful benchmark — one would expect 80% of the targets to have been achieved by now.[5] Based on this, we define the following categories:

- **On track:** 70% or higher achievement
- Potentially at risk: 50–69% achievement
- **At risk:** below 50% achievement

Current (October 2025) M&E data indicate that the project is **on track** in several areas, including the development of guidelines for RPL, assessment, and certification (Output 2), as well as capacity building for trainers, teachers, and assessors (Output 3). It should be noted, however, that while the RPL guidelines have been completed, formal approval is still pending — though expected in the coming months.

[5] Alternative reference points could also be considered — for example, the start of the main implementation phase in March 2023 or the convening of the first national project steering committees in March 2024 — and the data presented on the next page can be interpreted through these lenses. For the purposes of this evaluation, however, viewing progress in terms of the overall implementation period offers the most neutral perspective, as it captures all delays, including those beyond the project team's control.

Figure 1: Achievements measured against the LogFrame targets (status October 2025)



Source: Data provided by the ASTI project team
Note: Green indicates a phase target achievement of 70% and over, Yellow 50% and over, and Red below 50%. At the time of evaluation, 79% of the project duration has elapsed.

Further progress (**potentially at risk**) has been recorded in the development of WBL regulations and guidelines (Output 2), as well as in the preparation of National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS), qualifications, and curricula to support WBL implementation (Output 3). The number of companies engaged in these development processes has reached approximately 65% of the phase target (Output 4).

M&E data report that 655 TBG1 trainees have been assessed and certified (about 55% of the phase target) and 340 TBG2 WBL trainees (19% of the target). However, interviews showed that in the companies visited, no training that evaluators would classify as ASTI-supported WBL had yet occurred. This discrepancy may reflect differing interpretations of what constitutes "ASTI WBL" — whether it refers to any instruction by capacitated trainers, the number of certifications reported (as indicated by the M&E indicators), or another measure. As many firms already conduct internal training, it might also be challenging to clearly distinguish between ASTI-supported initiatives and others. Moreover, training data are collected by the chambers, whose limited capacity and experience in data collection may further affect the data.

All remaining targets are considered **at risk**. These include most indicators under Output 1 and Output 4 (with the exception of company participation), the TBG2 target under Output 3, as well as all outcome and impact targets.

Feedback interviewees and survey participants

Overall, ASTI demonstrates growing momentum and strong stakeholder engagement, particularly around training for in-company trainers and trainers of trainers (ToT). Participants emphasised the usefulness of the pedagogical focus, emphasising coaching, job task breakdown, and experiential learning, especially in companies previously unfamiliar with structured training methods. The inclusive and participatory pedagogy – focused on workplace learning rather than theory – was well received by both large firms and SMEs.

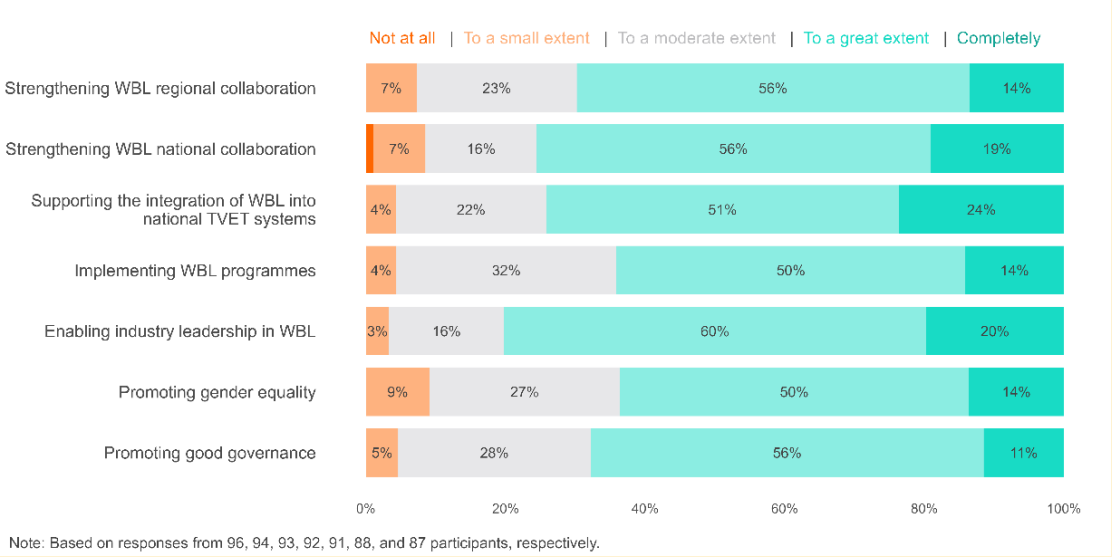
Equally, the project is building the capacity of BCPs – CAMFEBA, IBC, and LNCCI – largely through a "learning-by-doing" approach. The chambers now lead guideline consultations, company mobilisation, and coordination of training rollout, marking a significant departure from their traditional advisory role toward implementation leadership. In Cambodia, CAMFEBA and IBC were widely described in interviews as proactive and effective, mobilising companies, coordinating closely with MoLVT, and acting as reliable intermediaries for WBL. In Lao PDR, LNCCI was seen as committed but still developing its capacity, with interviewees noting slower follow-through and a heavier need for guidance as the chamber adjusts to a more hands-on implementation role. Across both countries, chambers noted that much of their contribution falls outside project financing, requiring them to use their own limited resources and leaving teams stretched.

Despite these advances, implementation remains behind schedule in most areas. In Lao PDR, companies that had prepared facilities, trainers, and curricula found themselves unable to proceed due to regulatory bottlenecks and slow ministerial approval: *"We're here, we're ready — but we can't move forward without the guidelines"*. In Cambodia, firms that had already invested in training in-company trainers faced similar standstills: *"We completed the first batch of*

trainers… but still don't have students." The WBL and QA guidelines not yet formally endorsed in both countries, prevented training rollout, leaving pilot companies in limbo. These delays, coupled with unclear procedures and intermittent communication between project teams and government counterparts, have weakened stakeholder motivation. As one participant explained: *"Modules one and two were in February, and then three and four in July. That gap confused participants."* The drawn-out sequencing and uncertainty could risk eroding private-sector confidence just as engagement was beginning to take hold.

Survey: Majority believes ASTI is effective across its result areas

A clear majority of respondents believe that ASTI is on track to achieve its intended results. Between 64% and 80% of stakeholders selected "to a great extent" or "completely" across the assessed elements. Training providers expressed particularly strong confidence, with 100% responding positively across all categories, while private sector representatives were more reserved (ranging from 52% to 72%). Interestingly, respondents in Lao PDR were generally more positive than those in Cambodia — a reversal of the pattern observed under *Relevance* and *Coherence*. The difference between the two countries ranges from 1 to 15 percentage points, except for "implementing WBL programmes," which received higher ratings in Cambodia.



Note: Based on responses from 96, 94, 93, 92, 91, 88, and 87 participants, respectively.

Integration of project outputs into national systems has also been slower than planned. In Lao PDR, no WBL or QA guideline had yet received formal ministerial approval by mid-2025, though the QA guideline was expected to pass later in the year. The process was hampered by institutional fragmentation within MoES and delays in assigning DQA as the lead authority. In Cambodia, the Operational Working Group's review and pilot validation of four new Standard Training Packages (STPs) marked progress, but approval and adoption at national level remain pending. Consequently, while policy drafts and technical documents are advancing, they have yet to translate into system integration or policy enforcement.

ASTI's "Swissness" has so far been reflected mainly through the study visit of an ASTI delegation to Switzerland, which generated positive engagement and visibility but limited tangible follow-up. The study tour in September 2025, with participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASTI team and SDC, was widely praised for fostering strong relationships among delegates, and for demonstrating how policy vision and enterprise engagement can be effectively combined, deepening participants' understanding of partnership-based TVET models. However, the translation of these insights into concrete reforms has been modest, with few structured mechanisms for continued exchange. Beyond the study visit, Swiss visibility has remained limited; the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET)-led trainings represented a comparatively small contribution[6], appreciated for technical input but seen as offering little scope for sustained engagement or contextual adaptation. The lack of sustained advisory involvement or participation in steering structures has also constrained Switzerland's policy-level visibility. Compared to other donors in the region with permanent representation or project management teams embedded in ASEAN structures, Switzerland's footprint has appeared modest.

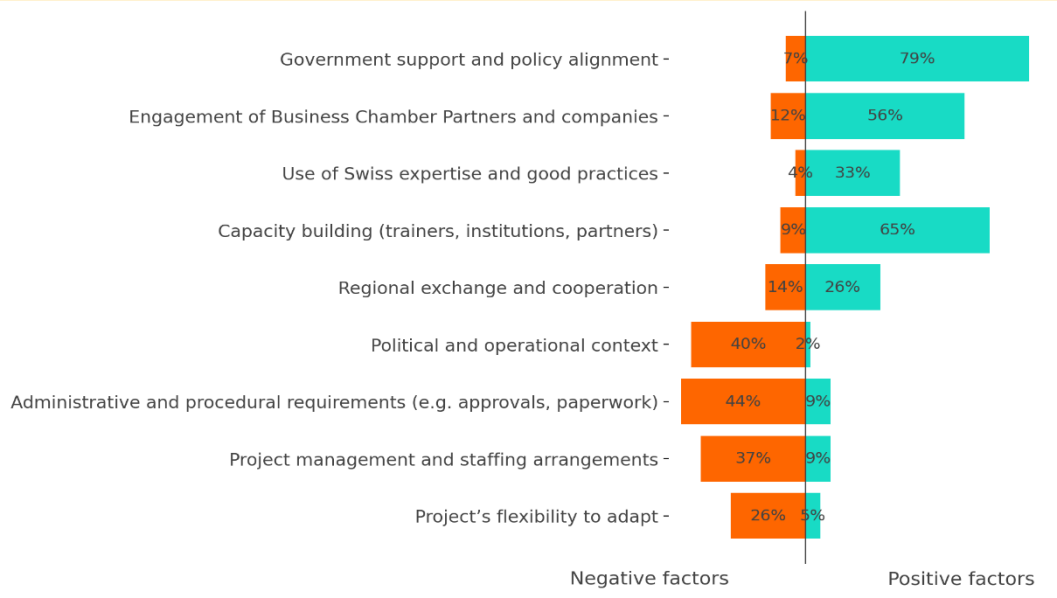
Regional engagement has progressed but remains more symbolic than substantive compared with initial ambitions. ASTI has contributed to ASEAN work plans and regional TVET policy dialogues, notably through participation in the ASEAN TVET Council meetings and the study visit to Switzerland, which included ASEAN Secretariat representatives. Yet, much of the collaboration continues to operate through country-specific workstreams rather than a genuinely regional platform. Nevertheless, ASEAN counterparts recognise ASTI's value in shaping regional discourse from the ground up: *"We want to make sure that the CLM voice is heard… we don't bring down ready-made ASEAN models. We build bottom-up."* This approach has helped position ASTI as a connector between national experimentation and regional policy intent, even if the scope of regional integration remains modest for now.

Survey: Key factors influencing the project's results

Key success factors include strong government commitment, active engagement of business chamber partners, and systematic capacity building across institutions in both countries. Nearly 80% of survey respondents cited government support as a major driver of progress, reflecting close policy alignment and ministerial endorsement that lend legitimacy to new WBL and RPL models – a view likely reinforced by the survey's high share of government respondents. Business chambers – LNCCI in Lao PDR, and CAMFEBA and IBC in Cambodia – were identified by 56% of respondents as pivotal actors linking training to market needs, mobilising companies, and co-developing national guidelines. Capacity building of trainers, institutions, and government staff (65%) has also strengthened delivery quality and system readiness. Interviews reinforced these findings, noting that the project has "*brought the private sector closer to policy*" and that in-company trainer programmes have proven particularly relevant. Together, these factors have laid a solid foundation for national ownership and implementation.

[6] SFUVET's contribution has not reflected its full potential, largely because the role it was assigned in practice did not match the vision of a strategic technical backstopper. With only 12–15 days per year to cover two countries and regional engagement, and often brought in late with limited planning visibility, SFUVET was confined to small, ad hoc tasks rather than meaningful system-level support.

Key hindering factors relate to political and operational constraints, administrative bottlenecks, and limited project management and flexibility. Around 40% of survey respondents identified the political and operational context – especially in Myanmar and, to a lesser extent, in Lao PDR – as the main barrier, citing instability, staff turnover, and uneven institutional capacity. Administrative and procedural requirements (44%) were another major challenge, with lengthy approval processes and bureaucratic delays slowing implementation. Project management and staffing constraints (37%) and limited flexibility to adapt (26%) further compounded these issues, as small teams struggled to pilot, systematise, and scale simultaneously. Interviews also pointed to weak regional exchange and modest "Swissness" beyond the study visit to Switzerland, limiting opportunities for peer learning and continuity. Collectively, these factors have constrained the project's ability to translate its design into fully operational and integrated outcomes.



Transversal themes

ASTI's transversal themes include gender equality, Leave No One Behind (LNOB), and good governance. The project's LogFrame sets participation targets of 50% for women and 40% for LNOB groups in training activities. According to M&E data, women represent 70% of TBG1 and 50% of TBG2 trainees so far; however, as noted earlier, it remains unclear whether resp. what training activities have taken place. No LNOB data are available at this stage, and there are no specific LogFrame indicators related to good governance. The insights presented below are therefore based primarily on information gathered through interviews.

Inclusion is acknowledged as important but remains at an early and largely ad hoc stage. Gender was not a major theme across interviews, but a few respondents noted emerging attention to women's participation and inclusion, or a wish to improve gender balance: *"We will focus more on women in the next two or three months."* Some interviewees observed incremental progress, particularly in newer occupational areas: *"We see more women applying for technical training now – it's a good sign."* However, others admitted that targeted occupations are predominantly male-dominated and that structural barriers, such as workplace culture and recruitment practices,

continue to limit women's involvement. There was no evidence of a formal or budgeted gender strategy in this phase. Overall, gender equality is seen as an emerging, rather than mainstreamed, requiring stronger intentionality and resources in future phases.

The project's WBL and RPL models inherently target disadvantaged groups — NEET and low skilled workers. However, while ASTI's target group inherently addresses the "leave no one behind" principle, operational measures (e.g., tailored support) are still being developed. They will have to be balanced against the interest of the private sector to invest into WBL and RPL (see discussion in section 3.1). Inclusion of persons with disabilities or other marginalised groups was viewed as premature without adequate support mechanisms. As one partner reflected, *"We're coming from an inclusion background… but introducing disability-focused programming now might be too early without the right investment."* Discussing the difficulty to recruit low-skilled youth and workers for WBL and RPL, stakeholders noted that without stronger community-level engagement and support mechanisms, the LNOB ambition risks remaining rhetorical.

Good governance has been demonstrated through structured coordination and consultation mechanisms. ASTI has established structured steering mechanisms at national and regional levels, and public–private consultation processes, enhancing transparency and coordination. In Lao PDR, collaboration between MoES and LNCCI in drafting national guidelines has fostered joint accountability, while in Cambodia, the Operational Working Group co-chaired with CAMFEBA has institutionalised private-sector participation in decision-making. Nonetheless, governance remains challenged by overlapping mandates, slow approvals, and fragmented information flow. To deepen governance effectiveness, the project would need to consolidate these processes into more permanent coordination mechanisms and improve data and communication systems to support timely, evidence-based decisions.

3.4. Efficiency

In this section, we examine how well ASTI's steering structures and the consortium partnership function (EQ 12); how efficiently the project has delivered its outputs in terms of time, quality, and use of resources (EQ 13); and how effective the collaboration between ASTI, government institutions, and the private sector has been so far (EQ 14).

Project disbursement has been markedly slow, reflecting the project's delayed start-up and limited absorption capacity during its first two years. Project disbursement has accelerated in 2025 but remains below expectations. By June 2025, cumulative expenditure reached CHF 1.71 million out of CHF 4 million, reflecting a utilisation rate of around 43%. While coordination and management costs (Parts 1–3) achieved a solid 64% execution rate, activity-level spending under Part 4 remains low at 18%, highlighting continued delays in field implementation. Expenditure so far has focused on inception-phase coordination, guideline development, and early WBL pilots, while large budget lines for training delivery, sectoral partnerships, and certification remain under-used. Although spending and results do not necessarily progress linearly in systems-oriented TVET projects, the gap is notable: more than three quarters of the project duration have elapsed and nearly half of the budget spent, yet average achievement across logframe indicators remains

only around one third[7]. This pattern suggests that ASTI is still transitioning from a planning and systems-development phase to active implementation. To improve disbursement efficiency, the project will need to accelerate pilot roll-out and streamline procurement and approval processes in the remaining time of phase I.

Delivery has been hampered by significant delays from both internal and external causes. Externally, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery period, the prolonged signing of the MoU delayed key activities, while ministerial coordination and potential political economy factors may have further slowed decision-making. Internally, the consortium's division along country lines, unclear roles and responsibilities, and differing organisational procedures within the consortium such as procurement and due diligence, undermined coordination and responsiveness. Partners recalled a three-year period of uncertainty around "*who does what*," especially between GIZ and Helvetas and among national teams. High staff turnover, including two project managers within the first three years and a new project manager starting in December 2025, further disrupted continuity, and chronic understaffing left country teams overstretched. Although roles have since been clarified through internal agreements and coordination within the consortium has improved, gaps in project management and knowledge systems persist. The project would benefit from more systematic documentation of responsibilities and decision-making processes, and alignment of financial management, M&E, and communication procedures.[8]

Quality of project activities have at times come under strain. Feedback indicated that SFUVET-led trainings were insufficiently adapted to country contexts, partly due to the delayed start of their engagement in 2024 and limited time for follow-up. Although participatory methods were used, short delivery windows and mixed participant levels reduced technical depth. Similarly, guideline consultations were seen as compressed, leaving little space for validation and refinement. In Lao PDR, the decision to shorten the WBL piloting phase further heightened the risk that implementation quality and assessment rigour could be compromised.

A deeper structural issue lies in the mismatch between the project's ambition and its modest resources. This creates understaffing and a difficult balance between technical depth and project management. Interviewees across all levels described a constant struggle to "do more with less." In Lao PDR, for example, the team was initially composed of one advisor and one junior finance officer, while the regional management had to stretch a handful of consultants across three countries and multiple thematic areas. This lean staffing setup limited the project's ability to provide consistent backstopping, mentoring, and quality assurance. Partners noted that staff often had to oscillate between administrative and technical roles, diluting focus and slowing

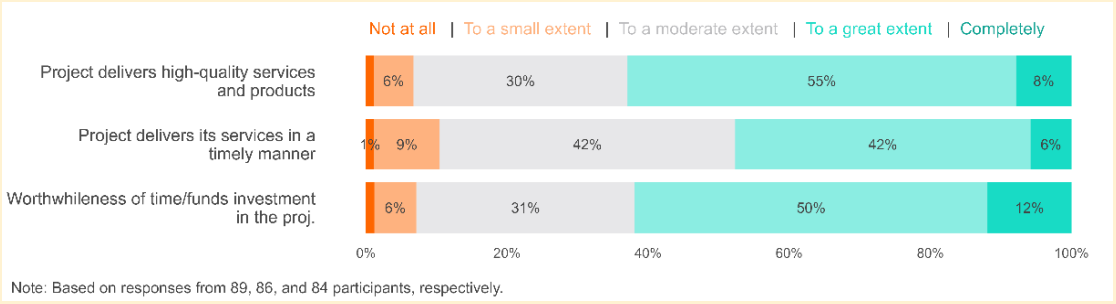
[7] The average level of achievement across logframe indicators was calculated by summing the percentage reached for each indicator in Figure 1 and dividing the total by the number of indicators.

[8] Giving feedback to the draft evaluation report, the project team notes: The project experienced a significantly delayed start due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent personnel changes further slowed progress — not only on the consortium side, but also on the SDC side. In addition, the former SDC Task Manager initially preferred to retain the former Team Leader despite our early and repeated concerns regarding his performance and suitability. By the time the Task Manager supported a change, considerable time had already been lost. Finally, the consortium had to prioritize establishing cooperation with the chambers, a process that was necessarily lengthy and resource-intensive.

progress. The effort to cover dual VET reform in countries with different stages of readiness further compounded these pressures. It also affected external visibility, as staff were largely occupied with daily delivery rather than policy dialogue or communication.

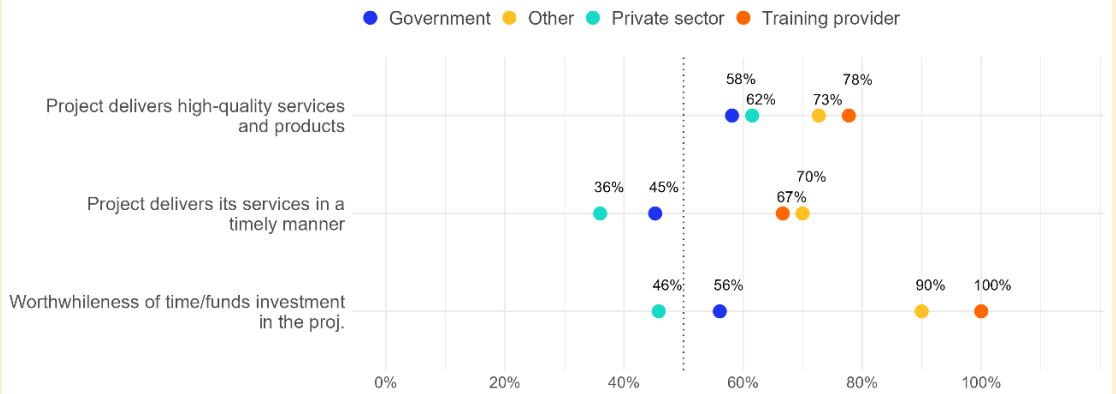
Survey: Positive and critical views in balance

Approximately half of respondents express a positive view overall. As reflected in other sections, training providers are notably more positive, while private sector representatives tend to be more critical. Government respondents align more closely with the private sector when it comes to efficiency questions. Country differences are relatively minor; however, respondents in Cambodia were more positive regarding the first element – delivering high-quality services and products.



Note: Based on responses from 89, 86, and 84 participants, respectively.

Share of respondents selecting “to a great extent” or “completely”, across stakeholder groups:



Note: For Government, based on responses from 43, 42, and 41 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 11, 10, and 10 participants, respectively. For Private sector, based on responses from 26, 25, and 24 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 9 participants.

Survey results on steering and coordination among consortium partners and between ASTI and government counterparts show similar patterns, with 63-66% of respondents indicating these work “to a great extent” or “completely.” Coordination with the private sector is rated higher, at 74%. While private sector respondents acknowledge this strong coordination, their overall responses tend to be more critical than those of other stakeholder groups.

Despite these challenges, collaboration with the project teams is widely appreciated. The commitment of the team was emphasised in many meetings. Across countries and institutions, partners described cooperation with ASTI as constructive, noting that the teams are approachable, responsive, and genuinely invested in capacity development. The coaching style of engagement (*"They guide us but don't control us."*) has been valued by government and business actors alike, creating a sense of partnership. Regular coordination through WhatsApp/Telegram groups, online meetings, and joint workshops helped sustain engagement and problem-solving despite the project's complexity, staff transitions, and uneven implementation pace.

Going forward, stakeholders are asking for more communication, visibility, and cross-country sharing at the sub-regional (CLM) and regional (ASEAN) level. Although in-country coordination has improved, the regional learning and exchange dimension remains underdeveloped. Many partners see ASTI's regional identity as a potential strength – one that could enable shared tools, peer learning, and mutual accountability – but in practice, opportunities for cross-country dialogue have been sporadic. Some respondents perceived the regional management as overly Cambodia-centric, with Lao PDR and Myanmar playing minimal roles in agenda-setting. At the regional level, partners expressed a desire for more regular and direct communication with the project team, noting that exchanges currently depend too heavily on formal meetings. At the sub-regional level, some called for more substantive and practice-oriented exchanges – focused on implementation experiences and lesson sharing – rather than meetings centred mainly on administrative updates or procedural coordination.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms remain insufficiently responsive, and data quality issues persist. Data collection remains largely manual, and the BCPs have limited experience in gathering and verifying such information, leading to inconsistencies – for example, in trainee counts (see section 3.3). Slow feedback loops further hinder timely validation of results and adjustment of activities. Additional challenges include unclear terminology[9] and the fact that the LogFrame that does not adequately reflect regional ambitions, as discussed in section 3.1. The project team has also noted the absence of a harmonised M&E framework between GIZ and Helvetas, and that existing tools are not well adapted to implementation realities.

There is a related risk that the pilot activities will generate only limited evidence. The number of pilots implemented to date remains small, restricting the project's ability to test, adapt, and validate processes at scale. It now appears that there will be only a single round of pilots, reducing opportunities for iterative learning. Moreover, the planned Cost-Benefit Analysis, which would have been a key element of the project's "proof of concept", appears to have been discontinued.

[9] The absence of standard definitions in the LogFrame – for example, what constitutes "issued" or "enacted" (regulations and guidelines), "assessed and certified" (trainees), or "reviewed" and "developed" (ASEAN strategies and action plans) – has resulted in inconsistent interpretation. Furthermore, the fact that the number of TBG1 trainees equals the number of TBG1 graduates continuing their studies, and that TBG2 trainees equal those reported to have received wage increases, implicitly assumes a 100% success rate. This is unrealistic and inconsistent, as trainees who continue further VET are not counted among those employed, yet the overall (impact) employment-related target remains 3,000.

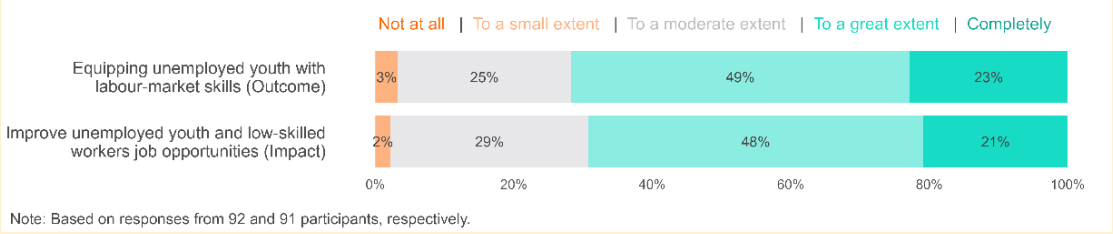
3.5. Impact

This section covers the extent to which ASTI has contributed to its development objective (EQ 15). ASTI's development objective / overall goal is "Improved career opportunities for unemployed youth and low-skilled workers", with three indicators resp. targets:

- Number of young women and men, especially those with limited education and early school leavers, who found wage or self-employment after participating in WBL. Target: 3000 (TBG1 & TBG2)
- Number of workers who realised an increase in income or promotion after participating in WBL. Target: 1800 (TBG2)
- Number of unemployed youth and low-skilled workers that continued VET after obtaining a qualification by participating in WBL. Target: 1200 (TBG1)

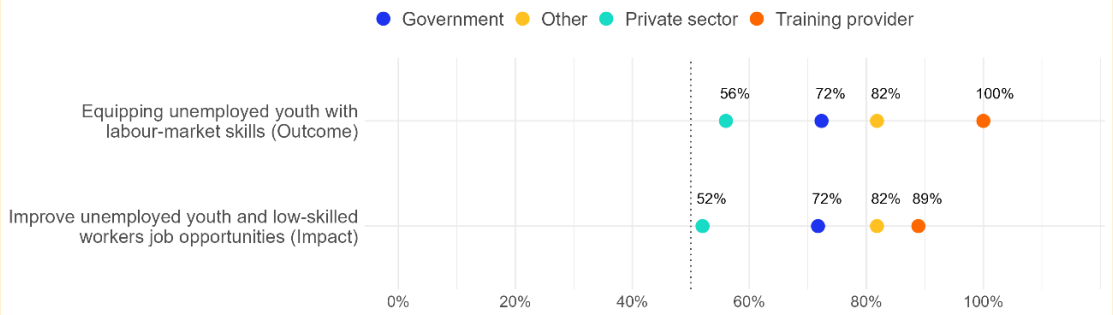
Survey: Majority believes ASTI is on track to reach intended outcome and impact

Consistent with the effectiveness findings presented in the previous chapter, around two thirds of respondents believe that the higher-level results are likely to be achieved. Training providers and respondents from Lao PDR remain particularly positive in their assessments.



Note: Based on responses from 92 and 91 participants, respectively.

Share of respondents selecting "to a great extent" or "completely", across stakeholder groups:



Note: For Government, based on responses from 47 and 46 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 11 participa
For Private sector, based on responses from 25 participants. For Training provider, based on responses from 9 participants.

Given current progress, the remaining targets are unlikely to be achieved within the next ten months, as discussed in the effectiveness section. However, survey participants expressed a more positive outlook (see dedicated section below), likely because their assessments are based less on quantitative targets and more on perceived contributions to qualitative goals.

Beyond the formal LogFrame indicators, the project also aims to contribute to systemic change and learning at both the sub-regional (CLM) and regional (ASEAN) levels. Some progress has been made in this regard – particularly through strengthening system actors and developing guidelines and curricula – but the pilot activities will need to demonstrate tangible outcomes that can serve as a foundation for embedding new training and certification practices. Even if pilots prove successful, significant efforts will still be required to institutionalise these approaches within national skills systems, as they are not yet self-sustaining. In terms of regional learning, progress has been more limited than initially anticipated, as discussed earlier.

3.6. Sustainability

This section examines the extent to which project results are likely to be sustained beyond donor support (political framework, partners' commitment and ownership, capacities, financial resources) (EQ 16).

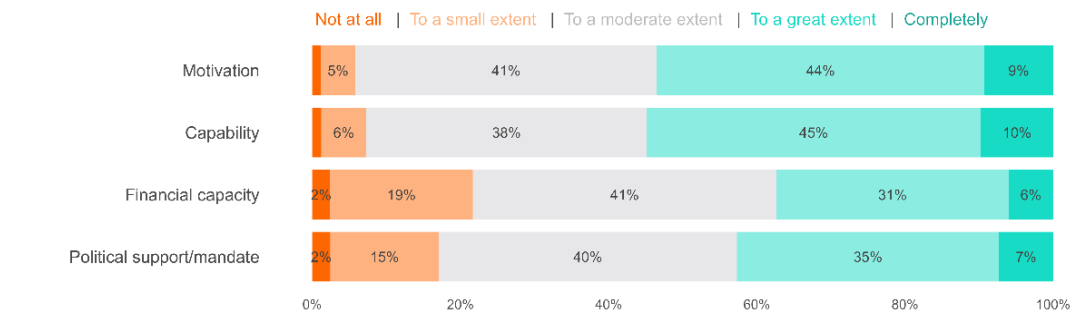
Company participation in ASTI remains to a significant extent goodwill-based rather than business-driven, raising concerns about long-term sustainability. There's been notable interest in the ASTI model from BCPs, companies, and government agencies as discussed in the Relevance section, which might – pending a successful trial – translate to longer-term commitment and ownership. On the private sector, motivations have been varied, however. A few employers were keen to test ASTI's model as a way to "*grow talent from the ground up,*" comparing the benefits of training entry level entrants against retraining diploma or bachelor graduates who often lack practical readiness. For them, the pilot serves as a controlled experiment that could eventually shift recruitment practices towards lower-level learners. Yet it was also observable that in many of the interviews, that CSR commitments, corporate training guidelines, government or buyer expectations, or personal networks played a role in their participation in the project rather than a strategic investment in skills. Several noted they joined to *"support national development"* or *"follow the instruction from headquarters,"* while others emphasised reputational motives — *"It's good for our company image and helps us connect with ministries."*

This motivation gap is reflected in firms' limited financial contributions. While many are willing to cover direct costs such as trainee stipends, training materials, or staff supervision, few show readiness to finance system-wide functions like certification, assessment, or coordination. Several company representatives stated that these responsibilities should remain with the state or donor-funded projects. One employer remarked, *"There is no clear benefit if we pay for certification; it should be the state's job."* Others hesitated even over trainee allowances, questioning the tangible returns. Without clearer incentives or cost-sharing mechanisms, most enterprises are unlikely to invest beyond their immediate operational needs.

Across both countries, uncertainty persists over how WBL and RPL will be financed once donor funding ends. In Lao PDR, stakeholders noted that the TVET Development Fund is not operational and that the government budget is "*very limited*." In Cambodia, the Skills Development Fund (SDF) is viewed as a promising but still cumbersome mechanism: *"If the SDF really works, it can help us share the costs — but so far, we see only paperwork"*. Both the SDF and TVET Fund are seen as key to long-term sustainability, yet none are ready to take over within the near future.

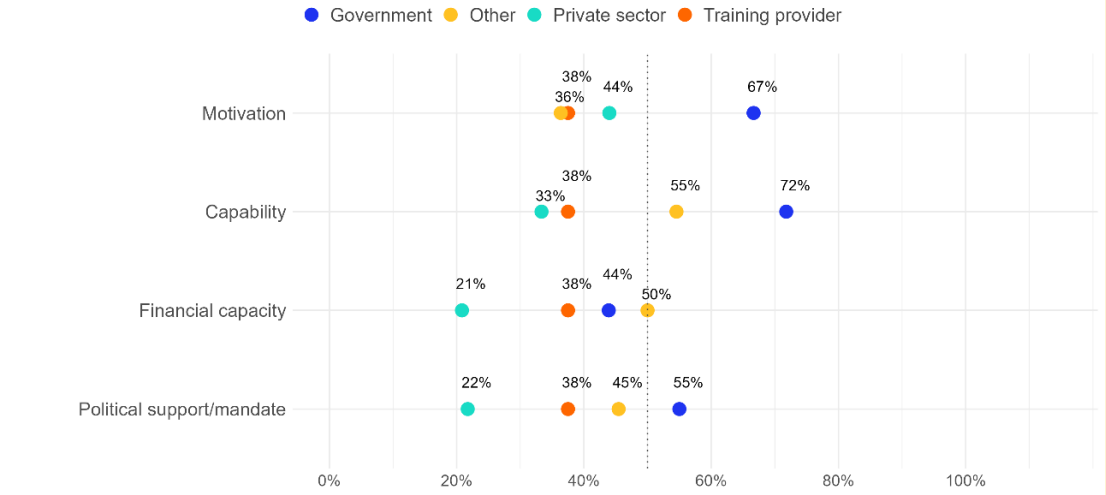
Survey: About half of respondents believe sustainability conditions are in place

In response to the question "Reflecting on the stakeholders involved in the ASTI project, do you think that after the project's completion (i.e., without further donor funding) they are motivated, capable, have the financial capacity, and sufficient political support or mandate to continue the project's activities?" respondents again split into two broad groups—one generally positive and one more critical. Among the assessed factors, financial capacity and political support are viewed most critically. Across stakeholder groups, private sector representatives are notably more sceptical, particularly regarding financial capacity and political support or mandate. Overall, respondents in Lao PDR tend to be more positive than those in Cambodia, with differences ranging from 4 to 15 percentage points.



Note: Based on responses from 86, 82, 83, and 82 participants, respectively.

Share of respondents selecting "to a great extent" or "completely", across stakeholder groups:



Note: For Government, based on responses from 42, 39, 41, and 40 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 11, 10, and 11 participants, respectively. For Private sector, based on responses from 25, 24, 24, and 23 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 8 participants.

Institutional ownership and coordination capacities are still fragile, especially among business chambers and SSCs. Both LNCCI and CAMFEBA have taken on greater responsibilities and visibility, yet interviewees doubted that either could independently coordinate WBL or RPL in the short term. In Lao PDR, LNCCI has started handling contracts and partner mobilisation but continues to depend on external technical support. In Cambodia, SSCs now have a stronger voice in sector coordination, at least in theory. In practice, their authority and resources remain weak, with most secretariats operating on a voluntary basis. Targeted external support, dedicated staffing, and clearer role definitions will therefore be essential to prepare for gradual transition.

ASTI in Myanmar

WBL is well suited to Myanmar's fragile context and the withdrawal of donors from public TVET. By focusing on private-sector-led training, ASTI offers a practical way to sustain skills development amid political instability, labour shortages, and migration pressures heightened by the 2024 conscription law. Employers face severe workforce gaps as *"it's not just skill shortages anymore—it's workforce shortages."* With formal systems paralysed, private providers and companies have become the only functioning training actors. Interviewees described ASTI's private sector focus as *"realistic, even necessary"* in a volatile environment where informal WBL practices have kept basic skills training alive.

Myanmar's experience could offer lessons on skilling in crisis settings, showing how non-state actors sustain vocational learning when public systems collapse. Currently, some providers continue *"offering a kind of work-based learning program for young people,"* tailoring courses to company needs. Larger firms combine theory at private institutes with in-company practice, while cross-company internships enable youth to gain experience despite instability. As one interviewee reflected, *"Maybe we need to look at what's possible now, not theoretical models."*

Implementation formally began in February 2025 after a year-long suspension due to post-coup security and reputational risks. During this pause, Helvetas Myanmar conducted a feasibility and mapping study to identify viable entry points and design a conflict-sensitive, non-governmental approach. The 20-month work plan (February 2025–August 2026) offers limited time to deliver results, but the team quickly mobilised private partners and associations to anchor activities.

Key early achievements include launching WBL documentation, engaging companies and associations, adapting training through private providers, and developing an occupational safety app and trainer ToT. The documentation of existing WBL practices was widely seen as a valuable step in mapping what remains viable within the private sector. It helped identify resilient enterprises and emerging champions. Companies in sectors such as construction and automotive expressed willingness to collaborate on skill hubs and future training initiatives. The OHS mobile app, developed with local tech partners, exemplifies adaptive, low-cost innovation suited to Myanmar's context. Meanwhile, a ToT programme for in-company mentors is underway, designed to strengthen pedagogy without relying on government infrastructure. As one stakeholder highlighted, *"If you want to make a difference, go to the place where they need it most."* Together, these initiatives demonstrate progress toward a lean, private-sector-driven WBL model that fits the current realities.

Skill Hub activities and regional exchange remain pending, with Myanmar's ASEAN engagement still limited. Restricted travel and non-engagement with public institutions isolate the team from broader collaboration. Although one private-sector representative joined the Swiss study tour, planned exchanges with Cambodia and Lao PDR have yet to occur, leaving Myanmar's potential to contribute lessons on *"skilling in crisis conditions"* largely unrealised.

Interviewees suggested several ways forward. For the remainder of **Phase 1**, ASTI should focus on implementing the approved activities, improving consortium coordination, ensuring Myanmar's consistent participation in regional planning, and strengthening in-country staffing.

For **Phase 2**, the focus should be on continuing and expanding **private-sector collaboration as the main delivery channel**. This could include supporting business associations to develop skills standards and co-finance training programmes, reinforcing the resilience of companies that have maintained informal WBL practices. Practical measures such as SME training guidelines, regulated internships, and flexible certification systems could help consolidate learning without involvement by the de-facto authorities. **Convening employers, TVET providers, and chambers around shared training priorities** would reinforce resilience and lay the groundwork for future re-engagement with government. In terms of regional learning, **Myanmar's evolving experience can serve as a case study in resilience and non-state delivery**, informing ASEAN-level discussions on skilling in fragile contexts and contributing to structured regional peer-learning platforms and working groups.

4. Conclusions

ASTI has remained strategically relevant despite operating in a dynamic and uncertain context. The initiative remains well aligned with ASEAN's goal of narrowing development gaps and with national TVET priorities in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Its private-sector-led model is designed to respond to key development challenges, including high school drop-out rates, skills shortages, productivity constraints, labour migration, and the persistent struggle of public TVET systems to stay responsive to market needs. By testing WBL and RPL, ASTI aims to demonstrate how more demand-driven and inclusive training models can take shape in the region.

The project has succeeded in maintaining genuine partner interest and commitment. Stakeholders across ministries, business chambers, and training institutions acknowledge ASTI's collaborative, coaching-oriented approach as a key strength. There's a notable motivation to pilot new models of public–private cooperation to deliver skills formation for NEETs and low-skilled workers. Although delays and coordination bottlenecks have limited tangible outcomes, the positive perception of ASTI's partnership model provides a valuable foundation for continued collaboration and learning.

ASTI has strengthened the role of business chambers in skills development. By channelling implementation through BCPs, the project has supported institutional learning within CAMFEBA, IBC, and LNCCI. These organizations are now more visible actors in national skills coordination and certification processes. The project has contributed to building local capacity for public–private dialogue — a foundational step toward more sustainable skills governance. However, challenges remain: these institutions continue to face limited human and financial resources, and their ability to sustain engagement without external support is still fragile.

Insufficient scoping at the outset has impacted the project's focus and its performance across all six evaluation criteria. Key issues include:

- The project design did not adequately assess private-sector or learner interest, nor clarify the realistic employability and wage outcomes that WBL and RPL could generate for NEETs and low-skilled workers. It failed to evaluate the required incentives or cost-sharing mechanisms to make participation attractive and financially feasible for companies, or to determine whether such models could/should be maintained through government or future donor support.
- The regional dimension lacked clearly defined objectives, achievable targets, and a coherent strategy for implementation.
- The project design did not sufficiently consider how ASTI could position itself within or complement existing initiatives.
- It was also not sufficiently clear how the project would contribute to the reform / change management process. Attempting to pilot, systematise, and scale WBL and RPL simultaneously overstretched management and financial capacities.
- The project's resources were not aligned with its level of ambition, undermining delivery and sustainability prospects.

Several critical assumptions — including partner incentives, learner demand, and the cost-effectiveness of WBL and RPL — were not revisited at the start of implementation. As a result, emerging risks and feasibility issues were identified late or overlooked. Contributing factors likely included limited resources, staff turnover, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted planning and coordination after the initial scoping. In hindsight, partners' willingness to collaborate might have been driven more by the appeal of participating in a regional initiative than by commitment to the specific WBL and RPL models promoted by ASTI. A key institutional lesson is therefore the importance of allocating sufficient time and resources for systematic scoping and assumption testing, both during project inception and during implementation ("pause and reflect" moments), to ensure that design assumptions remain valid and aligned with stakeholder motivations.

Implementation has been undermined by resource and coordination constraints. Delays in establishing the partnerships with the partner Ministries and BCP, understaffing, turnover among key personnel, and unclear division of responsibilities between consortium partners have slowed delivery and learning. Monitoring systems were insufficiently robust to capture results or adapt approaches in real time.

ASTI now faces a pivotal challenge – and opportunity – to deliver a robust proof of concept. With roughly ten months remaining in the current phase, the project has a window to generate first evidence that its models can effectively improve employability, productivity, and income. Generating robust data on cost, benefits, and the return on investment for companies, workers, and training institutions will be vital to demonstrate value and inform future government and private-sector investment.

Building on the assets and goodwill already established, ASTI must now recalibrate strategically – clarifying its niche, sharpening its data and learning agenda, and aligning ambitions with available resources. Providing a solid proof of concept will be essential for laying the foundation for institutional and financial sustainability and positioning the initiative for a second phase focused on scale-up and lasting impact.

Note on the Assessment Grid

SDC requires evaluators to complete an Assessment Grid and rate the DAC-criteria sub-elements on a scale from 1 to 4 (1 = Highly satisfactory, 2 = Satisfactory, 3 = Unsatisfactory, 4 = Highly unsatisfactory). The ratings are presented in Annex 7.

In the evaluation team's view, it is still too early to assess Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, and Sustainability, as these depend on the project's eventual proof of concept. This will need to be demonstrated through the implementation of a pilot and the collection of credible evidence.

At this stage, Coherence and Efficiency are both rated as Unsatisfactory due to limited collaboration with other donor-funded initiatives, delays in implementation, weaknesses in the M&E system, and insufficient resources dedicated to learning and evidence generation.

5. Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this chapter have been formulated based on the findings and the conclusions of the evaluation team.

Recommendation 1: Accelerate implementation of WBL and RPL

Addressees: GIZ / Helvetas, SDC *Supported by:* National partners	*Priority:* High	*Resources:* High	*Timing:* Short term

Rationale: With less than a year remaining, ASTI's success depends on demonstrating that its WBL and RPL models can deliver measurable results in employability, productivity, and income. Acceleration is essential not only to validate the models' relevance and feasibility but also to build a sound evidence base for decisions on a potential second phase. Refocusing on proof of concept will help shift efforts from broad engagement toward practical demonstration, evidence generation, and lessons for scale-up.

Possible actions:

- **Set clear, time-bound milestones** to strengthen accountability and enable timely course correction — including decisions on whether and how a next phase should proceed. These milestones should cover the creation of a detailed pilot roadmap which would include a definition/classification of what WBL and RPL formats are being piloted, and how success looks like (see Recommendation 2); the defined start and end of each pilot; data gathering points (at least baseline and endline); and the production and dissemination of evidence and learnings. Evidence generation should occur at two milestones: (1) early, interim findings to inform the design of Phase 2, and (2) results at the conclusion of the pilots. Further milestones should be related to the planning of phase 2.
- **Prioritise proof-of-concept delivery** by realigning targets and resources; consider temporarily scaling back less critical activities, for instance gender mainstreaming workstreams, additional regional activities, and non-essential capacity-building, to ensure sufficient depth and quality of pilots.
- **Mobilise the organisational strategic and technical support teams** (project management, regional advisory, and thematic experts) to help resolve bottlenecks and accelerate implementation. This could include creating a small regional technical support pool with clear service responsibilities; providing on-demand coaching to country teams instead of ad hoc missions; rotating technical leadership roles so that each country lead parts of agenda; strengthening internal quality assurance through joint document review and feedback loops; improving internal data sharing, and simplifying internal processes such as due diligence. Processes such as these would ensure continuity, coherent guidance,

and rapid troubleshooting during the final implementation stretch, also in light of the upcoming change of team leader.

- **Plan for a short (up to 4-month) no-cost extension**, if needed, to consolidate results, complete pilots, and document credible evidence on outcomes and learning.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen evidence generation and generate credible proof of concept

Addressees: GIZ / Helvetas *Supported by:* SDC, national partners	*Priority:* High	*Resources:* Medium	*Timing:* Short term

Rationale: ASTI's current M&E system remains largely output-focused and insufficiently equipped to capture outcome-level results on employability, productivity, and income. Data collection is fragmented, with limited verification and weak feedback loops between implementation and learning. Strengthening M&E is essential to produce credible, verifiable evidence of what works and why. A robust proof of concept – supported by reliable data on results, costs, and benefits – will allow ASTI to demonstrate effectiveness, inform future investment, and guide decisions on scale-up and sustainability.

Possible actions:

- **Define what success means**. Establish a clear definition of "proof of concept," specifying the results and indicators required to validate the WBL and RPL models' effectiveness and scalability. In addition to counting trainees, the project should specify outcome thresholds, such as the percentage of WBL graduates who obtain (self-)employment within a defined period, and the proportion who experience income gains relative to their pre-training/RPL situation.
- **Pilot and learn in real time**. Proceed with pilot implementation even while guidelines are being finalised; use early results to refine tools and approaches, ensuring that learning directly informs system design.
- **Collect credible data**. Strengthen M&E systems — including baselines, tracer studies, and company-level data — to ensure robust evidence generation. Introduce simple digital tools for partners to reduce manual reporting and improve data quality. Engage the backstopping team to support design, collection, and analysis, ensuring results are regularly reviewed and used for learning and adaptive management.
- **Assess costs and benefits**. Document tangible outcomes and cost implications for companies, workers, and training providers to identify viable incentive and cost-sharing mechanisms for sustainability.

Recommendation 3: Design a second phase with a smaller, deeper, and evidence-driven focus

Addressees:	*Priority:*	*Resources:*	*Timing:*
SDC, GIZ / Helvetas	Medium	Medium	Short - medium term

Rationale: ASTI's first phase demonstrated strong strategic relevance and partner engagement but was stretched across too many objectives, geographies and industries relative to its resources. A second phase should therefore consolidate learning and focus on deepening impact in fewer, well-defined areas. Building on the proof of concept, this phase should prioritise strengthening institutional and financial mechanisms that make WBL and RPL sustainable and scalable. A more focused approach will enable meaningful support of systemic change models, strengthen national ownership, and create a clearer pathway to long-term sustainability.

Possible actions:

- **Re-scope interventions strategically**: With support from consortium backstoppers, refine objectives, modalities, and partner roles once the proof of concept is established, aligning ambition with available capacity and resources.
- **If proof of concept is achieved**: Scale up in one promising sector (e.g. automotive) to reach critical mass, consolidate the evidence base, and focus on institutionalising sustainable mechanisms — including cost-sharing arrangements, incentive systems, and policy and regulatory frameworks supporting WBL and RPL.
- **If proof of concept is not achieved**: Use feedback to adapt or redesign the intervention. Options may include piloting revised models or repositioning ASTI as a regional learning and exchange platform on WBL practices more broadly.

Recommendation 4: Clarify and operationalise ASTI's regional ambitions for Phase 2

Addressees:	*Priority:*	*Resources:*	*Timing:*
SDC *Supported by:* GIZ/Helvetas	Medium	Low	Short - medium term

Rationale: ASTI's regional dimension has been conceptually important but practically underdeveloped. While the project aligns well with ASEAN's agenda, its regional role, partnerships, and expected outcomes have remained only loosely defined. Clarifying Switzerland's strategic ambition for ASTI at the regional level – including how it complements efforts in CLM countries – will be essential to guide realistic planning for a second phase.

Possible actions:

- **Define Switzerland's regional ambition** for ASTI, specifying areas of comparative advantage, expected outcomes, and the scope of engagement.
- **Conduct targeted stakeholder mapping** to identify key regional institutions, networks, and initiatives, as well as potential coordination and partnership opportunities.

- **Establish an operational approach for regional engagement** — for instance, appointing a dedicated liaison officer or leveraging the Swiss Embassy's leadership and convening role in Jakarta.
- **Promote visibility and collaboration** by exploring a capitalisation of experiences (CAPEX) initiative across the VSD portfolio in CLM to support broader ASEAN–Swiss cooperation and showcase this at a regional learning or policy event with high-level representation.

Recommendation 5: Actively collaborate with other WBL and RPL initiatives

Addressees:	*Priority:*	*Resources:*	*Timing:*
GIZ / Helvetas	Medium	Low	Medium term

Rationale: ASTI operates in a crowded landscape of national and regional actors pursuing similar objectives in WBL and RPL. Coordination among these initiatives remain limited. Strengthening collaboration would help ASTI avoid duplication, enhance policy coherence, and leverage complementary expertise and resources. This is particularly important given the modest resources at ASTI's disposal.

Possible actions:

- **Map existing and emerging initiatives** at both country and regional levels to identify strategic partners, complementary efforts, and opportunities for alignment.
- **Engage proactively with key actors** — including development partners, ASEAN bodies, and private-sector-led initiatives — to establish mechanisms for regular dialogue and coordination.
- **Adopt a long-term collaboration mindset**, using current engagement to lay the groundwork for structured partnerships – including cost-sharing, joint planning, resource pooling and more harmonised approaches - during a potential Phase 2. This should involve early discussions with partners about potential areas for joint planning, expectations for resource pooling, and mechanisms for aligning technical approaches across countries and regional platforms.
- **Examples**: For instance, in Lao PDR, the project could join forces with VELA on practical areas such as aligning workplace QA tools, harmonising terminology, coordinating employer messaging within LNCCI through shared platform of DCT Service Centre, joint outreach, and contributing to more coherent pathways (DCT–WBL framework) and incentive systems under a shared national policy direction. As another example, at regional level, the project could collaborate more closely with RECOTwin, including contributing to its upcoming mandate to revise ASEAN guidelines on in-company trainers, and identifying entry points in Cambodia, where RECOTwin noted limited visibility of GIZ's TVET work and indicated willingness to share resources.

Annex 1: Project Overview

Table 1: Project overview

ASTI	Details
Budget	• CHF 4,000,000
Duration	• September 2022 - August 2026
Implementation	• Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH • Helvetas Switzerland
Goal	• Improved career opportunities for unemployed youth and low-skilled workers
Outcome	• Unemployed young women and men, especially those with limited education and early school leavers as well as low-skilled workers, are equipped with labour market relevant skills that enable better employability and integration into the formal TVET system
Outputs	• **Output 1.a.** Strengthened collaboration between Switzerland and ASEAN to promote exchange and best practices on WBL. • **Output 1.b.** Established/enhanced coordination among regulatory authorities and industry representatives of CLM. • **Output 2.** Integration of WBL into the TVET system. • **Output 3.** WBL for selected occupations in selected industrial sectors implemented. • **Output 4.** Selected CLM industry representatives take a leading role in WBL, supporting development of sector specific NOSS/ qualifications / curricula, implementing WBL, assessing skills and supporting certification of trainees.
Key stakeholders	• **Government:** Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Cambodia; Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR • **Employer representatives** (as private sector): Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA), International Business Chamber of Cambodia (IBC), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI). • **Partners in Myanmar** (as the service providers only): Southern Economic Hub and Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Federation (MCEF).
Beneficiaries	• **Direct beneficiaries**: 3,000 trainees (unemployed young women & men and low-skilled workers) • **Indirect beneficiaries**: 6,000 (unemployed young women & men and low-skilled workers), employers, TVET service providers, in-company trainers, assessors, and suchlike.
Geog. coverage	• ASEAN, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar

Source: Annual progress report (Jan – June 2025)

Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

Note: In the evaluation report, EQ5 is addressed under the Relevance section, while EQ6 is discussed under Effectiveness.

Table 2: Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions	Docs	Data	Interv.	Survey
Relevance				
EQ 1: How well does ASTI Phase 1 respond to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries, national partners in CLM countries, and regional partners at ASEAN level?	●	●	●	●
EQ 2: Does ASTI focus on the right sectors/occupations?	●	●	●	
EQ 3: To what extent did the project remain relevant given ongoing political, economic, and social changes?	●		●	
Coherence				
EQ 4: To what extent is ASTI coherent with and complementary to other interventions, specifically SDC projects in CLM and the RECOTwin programme?	●		●	●
EQ 5: How clear and consistent is ASTI's WBL approach, and what added value does it provide?	●		●	●
EQ 6: How far has ASTI positioned itself as an ASEAN-level initiative beyond national interventions?	●		●	●
Effectiveness				
EQ 7: Is the project on track to achieve its planned outputs and outcomes?	●	●	●	●
EQ 8: What are the key success factors and challenges, and how can they be leveraged or addressed in the next phase?	●		●	●
EQ 9: How effective have ASTI's implementation modalities, specifically through BCP, been in achieving the set objectives?	●		●	●
EQ 10: To what extent has ASTI showcased the Swissness and SDC's visibility?	●		●	
EQ 11: To what extent has ASTI achieved its intended results on gender equality, LNOB, and good governance?	●	●	●	●
Efficiency				
EQ 12: How well does the project's steering structures and the consortium partnership work?	●		●	●
EQ 13: How efficiently has ASTI delivered its outputs (time, quality, resources)?	●	●	●	●
EQ 14: How effective is the collaboration between ASTI, government institutions, and the private sector so far?			●	●
Impact				

EQ 15: To what extent has ASTI contributed to its development objective?[10]			●	●
Sustainability				
EQ 16: To what extent are project results likely to be sustained beyond donor support (political framework, partners' commitment and ownership, capacities, financial resources)?			●	●

Annex 3: Interviewees

Institution	Name	Position	Location
Lao PDR			
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

[10] The development objective / overall goal being "Improved career opportunities for unemployed youth and low-skilled workers" (as per revised ProDoc November 2023)

[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]		[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
Cambodia			
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
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[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Myanmar			**Online**
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
ASEAN			Online
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]
[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

Annex 4: Data collection tool

Survey questionnaire

No	Respondents	Survey question	Response options
Background information			
1	All	What is your gender?	• Male • Female • I don't want to disclose
2	All	What kind of organisation do you work for?	• Government • Training provider (public and private) • Business Chamber Partner (BCPs) • Company • ASTI team (GIZ, Helvetas, SFUVET) • Other (please specify)
3	All	Which country do you focus on in your work?	• Cambodia • Myanmar • Laos • I have a regional role

Relevance			
4	All	In your view, to what extent have the project activities: • *aligned with ASEAN TVET priorities?* • *aligned with national TVET priorities?* • *been relevant to your organisation?* • *addressed important needs and priorities of* unemployed young women and men? • *addressed important needs and priorities of* low skilled workers? ** Only shown for Cambodia and Laos*	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
	All	Please briefly explain the reasons behind your selection.	
5	All	Is ASTI focusing on the right sectors? • Warehousing / logistics • Construction • Manufacturing • Automotive • Retail / customer service	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
	All	Are there sectors or occupations that you think should receive greater attention, either new ones or those already covered by ASTI?	
Coherence			
6	All	Do you think that the project has done enough to coordinate with: • other SDC VET-related projects in your country? • other regional VET programmes (e.g. RECOTwin)? • other development partners (e.g. ADB, ILO)	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
7	All	To what extent do you find that: • ASTI's WBL approach is clear and consistent? • ASTI's WBL approach adds value compared to other	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent

		TVET approaches in your country?	• Completely
	All	Please briefly explain the reasons behind your selection.	•
Effectiveness / Impact			
8	All	How effective has ASTI been in the following areas? • Strengthening regional collaboration on WBL • Strengthening national collaboration on WBL • Supporting the integration of WBL into national TVET systems (guidelines, capacity building, etc.) • Implementing WBL programmes (curricula, pilot training, RPL-based skills assessments, etc.) • Enabling industry representatives to take a leading role in WBL • Promoting gender equality in its activities • Promoting good governance in its activities	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
9	All	To what extent has the project contributed to these project goals? • Equipping unemployed youth with **labour market relevant skills** that help them enter or re-enter the labour market. *(Outcome)* • Enabling unemployed youth and low-skilled workers to **improve their job opportunities** *(Impact)*	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
	All	What are the most important changes that you associate with the project? Were there any negative effects?	
10	All	In your view, what are the main factors influencing the project's progress?	• Government support and policy alignment

		Please select up to three of the most important factors in each category: Positive factors (those that have facilitated progress) Negative factors (those that have hindered progress)	• Engagement of Business Chamber Partners and companies • Use of Swiss expertise and good practices • Capacity building (trainers, institutions, partners) • Regional exchange and cooperation • Administrative and procedural requirements (e.g. approvals, paperwork) • Political and operational context • Project management and staffing arrangements • Project's flexibility to adapt
		Please briefly explain the reasons behind your selection. What other factors, not listed above, do you consider important?	
Efficiency			
11	All	Reflecting on the ASTI project, do you think that: • the project delivers high-quality services and products? • the project delivers its services in a timely manner; any delays were justified? • the resources (time and/or funds) you invested while participating in the project have been worthwhile?	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
12	All	How well do coordination, communication, and support within and around the project work? Please assess the following: • ASTI's steering structures (e.g. National and Regional Project Steering Committees) • Between consortium partners (GIZ, Helvetas, SFUVET) • Between the project and government stakeholders	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely

		• Between the project and private sector stakeholders (BCPs and companies)	
	All	Please briefly explain the reasons behind your selection.	
Sustainability			
13	All	Reflecting on the stakeholders involved in the ASTI project, do you think that after the project's completion (i.e., without further donor funding): • they are MOTIVATED to continue the project's activities? • they are CAPABLE to continue the project's activities? • they have the FINANCIAL CAPACITY to continue the project's activities? • they have sufficient political support and/or mandate to continue the project activities	• Not at all • To a small extent • To a moderate extent • To a great extent • Completely
	All	Please briefly explain the reasons behind your selection.	
14	All	What additional measures or adjustments do you think could further strengthen the project in phase 2? Please share your ideas, opinions, and recommendations.	

Interview questionnaires

Government

1. Can you provide a brief overview of what your organisation is doing and what is your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. How well does ASTI's activities fit with the government policy and the needs of unemployed young people?
3. Does it fit the current economic and social situation?
4. There's a range of initiatives - what is the specific value that ASTI brings?

5. Probe: ASTI is advocating a new training model - do you think it is an attractive model for companies, learners, and providers, and why? (90% OJT, min. 10 weeks, 3 USD allowance) Is there previous experience / evidence / feedback that this would work?
6. Are the selected sectors and occupations relevant to national skills shortages? Are there any other sectors should be of focus?
7. Note: Warehousing / logistics, Construction, Manufacturing, Automotive, Retail / customer service
8. Are there other government or other donors' TVET initiatives that help unemployed youth and low-skilled workers? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
9. How does/could ASTI collaborate, leverage synergies better with government initiatives or those of other donors?
10. How well do you understand ASTI's overall WBL concept and model? Are there overlaps between this model and others proposed by different donors? Do you see the WBL approach as adaptable to national systems and scalable beyond the pilot phase?
11. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
12. Probes: How useful and adaptable are the WBL guidelines for quality assurance, assessment, and RPL? What progress has been made in integrating WBL into the NQF?
13. What are challenges?
14. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
15. How has ASTI contributed to regional cooperation on WBL within ASEAN, and what could be improved in its regional approach?
16. How has ASTI contributed to gender equality and LNOB in national TVET and WBL implementation, and what barriers remain?
17. How visible has Switzerland/ SDC's contribution been through ASTI (e.g. in meetings, communications, or technical work)? What value has Swiss expertise (e.g. SFUVET) brought to the project in terms of technical quality, innovation, or credibility?
18. What do you expect to see as ASTI's results on institutional and policy levels by the end of the project (mid-2030)?
19. How well has ASTI managed administrative processes *(ex: approval, reporting)*, and what could help speed up implementation in the next phase? Are there any other challenges you would highlight?
20. How has working with the ASTI team been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
21. How effective have ASTI's steering structures: Regional and National Project Steering Committees (R/NPSC), Implementation Management Committee (IMC) been in guiding and coordinating the project? What could be improved?
22. How is the government working with the private sector on TVET initiatives? Is there a plan to involve the private sector more formally?
23. What lessons have been learned regarding the institutionalisation of WBL within your organisation or system?
24. What plans are in place to keep the ASTI project's results going after it ends?

25. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward? (in the next 10 months, in phase 2)

BCP

1. Can you provide a brief overview of what your organisation is doing and what is your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. How well does ASTI's activities fit with your organisation's priorities and your members' workforce needs?
3. Does ASTI's training approach fit the current economic and social situation?
4. ASTI is advocating a new training model - do you think it is an attractive model for companies, learners, and providers, and why? (90% OJT, min. 10 weeks, 3 USD allowance) Is there previous experience / evidence / feedback that this would work?
5. You are involved in a range of initiatives - what is the specific value that ASTI brings?
6. Are the selected sectors and occupations relevant to national skills shortages? Are there any other sectors should be of focus?
7. Note: Warehousing / logistics, Construction, Manufacturing, Automotive, Retail / customer service
8. How does/could ASTI collaborate, leverage synergies better with government initiatives or those of other donors?
9. How well do you understand ASTI's overall WBL concept and model? Are there overlaps between this model and others proposed by different donors? Do you see the WBL approach as adaptable to national systems and scalable beyond the pilot phase?
10. Probe: How clear is the WBL framework provided by ASTI for companies and chambers to follow?
11. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
12. What are the challenges? Probes: How do you assess the development private sector engagement through ASTI?
13. What benefits have the chamber, and companies observed from participation in WBL (e.g. improved coordination with government, productivity, retention)?
14. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
15. Probe: What challenges have you faced in mobilising companies, trainers, and trainees?
16. How has ASTI contributed to regional cooperation on WBL within ASEAN, and what could be improved in its regional approach?
17. How has ASTI contributed to gender equality and LNOB in national TVET and WBL implementation, and what barriers remain?
18. How visible has Switzerland/ SDC's contribution been through ASTI (e.g. in meetings, communications, or technical work)? What value has Swiss expertise (e.g. SFUVET) brought to the project in terms of technical quality, innovation, or credibility?
19. What do you expect to see as ASTI's results on company- and youth/worker- levels by the end of the project (mid-2030)?

20. How well has ASTI managed administrative processes *(ex: approval, reporting)*, and what could help speed up implementation in the next phase? Are there any other challenges you would highlight?
21. How has working with the ASTI team been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
22. How effective have ASTI's steering structures: Regional and National Project Steering Committees (R/NPSC), Implementation Management Committee (IMC) been in guiding and coordinating the project? What could be improved?
23. How is the government working with the private sector on TVET initiatives? Is there a plan to involve the private sector more formally?
24. What lessons have been learned regarding the institutionalisation of WBL within your organisation or system?
25. What plans are in place to keep the ASTI project's results going after it ends? What financing or policy support would help sustain company-led WBL?
26. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward? (in the next 10 months, in phase 2)

Training Provider

1. Can you provide a brief overview of what your organisation is doing and what is your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. How relevant is the WBL approach to your training mandate and student needs?
3. Probes: How interested are students (or potential learners) in joining WBL training?
4. What challenges do you face when recruiting learners for WBL (e.g. perceptions of TVET, attractiveness of WBL, family or social attitudes, permeability)?
5. Are the selected sectors and occupations relevant to national skills shortages? Are there any other sectors should be of focus?
6. Note: Warehousing / logistics, Construction, Manufacturing, Automotive, Retail / customer service
7. How well do you understand ASTI's overall WBL concept and model? Are there overlaps between this model and others proposed by different donors? Do you see the WBL approach as adaptable to national systems and scalable beyond the pilot phase?
8. Probe: How clear is the WBL framework provided by ASTI for training providers to follow?
9. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
10. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
11. Probe: What challenges have you faced in working with companies, trainers, and trainees?
12. How has ASTI contributed to gender equality and LNOB in national TVET and WBL implementation, and what barriers remain?
13. How visible has Switzerland/ SDC's contribution been through ASTI (e.g. in meetings, communications, or technical work)? What value has Swiss expertise (e.g. SFUVET) brought to the project in terms of technical quality, innovation, or credibility?

14. What do you expect to see as ASTI's results on youth/worker- levels by the end of the project (mid-2030)?
15. How has working with the ASTI team been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
16. How effective have ASTI's National Project Steering Committees (NPSC), Implementation Management Committee (IMC) been in guiding and coordinating the project? What could be improved?
17. How has coordination between your institution, and the private sector (Chamber and companies) been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
18. What lessons have been learned regarding the institutionalisation of WBL within your organisation or system?
19. What plans are in place to keep the ASTI project's results going after it ends? What financing or policy support would help sustain WBL approach?
20. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward? (in the next 10 months, in phase 2)

Company

1. Can you provide a brief overview of what your organisation is doing and what is your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. Why did your company decide to participate in WBL? (labour & skills shortage, CSO, …)
3. How relevant are the WBL occupations and training content to your company's needs?
4. How well do you understand ASTI's overall WBL concept and model? Are there overlaps between this model and others proposed by different donors? Do you see the WBL approach as adaptable to national systems and scalable beyond the pilot phase?
5. Probe: How clear is the WBL framework provided by ASTI for you to follow?
6. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
7. Probes: What benefits have you observed from participation in WBL (e.g. improved coordination with government, productivity, retention)?
8. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
9. Probe: What challenges have you faced in mobilising companies, trainers, and trainees?
10. Has the project supported gender equality and inclusion in your workplace? What barriers remain?
11. How visible has Switzerland/SDC's support been through ASTI, and what added value have you observed from the Swiss approach?
12. What do you expect to see as ASTI's results on company- and youth/worker- levels by the end of the project (mid-2030)?
13. How has working with the ASTI team been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
14. How has coordination between your company, the chamber, the training providers, and the government been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?

15. What would help make WBL easier or more sustainable for companies in the future? What financing or policy support would help sustain company-led WBL?

In-company trainer

1. Could you briefly describe your company, your role, and your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. How relevant are the WBL training courses to your company's actual work and skill needs?
3. How were trainees selected, and do their profiles match your company's requirements?
4. How well do you understand ASTI's overall WBL concept and model?
5. How clear and useful are the WBL training materials, schedules, and guidelines you received?
6. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
7. Probes: How has participating in ASTI benefited you as a trainer or your company as a whole?
8. What kinds of skills or changes have you seen in trainees since starting the training?
9. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
10. Probe: Have you faced any challenges in delivering training at the workplace (e.g. time, equipment, coordination)? How have you managed them?
11. Have women or disadvantaged trainees been equally involved in your company's WBL activities? What could help make the training more inclusive?
12. How visible is the support from Switzerland (SDC/SFUVET) or ASTI to you or your company?
13. How has working with the ASTI team been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
14. What lessons have you learned from being part of ASTI's WBL training?
15. Would your company continue WBL training after ASTI ends? What would make that possible?

Donor

1. Could you briefly describe your organisation's involvement in TVET in Lao PDR (and/or ASEAN)?
2. How well is the government managing coordination across multiple donors in TVET sector? What mechanisms currently exist — or could be strengthened — to improve coordination and information-sharing among TVET projects and donors?
3. Have you observed fragmentation, duplication, or unclear mandates as a result of multiple overlapping initiatives?
4. How effective is coordination between your organization and ASTI, both formally (e.g., joint meetings) and informally (e.g., technical exchanges)?
5. What overlaps or touchpoints exist between your work and the ASTI project?

6. Are there specific areas where greater alignment or collaboration could be achieved (e.g., competency frameworks, green skills integration, and teacher training, QA tools, WBL methodology)?
7. How has ASTI contributed to regional cooperation on WBL within ASEAN, and what could be improved in its regional approach?
8. What would help strengthen donor coordination in the TVET and skills development sector?
9. Based on your experience, what do you see as the biggest risks or opportunities for scaling ASTI outcomes beyond the pilot phase?

ASEAN

1. Can you provide a brief overview of what your organisation is doing and what is your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. How well does ASTI's activities fit with the regional TVET policy and the needs of unemployed young people?
3. Probe: In your view, how relevant is ASTI's focus on WBL to ASEAN's broader agenda on human resource development and regional integration?
4. How well do you understand ASTI's overall WBL concept and model? Are there overlaps between this model and others proposed by different donors? Do you see the WBL approach as adaptable to regional systems and scalable beyond the pilot phase?
5. How does ASTI collaborate, leverage synergies with other regional initiatives supported by development partners such as RECOTwin (GIZ/BMZ), SEAMEO VOCTECH, or ILO/UNESCO-led programmes?
6. How effectively has ASEC coordinated with these partners to ensure synergy and avoid duplication?
7. What do you see as the most significant changes the ASTI project has introduced?
8. Probes: What has been ASTI's most significant contribution to ASEAN's TVET agenda so far?
9. How has ASTI helped advance regional policy dialogue on WBL, quality assurance, and skills recognition through the ASEAN TVET Council (ATC)?
10. What specific outcomes or improvements have you observed in regional coordination or knowledge exchange among Member States (particularly Cambodia and Lao PDR)?
11. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
12. How visible has Switzerland/ SDC's contribution been through ASTI (e.g. in meetings, communications, or technical work)? What value has Swiss expertise (e.g. SFUVET) brought in terms of technical quality, innovation, or credibility?
13. How has working with the ASTI team been? What has gone well, and what could be improved?
14. How effective have ASTI's Regional Project Steering Committees (RNPSC) been in guiding and coordinating the project? What could be improved?
15. What lessons have been learned regarding the institutionalisation of WBL in the region? What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward?

16. What plans are in place to keep the ASTI project's results going after it ends?
17. What opportunities do you see for scaling or mainstreaming ASTI's WBL approach within future ASEAN frameworks or the next Work Plan cycle?

Implementers

1. Can you provide a brief overview of what your organisation is doing and what is your involvement in the ASTI project?
2. How has SFUVET ensured that Swiss good practices are adapted to local contexts rather than transferred directly?
3. In your view, what is the distinct "Swiss value added" that SFUVET brings to ASTI compared with other international partners?
4. How effective has collaboration been with national partners — particularly ministries, chambers, and training providers — in applying the Swiss dual-training principles?
5. What challenges has SFUVET encountered in transferring and contextualising Swiss approaches within ASEAN systems?
6. How has coordination worked with the ASTI implementation consortium (GIZ and Helvetas) and with SDC?
7. How well has SFUVET collaborated with other development partners (RECOTwin, ASEAN Secretariat, ILO, UNESCO) in providing technical input or regional expertise?
8. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
9. Probe: What has been the impact of SFUVET's engagement on national partners' capacity to design and deliver WBL in Cambodia and Lao PDR?
10. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
11. How has ASTI contributed to regional cooperation on WBL within ASEAN, and what could be improved in its regional approach?
12. How has ASTI contributed to gender equality and LNOB in national TVET and WBL implementation, and what barriers remain?
13. What lessons have been learned regarding the institutionalisation of WBL? What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward?
14. Probe: What lessons has SFUVET drawn from working in multi-country, multi-partner regional settings such as ASTI?
15. What plans are in place to keep the ASTI project's results going after it ends?

SDC

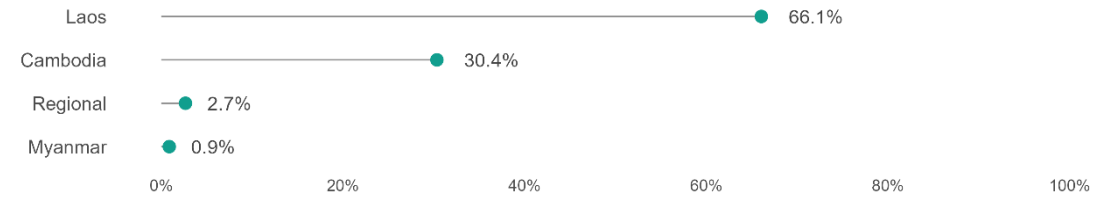
1. How does ASTI fit within SDC's broader regional and bilateral cooperation portfolios in the Mekong region and ASEAN?
2. You are supporting a range of initiatives, STAF, VTESS, previously VELA - what is the specific value that ASTI brings?
3. Probe: ASTI is advocating a new training model - do you think it is an attractive model for companies, learners, and providers, and why? (90% OJT, min. 10 weeks, 3 USD allowance) Is there previous experience / evidence / feedback that this would work?

4. Are the selected sectors and occupations relevant to national skills shortages in Laos? Good idea to fix it for the three countries? Are there any other sectors that should be of focus?
5. Was the project well anchored with MoE / DTVE?
6. What about RPL - is this the right addition?
7. Note: Warehousing / logistics, Construction, Manufacturing, Automotive, Retail / customer service
8. How well is ASTI coordinated with other SDC-funded or Swiss-supported programmes, such as VTESS in Lao PDR or DEY III in Cambodia?
9. What synergies or complementarities have been achieved between ASTI and other development partners (ADB, GIZ, World Bank, ILO, UNESCO, etc.)?
10. What do you see as the most significant changes the project has introduced? Which achievements are you particularly proud of? What are the challenges?
11. How has ASTI contributed to regional cooperation on WBL within ASEAN, and what could be improved in its regional approach? What is the value in the regional cooperation - does this help or rather hinder finding solutions?
12. Were there any unexpected effects of the project, either positive or challenging?
13. How effectively has ASTI promoted Swiss value addition (e.g. through SFUVET) — such as dual training expertise, system-level reform, or partnership-based implementation — in the ASEAN context?
14. Has ASTI enhanced SDC's visibility or strategic positioning as a regional partner in skills development?
15. How has ASTI contributed to gender equality and LNOB in national TVET and WBL implementation, and what barriers remain?
16. How effective are coordination and communication mechanisms between SDC country offices, the ASTI regional team, and implementing partners (GIZ, Helvetas, SFUVET)?
17. How effective have ASTI's steering structures: Regional and National Project Steering Committees (R/NPSC), Implementation Management Committee (IMC) / Operational Working Group (OWG) been in guiding and coordinating the project? What could be improved?
18. Were there any challenges in coordination, reporting, or resource allocation between the country and regional levels?
19. How effective does the lean team model work in the ASTI project? Is the resource allocation adequate / realistic to move anything (resp. given the regional sector)? Has the project been understaffed?
20. Have there been discussions of a non-cost extension? (the work plan 2025/26 contains a 12 months "extension period (tbc)") What's SDC's view?
21. What lessons have been learned regarding the institutionalisation of WBL?
22. What plans are in place to keep the ASTI project's results going after it ends?
23. What are SDC's expectations or priorities for a potential next phase of ASTI?
24. What changes or improvements would you like to see as the project moves forward? (in the next 10 months, in phase 2)

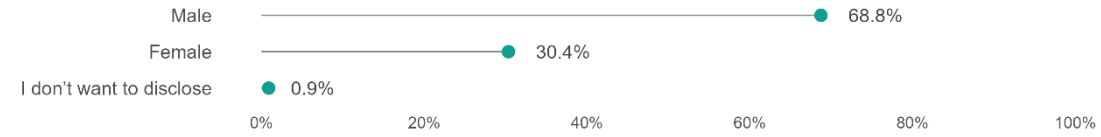
Annex 5: Additional survey information

We only included responses where participants completed all demographic questions and answered at least one non-demographic survey question, to ensure that the analysis was based on sufficiently informative and engaged responses rather than minimal entries.

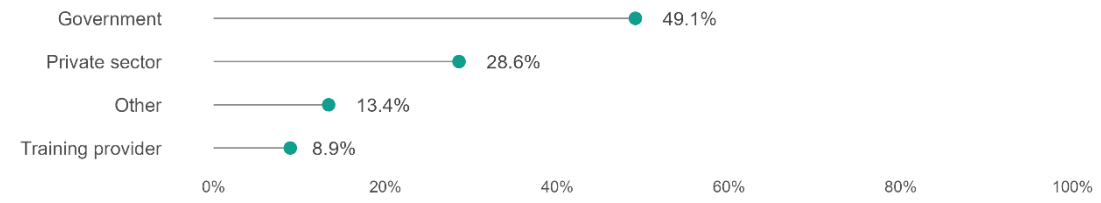
Survey demographics



Note: Based on the responses of 112 participants.

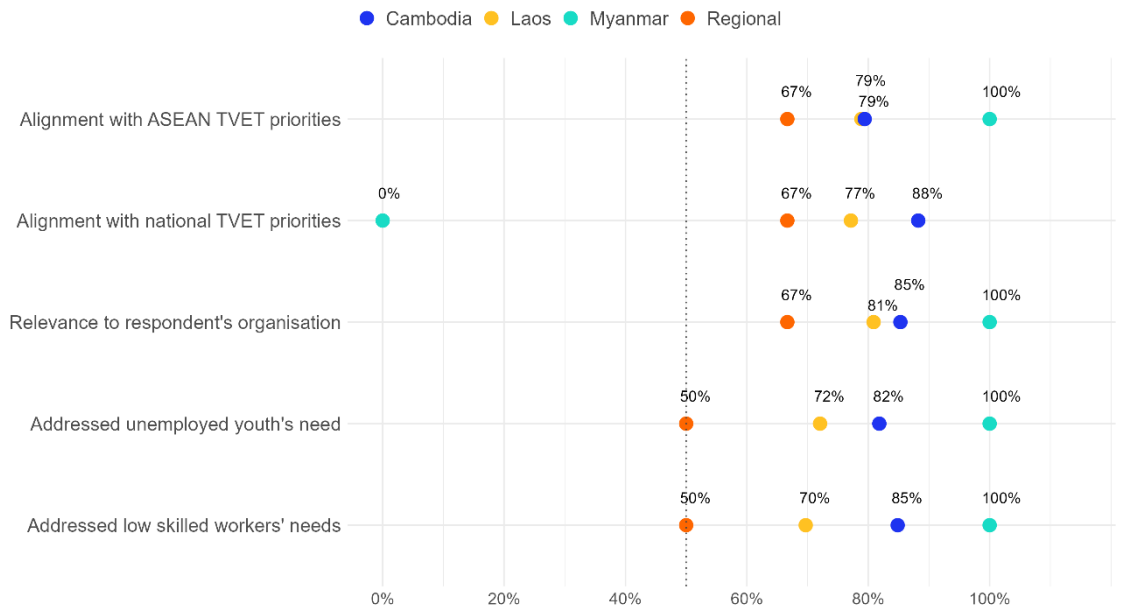


Note: Based on the responses of 112 participants.



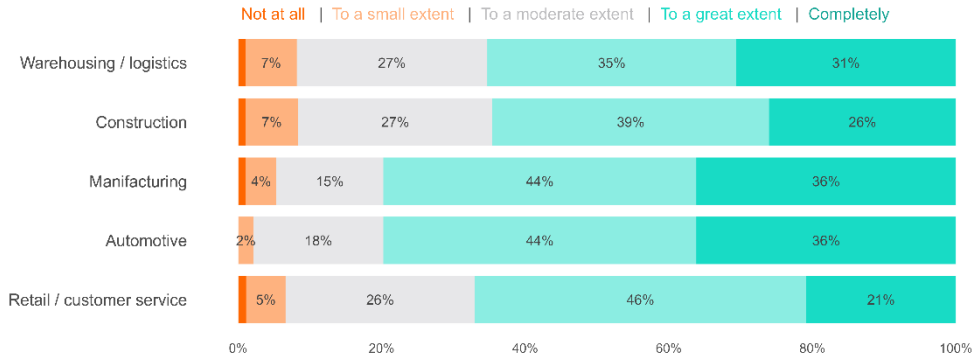
Note: Based on the responses of 112 participants.

Relevance

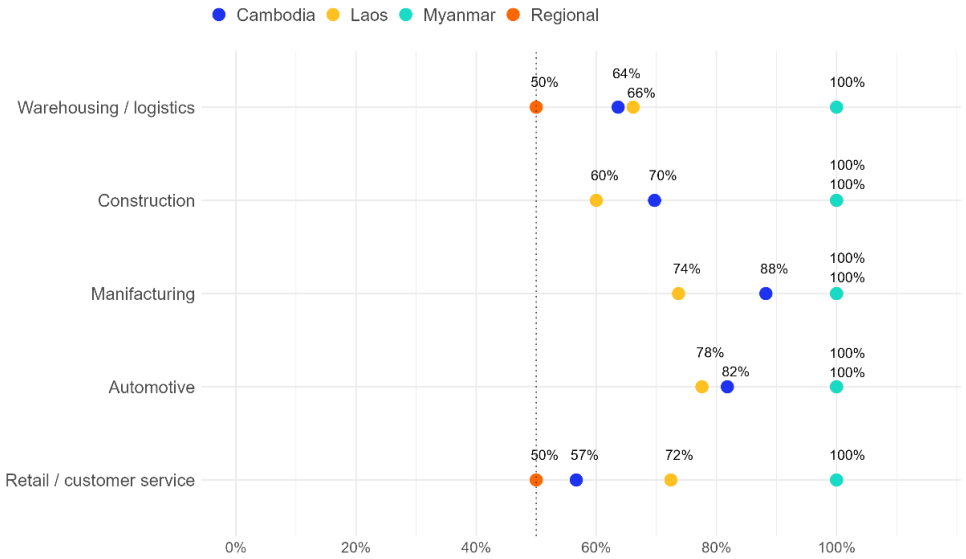


Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 34, 34, 34, 33, and 33 participants, respectively. For Laos, based on responses from 71 70, 68, 68, and 66 participants, respectively. For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 3, 3, 3, 2, and 2 participants, respectively.

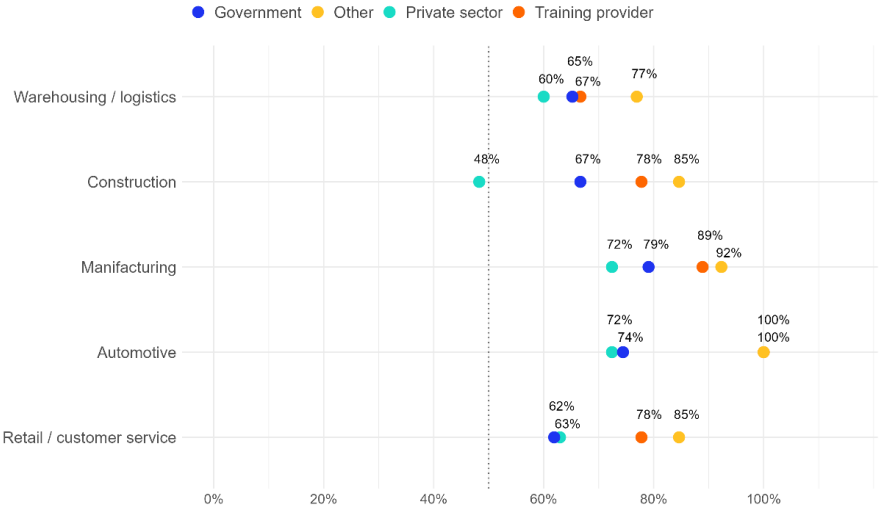
Sector relevance



Note: Based on responses from 98, 96, 94, 94, and 91 participants, respectively.

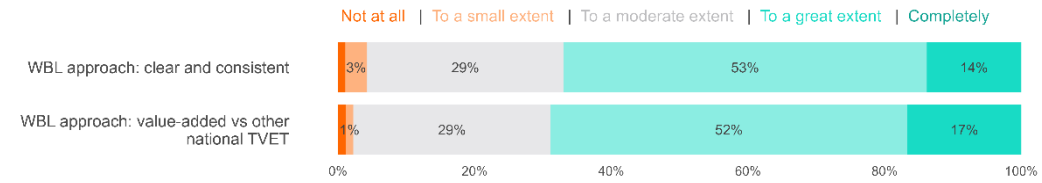


Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 33, 33, 34, 33, and 30 participants, respectively. For Laos, based on responses from 62 60, 57, 58, and 58 participants, respectively. For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 2 participants.

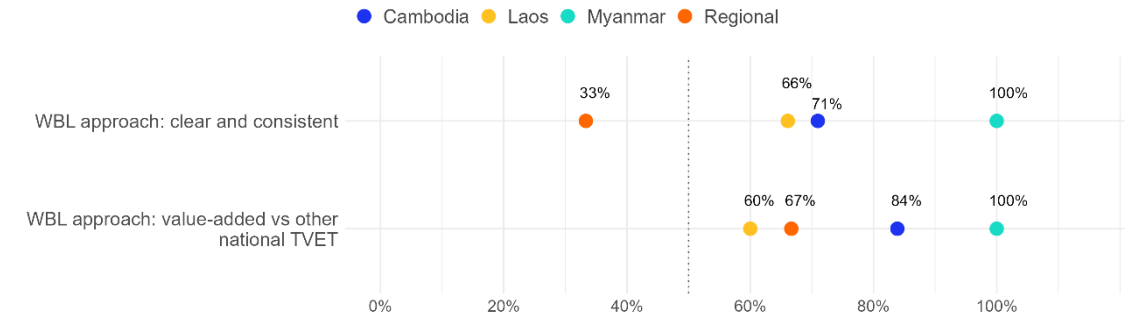


Note: For Government, based on responses from 46, 45, 43, 43, and 42 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 13 participants. For Private sector, based on responses from 30, 29, 29, 29, and 27 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 9 participants.

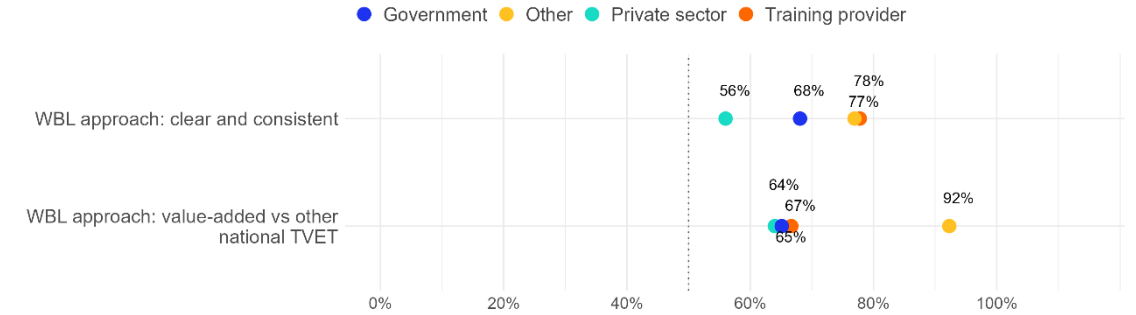
WBL approach



Note: Based on responses from 94 and 90 participants, respectively.

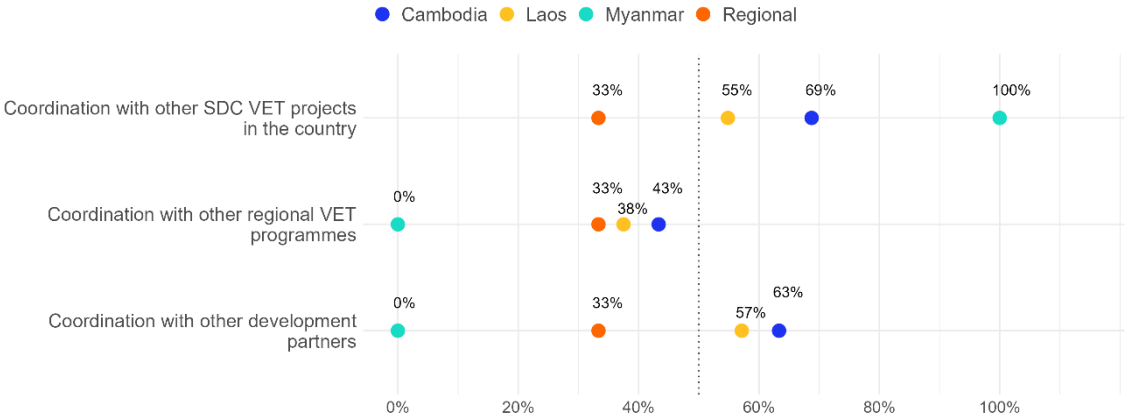


Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 31 participants. For Laos, based on responses from 59 and 55 participants, respectively For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 3 participants.



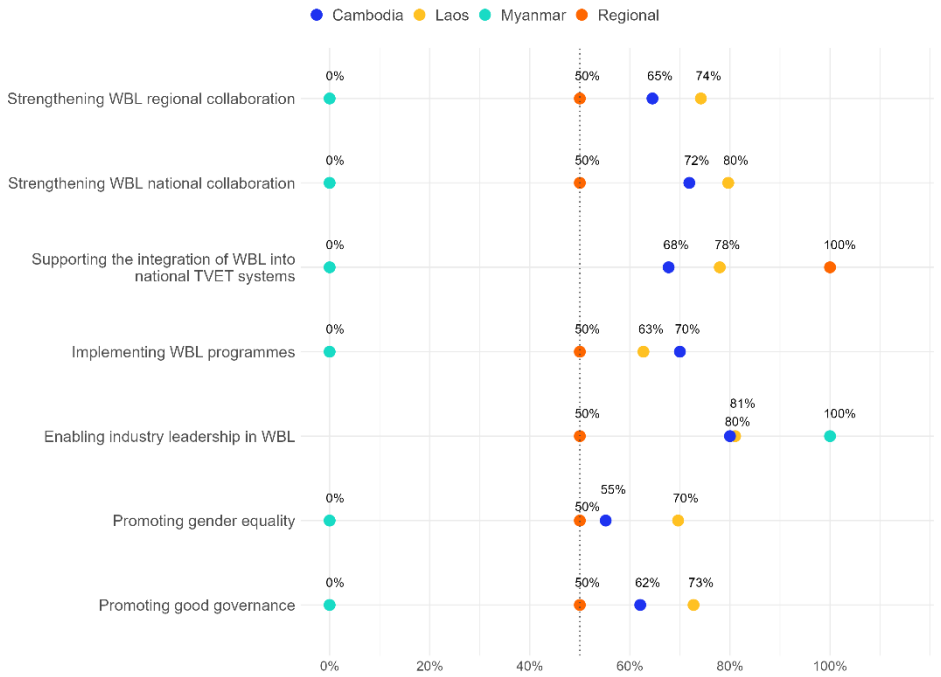
Note: For Government, based on responses from 47 and 43 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 13 participa For Private sector, based on responses from 25 participants. For Training provider, based on responses from 9 participants.

Coherence

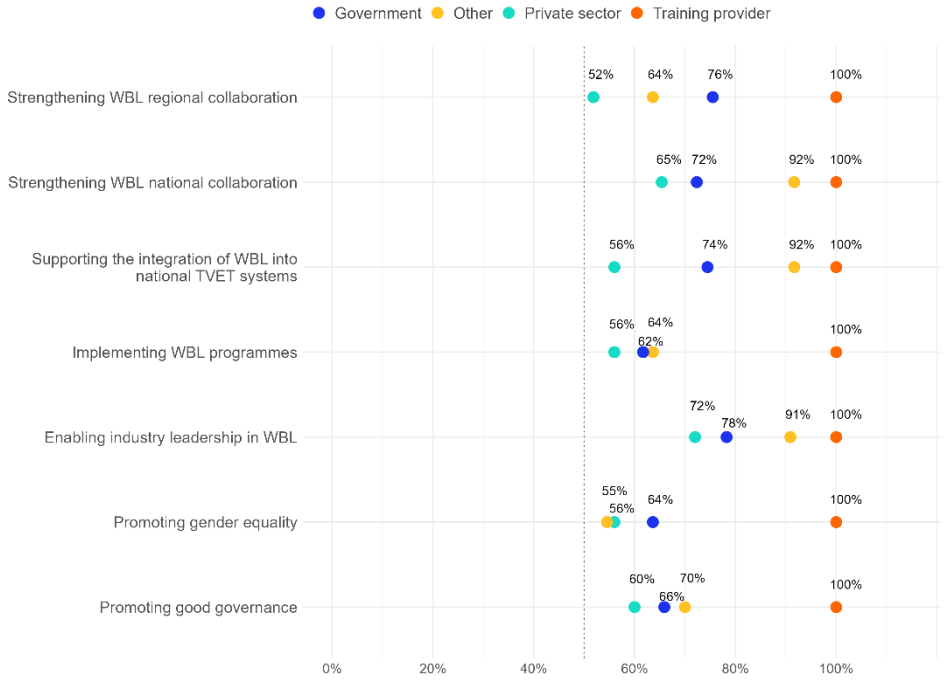


Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 32, 30, and 30 participants, respectively. For Laos, based on responses from 62, 56, an participants, respectively. For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 3 participants

Effectiveness

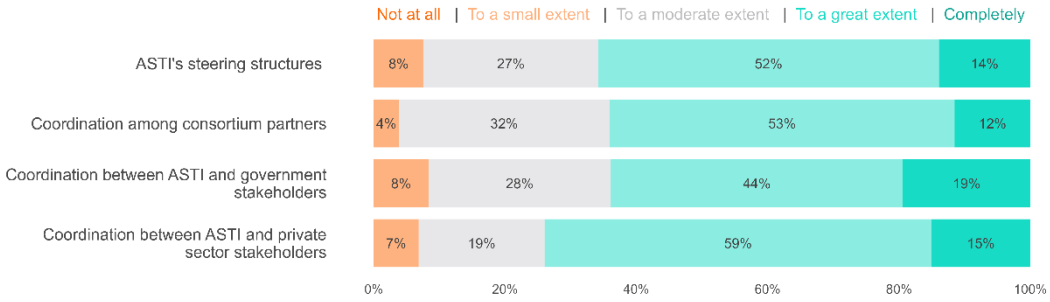


Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 31, 32, 31, 30, 30, 29, and 29 participants, respectively. For Laos, based on responses from 62, 59, 59, 59, 58, 56, and 55 participants, respectively. For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 2 participants.

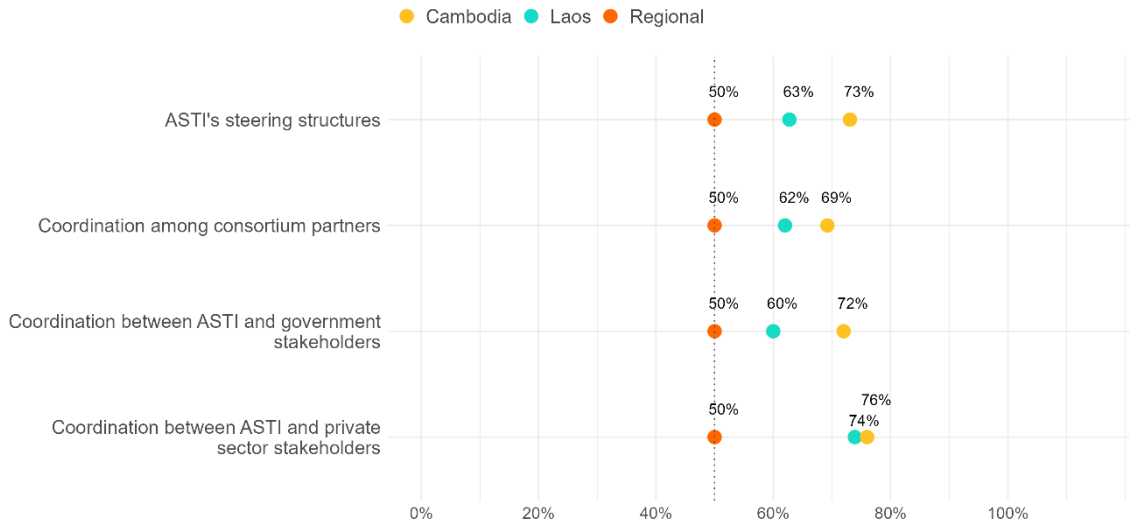


Note: For Government, based on responses from 49, 47, 47, 47, 46, 44, and 44 participants, respectively. For Other, based on respons from 11, 12, 12, 11, 11, 11, and 10 participants, respectively. For Private sector, based on responses from 27, 26, 25, 25, 25, 25, and 25 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 9, 9, 9, 9, 9, 8, and 8 participants, respectively.

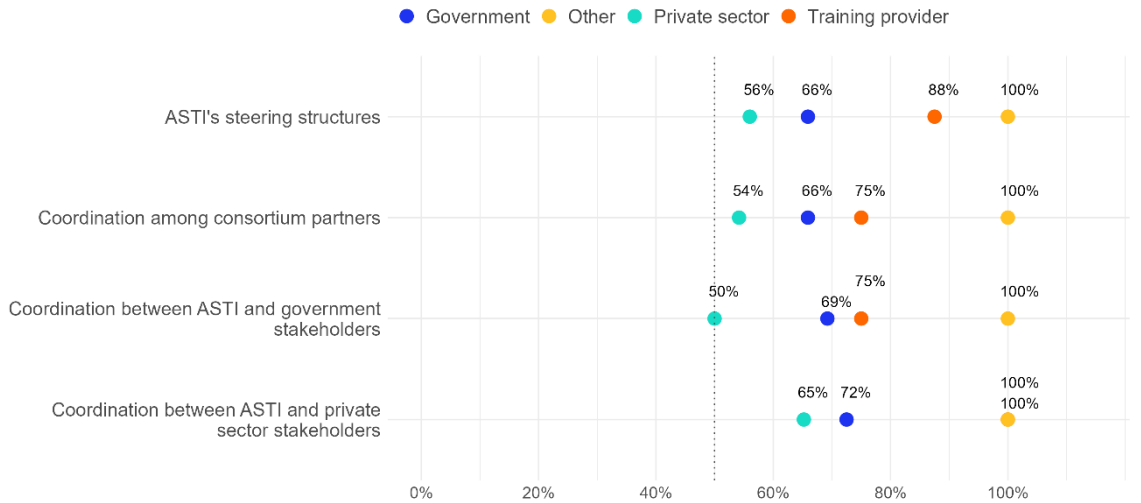
Efficiency



Note: Based on responses from 79, 78, 72, and 73 participants, respectively.

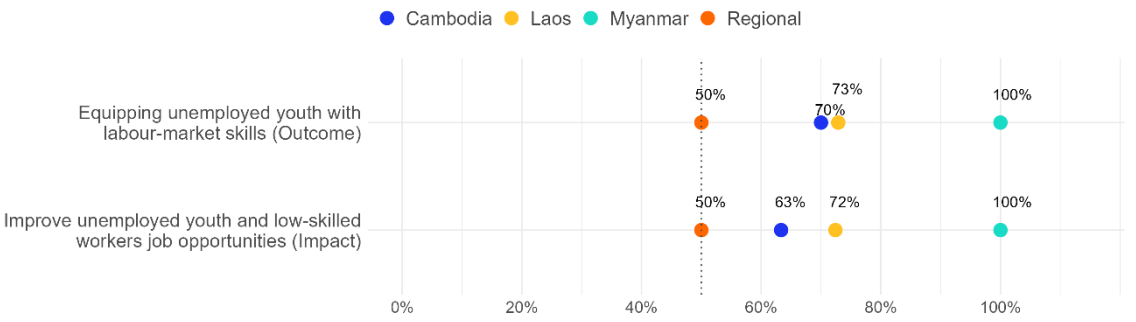


Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 26, 26, 25, and 25 participants, respectively. For Laos, based on responses from 51, 50 45, and 46 participants, respectively. For Regional, based on responses from 2 participants.



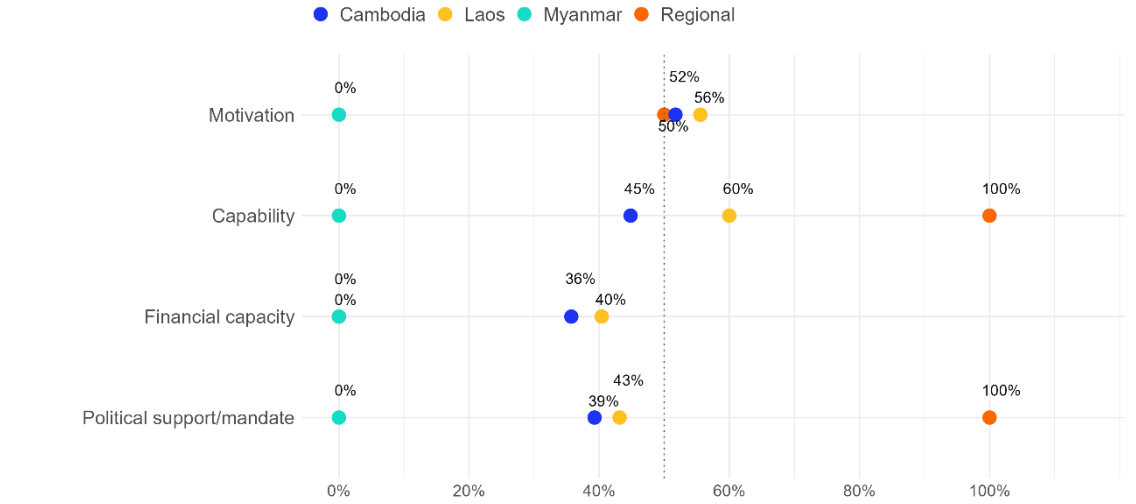
Note: For Government, based on responses from 44, 44, 39, and 40 participants, respectively. For Other, based on responses from 2, 2 1, and 2 participants, respectively. For Private sector, based on responses from 25, 24, 24, and 23 participants, respectively. For Training provider, based on responses from 8 participants.

Impact



Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 30 participants. For Laos, based on responses from 59 and 58 participants, respectively For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 2 participants.

Sustainability



Note: For Cambodia, based on responses from 29, 29, 28, and 28 participants, respectively. For Laos, based on responses from 54, 50 52, and 51 participants, respectively. For Myanmar, based on responses from 1 participants. For Regional, based on responses from 2 participants.

Annex 6: Assessment grid

The assessment grid below provides ratings for the elements identified as primary interests of the evaluation. Other elements, for which the evaluation gathered less evidence, are marked as 'not determined.' As the grid uses only four fixed scores, these ratings may differ slightly from those presented in the conclusion chapter, where decimal values have been applied.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
1 Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things? Summary: The extent to which the intervention's objectives and design (at the time of design and at time of evaluation) respond to beneficiaries' and involved stakeholders' needs and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. *Note: Understanding gendered power dynamics and reflecting on the SDG commitment to "leave no one behind" are crucial in understanding relevance.*	*Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.*	
1.1 ***Responsiveness to needs, policies and priorities***: the extent to which the objectives (at output, outcome and impact levels) of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries (target group), involved stakeholders (involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention) and, when relevant, to indirectly affected stakeholders (e.g. civil society, etc.). *Note: A particular emphasis should be placed on beneficiaries. If there are trade-offs, please describe them in the justification.*	0 - not determined	In the evaluation team's view, it is still too early to assess Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, and Sustainability, as these depend on the project's eventual proof of concept. This will need to be demonstrated through the implementation of a pilot and the collection of credible evidence.
1.2 ***Sensitiveness and responsiveness to the context and capacities of the beneficiaries and involved stakeholders***: the extent to which the context was considered in the design of the intervention (e.g. economic, environmental, equity, social, cultural, political economy and last but not least capacity considerations). *Note: Evaluators are encouraged to describe which contextual factors are most pertinent to the intervention.*	3 - unsatisfactory	The design failed to assess private-sector and learner interest, define realistic employment outcomes, or establish sustainable incentive and cost-sharing mechanisms. Its regional strategy lacked clear objectives and coherence, and it did not clarify how ASTI would align with existing initiatives or contribute to broader reform efforts.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
1.3 ***Quality of design****:* the extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as objectives and their related indicators, logframe, theory of change including related assumptions, choice of services and intervention partners, exit strategy) reflect the needs and priorities of the target group, are appropriate, realistic, clearly defined, measurable and feasible (technical, organisational and financial feasibility). *Note: the exit strategy should be planed from the outset of the intervention to ensure the continuation of positive effects as intended, whilst allowing for changes in contextual conditions.*	3 - unsatisfactory	See discussion under 1.2. In addition, by trying to pilot, systematise, and scale multiple components at once, the project overstretched its management and financial capacity, with resources ultimately misaligned to its ambitions.
1.4 ***Adaptation over time****:* the extent to which the intervention has meaningfully adapted to changes over the course of its lifespan (e.g. evolving policy and economic contexts, change of funding, new opportunities, outbreaks of conflict or pandemic, etc.).	0 - not determined	Operating in a dynamic context marked by both ongoing and emerging challenges, the project's ambitions have remained highly relevant — and in some cases have gained even greater importance (e.g., enrolment crisis in Lao PDR's TVET colleges, reintegration of returning migrants in Cambodia). At the same time, survey respondents identified adaptability as a hindering factor. Lack of adaptability might have contributed to the delays. Overall, it seems too early to assess adaptation over time given that implementation has only began in 2024.
2 Coherence: How well does the intervention fit? Summary: The compatibility of the evaluated intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution, i.e., the extent to which other interventions (in particular policies) support or undermine the intervention and vice versa.	*Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic*	

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
	mean of sub-criteria.	
2.1 ***Internal policy alignment***: the extent to which the intervention aligns with the wider policy frameworks of the Swiss Development Cooperation, including the most recent Swiss international cooperation strategy overall and at country level, as well as to relevant international norms and standards to which Switzerland adheres (international law, international agreements, etc.).	0 - not determined	Not covered by the evaluation questions.
2.2 ***Internal compatibility***: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country/region and thematic field (consistency, complementarity, synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts, subsidiarity). *Note: if feasible, evaluators are encouraged to also take into account compatibility with the interventions of different levels / departments of the Swiss government in the same operating context (e.g.: development, diplomacy, trade, security, etc.)*	3 - unsatisfactory	ASTI operates in a crowded TVET landscape in Cambodia and Lao PDR, where multiple donor-funded projects already promote dual training, RPL, and private sector interaction. Coordination remains largely ad hoc, with overlapping workstreams despite general alignment. In Cambodia, government leadership has improved, yet coordination still relies on informal exchanges; in Lao PDR, collaboration is fragmented and personality-driven.
2.3 ***External compatibility***: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity, synergies, overlaps and gaps, value-added, use of existing systems and structures for implementing activities, harmonization, coordination, etc.).	3 - unsatisfactory	See explanation above, which holds true for both internal and external compatibility. In addition, it can be noted that there is limited engagement with regional programmes (not funded through Switzerland) like RECOTwin has further constrained policy influence.
3 Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives? Summary: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and its results,	*Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically*	

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
including any differential results across groups.	*be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.*	
3.1 ***Achievement of objectives***: The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes) as originally planned (or as modified to cater for changes in the environment), including its transversal objectives (e.g. gender, climate) *Note: If some – but not all – of the objectives were achieved the evaluators will need to examine their **relative importance** to draw conclusions on the effectiveness.*	0 - not determined	In the evaluation team's view, it is still too early to assess Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, and Sustainability, as these depend on the project's eventual proof of concept. This will need to be demonstrated through the implementation of a pilot and the collection of credible evidence. Many of the LogFrame targets are at risk to being achieved within the remaining timeframe – however, these delays are assessed as part of efficiency below.
3.2 ***Unintended effects***: The extent to which the intervention has responded adequately to the potential benefits/risks of the positive/negative unintended results.	0 - not determined	Not covered by the evaluation questions.
3.3 ***Differential results****:* the extent to which the intervention results (outcomes) were inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation.	0 - not determined	See comment above, too early to assess.
4 Efficiency: How well are resources being used? Summary: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.	*Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated.*	

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
4.1 ***Economic efficiency*:** The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (inputs outputs; inputs outcomes) in the most cost-efficient way possible (including allocation of resources between target groups and time periods; available options for purchasing inputs according to market conditions, etc.).	2 - satisfactory	While difficult to assess at this point given the uncertainties to what extent outputs and outcomes can be achieved (see discussion above), economic efficiency outside timeliness and operational efficiency (both captured below) seems satisfactory. Quality of project activities has at times come under strain, and is also at risk going forward, given the need to accelerate implementation.
4.2 ***Timeliness*:** The extent to which the intervention delivered the results (outputs, outcomes) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and the extent to which efforts were made to mitigate delays. *Note: in case timeliness was unsatisfactory for reasons outside of the intervention's control, the rating should still be unsatisfactory and explanation provided in the justification field.*	3 - unsatisfactory	Project delivery was delayed by both external and internal factors, including post-COVID disruptions, slow ministerial coordination, and a prolonged MoU process. Internally, unclear roles, fragmented consortium structures, and high staff turnover hindered implementation.
4.3 ***Operational efficiency***: The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.)	3 - unsatisfactory	Weak coordination within the consortium, unclear roles, and fragmented procedures for procurement and decision-making slowed delivery and resource use. Although disbursement accelerated in 2025, spending and redirection remained constrained by complex approval chains and limited managerial flexibility. Monitoring and risk management were reactive rather than strategic, with manual data systems and slow feedback loops limiting timely adjustments.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
5 Impact: What difference does the intervention make? Summary: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment. *Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual impacts (i.e. already evident) and foreseeable impacts.*	*Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.*	
5.1 ***Intended impacts*:** The extent to which the intended (planed and, where applicable, revised) 'higher-level effects' (i.e. lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention were (or are expected to be) achieved. *Note: also consider the extent to which the intervention contributed to "holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms" and transformational change (addressing root causes or systemic drivers of poverty, inequalities, exclusion and environmental damage).*	0 - not determined	In the evaluation team's view, it is still too early to assess Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, and Sustainability, as these depend on the project's eventual proof of concept. This will need to be demonstrated through the implementation of a pilot and the collection of credible evidence.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
5.2 ***Contribution to intended impacts:*** The extent to which the intervention actually contributed (or is expected to contribute) to the intended higher-level effects. *Note: results of contribution analysis, etc.*	0 - not determined	See comment above, too early to assess.
5.3 ***Unintended impacts***: Has the intervention brought about (or is it expected to bring about) any unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results? If yes, to what extent have these higher-level effects been positive (or are likely to be positive)? *Note: consider here any kind of unintended effects such as escalating or deescalating effect on a conflict or context of fragility, effect on the legitimacy of the state or non-state actors, effect on the inclusion or exclusion of vulnerable groups, unintended pollution, etc. If there wasn't any noteworthy unintended impact (higher-level effect), mark this question as non-applicable (n/a) and do not give a rating.*	0 - not determined	Not part of the evaluation questions.
5.4 ***Differential impact***: the extent to which the intervention's intended and unintended higher-level results (impacts) were (or are expected to be) inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and the extent to which key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability and leave-no-one-behind were taken into account during the implementation. *Note: Keep in mind that positive impacts overall can hide significant negative distributional effects.*	0 - not determined	See comment above, too early to assess.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	
6 Sustainability: Will the benefits last? Summary: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are	*Please do not write anything here. The DAC criteria score*	

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
likely to continue. Includes an examination of the enabling environment for sustainable development, i.e. financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analysis of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs. *Note: depending on the timing of the evaluation and the timescale of intended benefits, evaluators can assess for both actual sustainability (i.e. the continuation of net benefits created by the intervention that are already evident) and prospective sustainability (i.e. the net benefits for key stakeholders that are likely to continue into the future)*	*will automatically be calculated as the arithmetic mean of sub-criteria.*	
6.1 ***Capacity and resilience development***: The extent to which the beneficiaries and development partners have strengthened their capacities (at the individual, community, or institutional level), have the resilience to overcome future risks and external shocks that could jeopardise the intervention's results and have improved their ownership or political will.	2 - satisfactory	ASTI demonstrates growing momentum and strong stakeholder engagement, particularly around training for in-company trainers and trainers of trainers (ToT). The project is also strengthening the capacity of business chambers (CAMFEBA, IBC, LNCCI) through a learning-by-doing model, enabling them to take on more active implementation roles — though this shift has placed pressure on their limited internal resources. Despite these advances, the coordination capacity of the business chamber partners is still weak. This is reflected, for instance, in the confusion around project concepts and funding mechanisms, as well as in the quality of data collection.
6.2 ***Financial sustainability***: The extent to which development partners have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. increased national, and where applicable subnational, financial or budgetary commitments).	3 - unsatisfactory	Although it is still too early to assess sustainability overall, financial sustainability emerges as a significant risk going forward. Only a few companies have demonstrated willingness or capacity to finance system-wide functions such as certification, assessment, and coordination.

DAC criteria and SDC/SECO sub-criteria	Score	Justification
		While there is potential for co-financing through mechanisms like the Skills Development Fund and the TVET Development Fund, ensuring long-term financial sustainability is likely to remain a major challenge.
6.3 ***Contextual factors***: The extent to which the context is conducive to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. policy or strategy change; legislative reform; institutional reforms; governance reforms; increased accountability for public expenditures; improved processes for public consultation in development planning). *Note: It includes assessing the trade-offs associated between instant outcomes and potential longer-term effects as well as the trade-offs between financial, economic, social and environmental aspects.*	0 - not determined	See comment above, too early to assess.
7 General comments Summary: this section is only for free text (no score). The evaluator may provide an overall assessment of the evaluated intervention, explore and reflect on relationships and synergies between different criteria (this includes considering if and how they are causally related).		In the evaluation team's view, it is still too early to assess Relevance, Effectiveness, Impact, and Sustainability, as these depend on the project's eventual proof of concept. This will need to be demonstrated through the implementation of a pilot and the collection of credible evidence.

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Swiss Cooperation Office and Consular Agency in Cambodia

Ref. 7F-10255.01.34

Phnom Penh, 16 January 2026

Subject: SDC Management Response to the External Evaluation of ASTI Phase 1

Introduction

The present document states the position of the SDC regarding the recommendations stemming from the external evaluation of Phase 1 of the mandated project entitled "ASEAN-Swiss TVET Initiative" (ASTI). The project has been implemented since September 2022 by an international consortium comprising GIZ International Services (GIZ InS) and Helvetas.

This management response shall provide guidance for priority setting and decision-making during the remainder of ASTI Phase 1 and give orientations for the planning of a possible subsequent Phase 2. It will be published jointly with the final evaluation report on the Swiss Federal Government's Administration Research Actions Management Information System[1].

The external evaluation was conducted by the consultancy firm orange & teal, under the leadership of Mr. Micheal Morlok, from September to December 2025, based on mutually agreed terms of reference and in accordance with international evaluation standards. The evaluation process was managed by the SDC Office in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with a close involvement of other Swiss foreign representations in the region and thematic experts of the SDC.

The evaluation had the following two objectives: i) to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the ASTI Phase 1; and ii) to provide lessons learned and forward-looking recommendations for the design and implementation of ASTI Phase 2.

General appraisal of evaluation results

The SDC appreciates the comprehensiveness of the evaluation report and acknowledges the complexity of the exercise, which addressed a multifaceted, multi-stakeholder development intervention operating in three countries, combined with a regional (ASEAN) component.

First, we are pleased to note that the relevance of the project is confirmed. The project has generated significant interest among private sector partners and government counterparts for its hands-on, company-led learning and competency-based certification models.

We concur with the evaluation's general finding that the project is lagging behind important targets and needs to accelerate implementation, as well as to strengthen its monitoring system going forward. We also take careful note of the suggested improvements regarding the functioning of the consortium, outreach to relevant ASEAN stakeholders, and coordination with other regional and national vocational skills development projects.

We appreciate that the evaluation report clearly identifies current shortcomings and conceptual bottlenecks that need to be addressed to build a solid case for a second phase.

Overall, we believe the report provides valuable reflections and actionable recommendations in a constructive, forward-looking manner. The five recommendations are to some degree overlapping.

[1] ARAMIS; https://www.aramis.admin.ch/.

The evaluation process itself was smooth and implemented within a relatively short timeframe. Still, sufficient time was allocated to validate the initial evaluation findings and to consult the consortium and members of the ASEAN Secretariat on the draft conclusions and recommendations. The consultants made every effort to provide a nuanced and comprehensive analysis.

SDC fully agrees with three of the five recommendations set out by the evaluation team, and partially agrees with two of them, as summarized hereafter:

1. Accelerate implementation of WBL and RPL	
2. Strengthen evidence generation and generate credible proof of concept	
3. Design a second phase with a smaller, deeper, and evidence-driven focus	
4. Clarify and operationalise ASTI's regional ambitions for Phase 2	
5. Actively collaborate with other WBL (work-based learning) and RPL (recognition of prior learning) initiatives	

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

Separate responses to each recommendation with measures proposed by the SDC are provided in an Annex to this document.

Outlook

SDC takes the concerns raised by the evaluation team seriously and will ensure a rigorous and systematic follow-up of all proposed measures. In the coming months, the focus will be on establishing a clear and shared understanding of the project's WBL model, underpinned by robust data and documentation demonstrating the effectiveness and scalability of ASTI's dual vocational education and training arrangements. Discussions with the consortium lead (GIZ INS) have already commenced in this direction and will continue throughout Q1. This process is expected to provide a sound basis for an informed decision in April 2026 regarding the planning of a second project phase.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the consultant team, i.e. Mr. Michael Morlok, Ms. Ha-My Nguyen, Mr. Seyhah Ven, and Ms. Sunnti Duangtavanh as well as the SDC peer reviewer, Ms. Manuela Sells-Rohrbach for their precious work and commitment to this complex assignment.

Furthermore, our thanks go to the colleagues of GIZ InS and Helvetas for the smooth collaboration during all stages of the evaluation. Last but not least, we would like to thank all stakeholders associated with ASTI for their general engagement with the project over the past years and for their precious feedback provided during the evaluation process.

Mr. Christian Disler & Mr. Va Ros
Swiss Cooperation Office in Cambodia

Annex Overview of recommendations[2] and corresponding management response by the SDC, incl. proposed measures

Recommendation 1: Accelerate implementation of WBL and RPL		
Rationale: With less than a year remaining, ASTI's success depends on demonstrating that its WBL and RPL models can deliver measurable results in employability, productivity, and income. Acceleration is essential not only to validate the models' relevance and feasibility but also to build a sound evidence base for decisions on a potential second phase. Refocusing on proof of concept will help shift efforts from broad engagement toward practical demonstration, evidence generation, and lessons for scale-up.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
It is generally recognized that the project, in several respects, lags significantly behind the set targets. We agree that there is a need to develop a clear definition and classification of the WBL and RPL pilots implemented so far. It should be substantiated how successful these pilots have been (or not) in yielding tangible benefits for companies (productivity gains), workers (learning, income), and training institutions (industry relevance, demand), and whether they can be integrated into the formal TVET system at the country level. To enable such an appraisal, the project needs to collect comprehensive and credible data to inform reporting and to clarify the WBL model for future scale-up. In the medium-term, we expect ASTI and the BCPs to have a robust M&E system to track the impact of the applied WBL/RPL format(s), in particular in terms of employability, income, and continuous learning of the workers. We agree that at this stage a four-months no-cost extension of Phase 1 until the end of the year seems advisable. This would allow sufficient time for work on the proof of concept and a subsequent thorough planning of a second phase.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Come up with an interim "proof-of-concept"; develop country-specific clear typologies of the WBL model(s) piloted in Phase I so far	ASTI Team	31 March 2026
b) Review the implementation of the 2026 work plan	ASTI team	30 April 2026
c) Prepare all required documents for a no-cost extension of ASTI Phase 1 until 31.12.2026	ASTI Team, SDC	30 June 2026
Recommendation 2: Strengthen evidence generation and generate credible proof of concept		
Rationale: ASTI's current M&E system remains largely output-focused and insufficiently equipped to capture outcome-level results on employability, productivity, and income. Data collection is fragmented, with limited verification and weak feedback loops between implementation and learning. Strengthening M&E is essential to produce credible, verifiable evidence of what works and why. A robust proof of concept – supported by reliable data on results, costs, and benefits – will allow ASTI to demonstrate effectiveness, inform future investment, and guide decisions on scale-up and sustainability.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
We agree that the project, in cooperation with the different BCPs, must improve its M&E system to assess the impact of its WBL/RPL models, in particular with regard to the employability of learners/trainees as well as their income and learning outcomes. Data collection needs to be standardized and digital, and a dedicated (regional) M&E officer should be nominated. A cost–benefit analysis (CBA) shall also be conducted in due course and shared with relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, a rapid assessment of the existing Business Chamber Partners (BCPs) and participating companies (incl. case studies of pilot WBL implementation) would provide robust evidence of their ownership and interest in continuing WBL practices.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing

[2] As outlined in the evaluation report, p. 26-29.

a) Conduct a tracer study and cost-benefit analysis (CBA) assessing the impact of work-based learning (WBL)	ASTI team	30 June 2026
b) Conduct a rapid assessment of the BCPs and participating companies	ASTI team	Q3 2026
c) Re-visit the project set-up in terms of staffing, internal decision-making and thematic backstopping, and communication within the Consortium; consider placing a senior ASEAN liaison officer in Jakarta for Phase 2	ASTI team	Q2-3 2026

Recommendation 3: Design a second phase with a smaller, deeper, and evidence-driven focus

Rationale: ASTI's first phase demonstrated strong strategic relevance and partner engagement but was stretched across too many objectives, geographies and industries relative to its resources. A second phase should therefore consolidate learning and focus on deepening impact in fewer, well-defined areas. Building on the proof of concept, this phase should prioritize strengthening institutional and financial mechanisms that make WBL and RPL sustainable and scalable. A more focused approach will enable meaningful support of systemic change models, strengthen national ownership, and create a clearer pathway to long-term sustainability.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

We agree in principle with this recommendation and also believe that the project should refine and narrow the number of sectors and occupations for targeted scale-up in a possible phase 2. It could indeed make sense to add additional levels of competencies, where relevant, by moving from VC/L1 to L2/L3 levels.

Otherwise, we believe that the geographic scope and regional dimension of the project shall remain.

In view of a possible phase 2, the targeted sectors and occupations should therefore be re-assessed/confirmed. This means a thorough analysis of WBL courses and sectors—including their content, training delivery modes, market relevance—should be conducted, as this is crucial for investment decisions and the success of WBL, incl. its the integration of WBL into the formal TVET system.

In connection with the above, the partnerships with TVET institutions in Cambodia and Lao PDR should be reviewed, also to avoid overlap and seek complementarity with other, existing TVET programs. ASTI might also want to reassess its target beneficiary groups and consider engaging with additional business associations to expand the number of participating companies.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Reassess and conduct thorough analysis of WBL sectors and courses	ASTI team	Q3 2026
b) Revisit the roles and task distribution among the different consortium offices, sub-contractors, TVET institutions, and BCPs.	ASTI team	Q3 2026

Recommendation 4: Clarify and operationalise ASTI's regional ambitions for Phase 2

Rationale: ASTI's regional dimension has been conceptually important but practically underdeveloped. While the project aligns well with ASEAN's agenda, its regional role, partnerships, and expected outcomes have remained only loosely defined. Clarifying Switzerland's strategic ambition for ASTI at the regional level – including how it complements efforts in CLM countries – will be essential to guide realistic planning for a second phase.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

Delays in national implementation and limited human resources as well as a lack of strategic outreach by the GIZ InS regional project management have led to lower-than-expected engagement of the project at ASEAN level.

The regional ambition of the project might not have been outlined in detail in ASTI's founding documents. We believe, however, that there is a shared understanding between ASEC and SDC that the regional dimension of ASTI lies, first of all, in the exchange of know-how and good practice among ASEAN member states on how to effectively shape and implement work-based learning (dual VET), with the idea that such mutual learning can take place both bottom-up (with the three ASTI pilot

countries sharing their WBL arrangements with the other member states) and top-down (with advanced countries such as Singapore or Indonesia sharing insights into their VET systems and practices with CLM[3]). Secondly, the project shall serve as a regional thematic platform and a support mechanism for ASEAN and its institutions, namely the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC; in particular IAI/NDG Division), the ASEAN TVET Council (ATC), the Senior Officials Meeting on Education (SOMED), and the ASEAN Confederation of Employment (ACE).

It is true that the project so far has not delivered on these promises. While we believe the general strategic set-up / design of the project remains valid, we agree that the project's regional ambition needs indeed to be reconfirmed and adequately captured in the intervention strategy/logframe of a potential second phase. It must also be clarified, jointly with ASEAN, how the project can meaningfully support the ATC and ASEC and their respective policy frameworks and work plans.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Consult relevant ASEAN bodies for defining ASTI's role in supporting relevant frameworks/work plans	ASTI team, ASEC	Q2 2026
b) Re-clarify ASTI's regional component and reflect it in the ProDoc for Phase 2	SDC, ASEC, ASTI team	Q2-3 2026

Recommendation 5: Actively collaborate with other WBL and RPL initiatives

Rationale: ASTI operates in a crowded landscape of national and regional actors pursuing similar objectives in WBL and RPL. Coordination among these initiatives remains limited. Strengthening collaboration would help ASTI avoid duplication, enhance policy coherence, and leverage complementary expertise and resources. This is particularly important given the modest resources at ASTI's disposal.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

We agree that, to date, the project has been rather self-contained and has devoted limited effort to outreach and to seeking synergies with other relevant VSD initiatives, both at the national (CLM) and regional (ASEAN) levels.

In line with its regional ambition, ASTI should indeed invest more resources in facilitating effective knowledge management, peer-to-peer learning, and the sharing of WBL practices among ASEAN Member States, in close collaboration with relevant ASEAN bodies. Efforts to enable private sector stakeholders from Myanmar to participate in relevant capacity development activities in Cambodia and Lao PDR should be accelerated. At the same time, we concur with the evaluators that project implementation in Myanmar has the potential to generate valuable lessons for ASEAN and beyond on how to apply non-state VSD delivery in an emergency or fragile context.

A rapid light actor/stakeholder mapping could help in getting more clarity about other relevant regional and national projects, actors and coordination mechanisms with a focus on dual VET, and thereby to assess where there are existing gaps where ASTI can provide added value. This is also related to the response to recommendation #4.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Conduct a rapid mapping of relevant VSD projects at both national and regional levels for future collaboration and coordination	ASTI team	Q1 2026
b) Develop communication / outreach strategy with e.g. quarterly newsletters, LinkedIn account etc. to enhance both knowledge-sharing and visibility of the project	ASTI team	Q1-2 2026

[3] Commonly used abbreviation for Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar.