



Evaluation 2011/2

SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities



Evaluation of

SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities

Commissioned by the Corporate Controlling Section
of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

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Bern, June 2011

Evaluation Process

Evaluations commissioned by SDC Senior Management were introduced in SDC in 2002 with the aim of providing a more critical and independent assessment of SDC activities. Joint SDC/SECO programs are evaluated jointly. These Evaluations are conducted according to the OECD DAC Evaluation Standards and are part of SDC's concept for implementing Article 170 of the Swiss Constitution which requires Swiss Federal Offices to analyse the effectiveness of their activities. SDC's **Senior Management** (consisting of the Director General and the heads of SDC's departments) approves the Evaluation Program. The **Corporate Controlling Section**, which is outside of line management and reports directly to the Director General, commissions the evaluation, taking care to recruit evaluators with a critical distance from SDC.

The Corporate Controlling Section identifies the primary intended users of the evaluation and invites them to participate in a **Core Learning Partnership (CLP)**. The CLP actively accompanies the evaluation process. It comments on the evaluation design (Approach Paper). It provides feedback to the evaluation team on their preliminary findings and on the draft report.

During a one day Synthesis Workshop, the CLP validated the evaluation findings and conclusions and, with the facilitation of the SDC Evaluation Officer and a representative of the Evaluation Team, elaborated recommendations and lessons learned for SDC from their perspective. These are noted in the **Agreement at Completion Point (ACP)**. Based on the **Final Evaluator's Report** and the ACP the ad-interim Head of Regional Cooperation (the department in which the Focal Point for VSD is located) drafted the **Senior Management Response (SMR)**. The SMR was subsequently approved by SDC's Senior Management. The SMR lays out specific, time-bound measures and those for executing them.

The ACP and the SMR are published together with the Final Evaluators' Report. For further details regarding the evaluation process see the Approach Paper in the CD attached.

Timetable

Step	When
Evaluation Programme approved by Senior Management	September 2009
Approach Paper finalized	April 2010
Implementation of the evaluation	August – December 2010
Agreement at Completion Point	March 2011
Senior Management Response in SDC	April 2011

I Long Evaluation Abstract

Donor	SDC
Report Title	Evaluation of SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities
Geographic Area	Albania, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Mali, Moldova, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru
Sector	Education / Employment & Income
Language	English
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Subject Description

The report presents the findings of an external evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) Vocational Skills Development activities. The evaluation portfolio covered 10 projects and programmes in 9 countries (Albania, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Mali, Moldova, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru). The report is structured along the lines of the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria.

Evaluation Methodology

This global-level sector analysis is based on information on ten projects. Four of these projects were reviewed on the basis of fieldwork, and six on the basis of documentary analysis. Four of the latter were executed as comprehensive case studies; for the remaining two, brief meta-evaluations of two to three pages were produced.

In the context of fieldwork, data for a complementary quantitative analysis were collected in three countries, where tracer studies were implemented. Quantitative data from surveys were primarily analysed in the form of descriptive statistics and statistical tests based on the comparison of means. For Burkina Faso, the simple comparison of means was complemented by propensity score matching. The four field studies were also based on qualitative data from two sources: firstly, documents such as credit proposals, previous reports etc. to which the evaluation team had access, and secondly, interviews with stakeholders who were associated with the VSD activities. Additionally, consultants conducted interviews with beneficiaries, who were generally selected from among those who had been interviewed for the surveys. Interviews with employers were also conducted in a similar way.

Findings and Conclusions

Overall, SDC's VSD activities can be rated as 'satisfactory'. The main strength of the programmes under review is their strong orientation towards the needs of their respective national and local contexts, with an awareness of labour market realities. Strong labour market-orientation is also the basis for the contribution to higher employment by SDC's

VSD activities, as well as for their achievements in the domain of more fundamental changes to VSD systems. The main weakness of activities under review is that target populations are not always being reached, particularly when it comes to socio-economically disadvantaged people and females. In a similar vein, evidence from this report shows that many of the activities are not contributing to higher incomes in a significant way. As we have seen, achieving impact remains a challenge, even more so if a long-term perspective is adopted. In order to continue to achieve satisfactory results, it will therefore be important to focus on the key strengths of SDC's VSD activities, i.e. the strong context orientation and the efforts to involve representatives from the world of work (notably employers and self-employed) in planning and delivery of training. In order to *improve* performance, however, the team believes that it will be important to increase efforts to constantly and holistically monitor the effects of interventions, not only at the level of individual projects, but also across regions.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The evaluation recommended that:

- A more comprehensive and differentiated VSD strategy needs to be developed, that makes explicit reference to secondary and higher education and also conceptualises VSD as a contribution to economic change.
- A more realistic and sustainable approach to the dual model, as well as a more differentiated approach to qualifications frameworks, needs to be developed.
- In the case of non-formal VSD programmes that support beneficiaries' access to self-employment, not only by offering training but also by providing necessary equipment and/or financial capital, funding for these additional benefits must not be provided at the cost of reducing outreach. Under such circumstances, promotion of micro-credit schemes seems to be particularly promising.
- When pre-vocational training is being supported, it should be ensured that representatives of the respective economic sectors (co-) finance equipment and consumables.
- Project design, implementation and evaluation processes need to be more streamlined.
- Access of women to VSD programmes needs to be ensured.
- SDC should insist on the formulation of exit strategies as early as at the credit proposal stage.
- Comprehensive inception phases are important. These should more systematically consider political-administrative structures and existing training cultures, and assess the underlying motivations of key stakeholders to engage in fundamental changes to VSD systems.
- Lastly, it will be important to strengthen the networks in charge of VSD.

II Senior Management Response to the Evaluation of SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities

SDC Senior Management takes note of the final draft report "Evaluation of SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities" dated 21st of March 2011 and the final draft of the "Agreement at Completion Point of the Core Learning Group (CLP) dated 25th of March 2011. Management thanks all those involved for the thorough work and identification of opportunities for improvement in SDC's engagement in Vocational Skills Development (VSD). It appreciates the quality of the report in terms of content, structure and readability. It notes that this exercise is among the first thematic evaluations since the reorganization 2008 of SDC. Hence, many of the findings and recommendations relating to the functioning of networks and knowledge management are relevant for SDC's thematic work in general.

The positive assessment of SDC's VSD activities is appreciated. Good adaptation to the local context, strong labour market orientation and private sector involvement in defining VSD contents should remain trademarks of SDC's approach.

Management generally supports the recommendations of the CLP concerning the priorities for change proposed by the evaluators. The following points are particularly important and require action:

1. VSD Priority – Portfolio Overview

Currently only 1% of bilateral Swiss ODA, as reported to OECD, is classified as VSD. This seems very little, given SDC's track record, comparative advantage and the high acceptance of VSD among politicians and the Swiss public at large. However, data do not reflect the reality. Many VSD activities are "hidden" under the labels Higher Education or Employment & Income. There is **no clear overview** of SDC's VSD portfolio because of **poor data quality** and more importantly because of divergent understanding of what VSD is and what it is not.

- The division heads responsible for Education and Employment & Income, and the respective focal points will develop till end of June 2011 a clear guidance on how to harmonize across all operational units VSD definition, SAP data entry and documentation. The directorate calls responsible operational staff to exercise due care when encoding new project phases in SAP database.
- The operational lines are responsible for checking data quality.
- The more accurate overview of SDC's current investment in VSD informs the strategic discussion regarding the future priority of VSD under the 2013-16 message to parliament.

2. SDC positioning regarding the dual VSD model

The evaluators provide ample evidence and arguments that a narrow application of the Swiss dual model does not work in many development contexts and stresses the importance of context-specificity. However, key determinants of SDC's VSD projects are also key characteristics of the dual model such as the importance given to hands-on learning, labour market orientation and private sector involvement. Using dual model elements, adapting them to the local context and targeting the poor produce the expected development impact.

- Position SDC's engagement in VSD as a localized adaptation of the dual model. Stress commons rather than differences in our communication in Switzerland.

3. Specific points regarding future directions in VSD

SDC's VSD activities score very well in terms employment results, much better than the more costly and less inclusive formal vocational training programs. The focus is often on short-term skill needs in more traditional economic sectors, such as the artisanal sector, yielding good results in terms of employability and ensuring a strong poverty and rural focus.

- Maintain a strong employment orientation, emphasizing access of poor and marginalized people to VSD.

However, such approach pays little attention to the potential **contribution of VSD to economic development** and to address skill needs of modern, critical economic sectors. For example, greening economic development and contributing to the shift towards low-carbon growth requires also skills development in relevant economic sectors. This would require a different approach, by developing for example ventures between technical institutions at the post-secondary level and the modern private sector. The scope for apprenticeship in "modern" industries and for establishing public private development partnerships (PPDP) would increase. The downside of such approach would be the much higher cost per trainee.

- Where the contextual situation permits, develop specific VSD projects in critical sectors for sustainable economic development, including possibilities for PPDP.

Gender aspects are critically important in VSD programs because of the gender-biased segregation of labour markets. Most of SDC's VSD activities have an explicit gender focus. Nevertheless, integrating female trainees into gainful employment remains difficult. The evaluators propose several ways to address the problem, such as linking VSD activities with other measures of economic development in order to promote woman self-employment or by promoting VSD of females for more qualified occupations in modern economic sectors.

- Deepen the gender focus in VSD activities taking into account the evaluators recommendations.

In some cases, informal basic education programs include a specific VSD component. The programs contributed to better integration of marginalized groups into rural labour markets. To a large extent this positive outcome is explained by the acquired literacy skills and the fact, that imparting broad life skills, including some professional skills, helped preparing program beneficiaries for the rural life. However, if the objective was also to improve employment and income, such basic education programs with VSD components would have to be followed by further vocational training or coupled with measures (such as micro-credits) that stimulate self-employment.

- Clarify the purpose, the expected results and the role of such "pre-VSD" components within the countries education and VSD systems and within SDCs VSD "strategy".

Management asks the division heads responsible for VSD and Education to ensure discussion of the evaluation results and management decisions stipulated under points 2 and 3 above in the respective networks, to define ways to respond to recommendations and to assess whether or not a revision or an updating of the **Guidelines for Education and VSD** (2008) is needed.

4. Implementation and Quality issues

Both evaluators and CLP point out a number of opportunities to improve implementation. Senior Management agrees to strengthen, under the lead of the network Focal Points for Education and Employment & Income, the following:

- Design comprehensive **inception phases** to better understand the motivations, interests of key stakeholders and the existing training culture. This would help to define what can realistically be achieved at the policy level, and ensure better sustainability prospects for the policy and education system dimensions of VSD programs.
- Consider developing of a few **standard indicators** as well as principles for monitoring and results measurement. Despite the diversity in SDC's VSD portfolio some standardization is useful for promoting learning and for improving reporting across SDC.

5. Networking and Knowledge management

The reports are rich in terms of lessons and suggestions for improving knowledge management covering aspects like role of focal points, thematic quality assurance, standard setting, thematic human resources etc., many of which are already addressed in the paper "tasks, competencies and responsibilities in thematic quality assurance", approved by Management.

- The network status report due in June 2011 has to take on board the lessons from this evaluation together with other inputs to be provided by thematic leaders and focal points.

6. Network architecture – where to root VSD?

The evaluation clearly shows that VSD requires a combination of competencies in Education and Employment & Income. In that sense, it is essential, that there is a fluid exchange between both networks and that staff working on VSD combine both dimensions. Whether to integrate VSD into the Education network, leave it with Employment & Income or create a separate network cannot be addressed in isolation and without **considering the overall network structure**, the discussion on thematic careers and considerations about the number of networks a small organization like SDC can realistically manage.

- Management asks the division "Knowledge and learning processes" to prepare, in collaboration with Focal Points and thematic leaders, an input paper for future discussions on SDC's overall network architecture, taking into account the lessons from the VSD evaluation as well as experiences from other networks.

Agreement at Completion Point (ACP) of the Core Learning Partnership (CLP)

General Appreciation

The CLP estimates the present external evaluation report on SDC's Vocational Skills Development (VSD) Activities as being a well structured and careful synthesis of the underlying case studies. Furthermore, the CLP appreciates having been invited to comment on the inception report as well as on the preliminary findings of the study. The CLP likes to start with some general remarks and appreciations on the evaluation report as a whole:

- This evaluation report is one of the very first external evaluations at thematic level since SDC restructuring in 2008 (Reo08). Some of its findings are therefore not only valid and relevant for VSD but also for the thematic work within SDC in general. The aspects pertaining to quality assurance and project cycle management (PCM), human and financial resource, as well as the concrete functioning of networks, need to be discussed at institutional level.
- The evaluation raises questions on the thematic rooting of VSD within the thematic structure of SDC and points out certain institutional ambiguities. Traditionally aspects of VSD are part of programmes in Employment & Income, in Education and often also in Rural Development sector. In the current proposal for the new message to the parliament VSD and education are however presented as one theme. To what extent this implies changes in network structures, is still open and subject to management decisions.
- The CLP acknowledges the difficulties encountered by the evaluation team (ET) during the portfolio selection. From the beginning, it was intentional to exclude agricultural training following SDCs internal task sharing. The ambiguities regarding general secondary and higher education instead had not been foreseen. The fuzziness was not only due to an unclear separation of the different subsectors, but also to inconsistencies in data quality and data management in the SAP database.
- The selection of single projects directed the evaluation towards a rather eclectic view of SDCs VSD activities. While in several countries different projects with separate goals and levels of intervention are intentionally interwoven in a programme approach, the choice of single projects for the evaluation did not reflect this fact sufficiently. In the case of Burkina Faso, the evaluation team tried to address this problem by looking at different projects in the field of VSD and their interconnectedness.
- Based on the available results data, the evaluation does not allow drawing conclusions regarding outcomes and impact of VSD activities at an aggregated level for SDC as a whole. Although the ET compiled a table with the data available in the projects, general statements about the whole of SDC performance were not made.
- The CLP acknowledges the low quality of data available in most of the projects and the difficulties for the evaluation team to follow a scientific approach for the evaluation. The development of functional monitoring systems and the need to systematically gather baseline data (including gender aspects) will be one of the most important areas to be improved in the future.

- The evaluation team proposed as one element of its methodological approach “semi-quantitative” analysis. As mentioned in the report, limitations on the reliability of the analysis are rather high. As a result, the CLP has difficulties to judge the advantages and the added value of the proposed methodology. For the time being, a lesson learned for future evaluations is that proposed quantitative methodologies have to be carefully crosschecked against the available baseline and monitoring data quality.
- The CLP takes note of the weak coverage of specific gender aspects and questions in the evaluation report. As gender is of special relevance in the field of VSD, it would be important to have gained specific insights into gender related questions that go beyond the proportion of women and men participating in training.
- The CLP observes different levels of quality in the case studies underlying the evaluation report. While the CLP agrees on the fact that an independent evaluator expresses his own appreciations, which may contrast with the ones of SDC staff, it expects that conflicting opinions are equitably reflected in the report. At least in one case, the allusive style hampers a constructive drawing of conclusions, although many points raised deserve consideration.

Lessons learned und recommendations

The CLP discussed the priorities for change as formulated by the ET and has drawn conclusions for the future work of SDC in the field of Vocational Skills Development. In order to facilitate the overview of the different fields of action, the CLP has structured 14 recommendations in 4 areas.

a) Recommendations regarding organisational issues

Two of the three points raised in this chapter are not only applicable to VSD, but also to other rather thematic areas, as a consequence of SDC restructuring. These points need therefore to be tackled as part of a broader discussion on the role and position of thematic work within SDC.

- **Joint learning and knowledge management:** The processes for knowledge management and institutional learning need to be strengthened. Steps have to be taken at institutional level, following the Reo08.
 1. However, the **CLP recommends to strengthening knowledge management further**, by deepening peer exchanges through the networks, thematic training of staff and a documentation system which allows interested staff to easily access the most relevant thematic documents (project descriptions, case studies, evaluations and other studies).
- **Roles, tasks, competencies and responsibilities of Focal points:** The roles, tasks, competencies and responsibilities for quality assurance in VSD need better definition and distinction between Focal Points, thematic programme managers in the geographic division and regional advisors located in the regions. The CLP acknowledges, that during Reo08 steps have been taken to further clarify these points, but underlines the fact, that the implementation and the strengthening of the thematic quality assurance needs constant monitoring and support by all levels of SDC's management.

2. **The CLP recommends a) to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different thematic actors** based on the SDC document on “Tasks, Competencies and Responsibilities in Thematic Quality Assurance” from December 22nd 2010 and b) to follow up with its implementation as part of the status reports done by the division Knowledge and Learning Processes.
- **Structure of thematic networks:** Currently within SDC institutional structure, VSD is considered one of the three main areas of work within Employment & Income - network. The rationale is to ensure the link between VSD and the corresponding economies. However, in practice, different other networks are concerned directly with skills development and education. This is the case for rural skills development in the Rural Development Network but also for Education network, (e.g. links between basic education and vocational education in the non-formal education programmes in Western Africa, Bangladesh and Latin America).

The CLP agrees on the fact that this situation leads to duplications and ambiguities. However its position remains divided: does this situation need structural adjustments within SDC or should this diversity be preserved as bases for a multifaceted approach?

On this issue the CLP did not find a common position, but all the different solutions proposed by the evaluation team had its followers. Some members prefer the status quo, with a close collaboration between the networks Employment & Income and Education, (considering the crucial role of a strong market orientation of VSD). Others suggest creating a single network “Education”, which would comprise all VSD activities, and a clear focus on VSD thereby contributing to thematic concentration.

Importance and weight to be given to VSD as a thematic focus are part of a strategic decision by SDC’s management. **The CLP underlines the need for sufficient human resources in case of an increased weight of the theme VSD.**

b) Recommendations regarding Project cycle management

- **Common standards regarding streamlining project design, implementation and evaluation processes:** The evaluation team suggests common standards regarding streamlining project design, implementation and evaluation processes. The CLP agrees on the requirements for a more concise project cycle management, (for instance the request to have sound baselines and to define reporting requirements for partners). The CLP doubts however, that one single standard can represent all the different approaches chosen in the highly context specific VSD projects.
3. **The CLP recommends that SDC should agree on certain common principles, levels of monitoring and dimensions of monitoring systems (economic, social and political aspects).** In this sense, the need to have better systems in result measurement and reporting is already widely acknowledged. This issue will be at the heart of the next face-to-face-meeting of the Employment & Income - network in May 2011, with an internal training on result measurement and the establishment of a working plan on result measurement in VSD.
 - **SAP data quality for portfolio management purposes:** For the evaluation team, the poor data quality deriving from the SAP-System (and project documentation more generally) was one of the major constraints identified. The CLP agrees on the fact that, at present, SAP is not delivering the information needed with the level of detail and flexibility required by users.

This fact applies to all themes in SDC, but is more accentuated in the case of VSD. VSD is treated as a subsector of the Education sector in the SAP database, whereas institutionally and programmatically within SDC the link to Employment & Income is more strongly accentuated. Thus, several projects are not classified as VSD projects, but rather as Employment & Income or Rural Development projects.

4. **The CLP** assumes that the reason for the high percentages for secondary and higher education mentioned by the ET lie in this fuzziness, but agrees on the need for further analysis and **recommends that the Focal Points “Education” and “VSD” are given the mandate to clarify the data regarding of the VSD.**

c) Recommendations regarding the thematic orientation of SDC VSD portfolio

The CLP takes note that most of the priorities for change on thematic orientation focus on interventions in the formal sector while a big part of SDC's projects address the non-formal economies and education systems. This focus is a sign of SDC's orientation on poverty alleviation and rural development as core elements of SDC's policies. What might be seen as a contradiction is rather one of the basic debates in development work; should interventions tackle poverty directly (having the poorest as sole direct beneficiaries) or should support be indirect, benefiting to the system in broader terms and promoting economic growth while the impact on the poor may be indirect and take longer to materialise but in a more sustainable manner?

- **VSD strategy:** The CLP takes note of the ET's proposal to develop a more comprehensive VSD strategy.
5. **The CLP recommends reviewing the existing guidelines for basic education and vocational skills development and making** changes following the decisions taken based on this evaluation.
- **Productivity increase:** The CLP agrees on the importance of linking VSD activities to future income opportunities, therefore increasing the relevance of training programmes. Depending on target groups, geographical focus and economic situation, intervention strategies and scope may differ considerably, however.
6. While the evaluation team supports a stronger focus on productivity increase, **the CLP recommends keeping a more general focus on economic and social development.** The latter can often not be covered by VSD interventions only, but needs a complementary programmatic approach with corresponding measures in economic and social development.
- **Higher technical education:** The proposal of the evaluation team to intervene in the higher technical education would, in the view of the CLP, not replace existing intervention strategies, but rather complement them.
7. **In this sense the CLP recommends to support projects, that focus on linkages between technical institutions at post-secondary and higher education level and the business world (in specific sectors as per country strategic needs of productivity increase) and to closely monitor their outcomes.**
- **Labour market orientation:** Labour market oriented training offers are paramount; but it is not the role of a development agency to define these needs and to link it with the related skills, this is rather the role of the stakeholders in the country.
8. **The CLP recommends continuing the strong labour market and employment orientation of its VSD programmes** and to further empower the partners in the definition of their skill needed.

- **Qualification systems in VSD:** The CLP underlines the importance of Qualification systems in VSD, but doesn't consider the support to national qualification frameworks as a key role of SDC. Where SDC has been playing an important role in the sector and is asked to contribute to the development of a qualification system, as it is the in Nepal, it supports active involvement of the private sector into the design and strives for avoiding overdesign, bureaucratisation and unsustainable recurrent costs.
 - **“Dual model”:** The CLP acknowledges that the Swiss experience with a firm based education or “dual” VSD system is an important feature of the Swiss educational culture. Two specific features are particularly known and appreciated internationally: the importance given to practical training and the close involvement of the private sector in the definition and the delivery of VSD; which makes them often elements of SDC's VSD projects. The CLP shares however the opinion of the Evaluation team, in the sense that another important characteristic of Swiss support lies in a strong context orientation, which is not often compatible with the building on key elements of the dual system.
9. **The CLP recommends a pragmatic and flexible approach using components of the dual model** (firm based training, inclusion of the private sector in definition and delivery of VSD, etc.) if relevant in the intervention context.
- **Access to paid labour or self employment:** The CLP shares the opinion, that access to paid labour or self employment is one of the main goals for all VSD measures. It agrees also with the fact that the supply of equipment or financial capital by projects supporting thus the integration into employment may reduce the outreach of the VSD components in certain projects. Nevertheless, **the CLP is of the opinion, that the proposed establishment of micro-credit schemes is a too narrow proposal for a complex problem.** If a project is tackling several levels on the pathway from school to employment, a broad and context-specific approach is required.
 - **Links to modern labour markets:** SDC has a long stand working in rural development and with marginalised groups and should not lose this comparative advantage.
10. **The CLP recommends supporting the diversification for training offers in rural areas** and specific groups; it also considers the links to modern labour markets as crucial.

d) Recommendations regarding policy changes and policy dialogue in VSD

SDCs interventions aim on one hand at improving the performance and the orientation of service providers, (both public and private ones), on the other at changes in policies and structures. As stated by the evaluation team, such support needs time, especially in a field like VSD, where collaboration with many different partners on different levels is needed. The CLP wants to underline the following elements, which seem crucial for a success in policy changes, for VSD, but other areas as well:

- **Inception phase of VSD interventions:** VSD systems are complex, both at the intervention level (micro, meso, macro) and at the level of political responsibility (national, regional and local level). Therefore interventions often need to address different of these levels in order to have a wider impact.
11. **The CLP therefore supports the proposal to have comprehensive inception phases**, which on one hand allow deepening the understanding of the different

actors in a system, and on the other hand allow integrating the stakeholders into a project design.

12. **Exit strategies: the CLP recommends that sound exit strategies are part of every entry proposal for a long term commitment in VSD.** The definition of an exit point has to happen on the level of reached goals and benchmarks based on the relevance of an intervention and not just on the basis of a predetermined duration and allocation of funding.
- **SDC's role in alignment and harmonisation:** VSD is a thematic field where, as the evaluation shows, donor agencies are re-entering and investing again in recent years. Approaches between donors differ considerably and are often linked to experiences in the own donor countries. Alignment and harmonisation are therefore not always easy to achieve. However, despite its relative small size, SDC has been playing a key role in policy dialogue and donor coordination in several countries.
13. The **CLP recommends to strengthen this role**, where possible, and to foster pragmatic and solid solutions, which are neither overdesigned nor too bureaucratic and which integrate the private sector as client and deliverer of VSD.
- **Gender:** Gender aspects are of special importance in VSD, as this sector touches both incomes but also labour division in societies. A lot of SDCs programmes do actively integrate gender aspects into planning and implementation and SDC has developed specific tools to support this.
14. Nevertheless **the CLP recommends deepening gender specific aspects** further.

III Evaluators' Final Report

Evaluation of SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities

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

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Acronyms

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
ATMT	Advanced Technical and Managerial Training
BE	Basic education
BLSYA	Basic Life Skills for Youth and Adults
CAFP	Cellule d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle
CAP	Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle
CBN	Centre Banma Nuara
CEP	Certificat d'études primaires
CLP	Core Learning Partnership
CMES	Centre for Mass Education in Science
COOF	Cooperation Office
CQP	Certificat de qualification professionnelle
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DS	Desk study
EFA	Education for All
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FAFPA	Fonds d'appui à la formation professionnelle et à l'apprentissage
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FNAM	Fédération Nationale des Artisans du Mali
FONAEF	Fonds National de l'Alphabétisation and l'Education Non Formelle
FS	Field study
FTS	Formation Technique Spécifique
HDI	Human Development Index
INATEC	Instituto Nacional Tecnológico
IR	Inception Report
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
ME	Meta-evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOSAC	Moldovan Occupational Standards, Assessment and Certification
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NIE	Newly Industrialising Economy
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSTB	National Skill Testing Board
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAFP	Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle
PLCE	Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SE	Secondary education
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VSD	Vocational Skills Development
VT	Vocational training

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Executive Summary

Vocational skills development (VSD) has been an important aspect of SDC's portfolio for many decades. Whereas many other donor agencies withdrew from this sub-sector for extended periods of time, SDC's support to it has been comparatively more continuous. Between 2000 and 2008, SDC's VSD portfolio comprised around 58 projects that received almost CHF 132 million in total, an amount that represents approximately 28% of SDC's bi- and multilateral aid to education. It is against this backdrop that SDC's senior management mandated an independent team to evaluate the agency's VSD activities, mainly with the aim to a) provide elements for informing SDC's senior management as well as SDC's operational units with regard to the definition of thematic priorities, but also b) to provide information about outcomes and signs of impact.

Along the lines of the evaluation standards by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the evaluation was expected to provide information on the extent to which SDC's VSD activities and interventions a) reach the targeted segments of the population, b) contribute to higher employment rates and higher incomes of poor and disadvantaged people, c) make use of appropriate context-specific modalities, d) are effective in influencing VSD policy reforms and e) add value in terms of innovation and particularities in the various approaches used. Of particular interest in this context was the value added of programmes designed along the lines of the dual model of vocational training, as it is prevalent in the Swiss VSD system.

The evaluation was based on information on ten projects. Four of these projects – the Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project 2 (PLCE, Bangladesh), Tin Tua (Burkina Faso), the Moldovan Occupational Standards, Assessment and Certification Project (MO-SAC, Moldova) and Caplab (Peru) – were reviewed on the basis of fieldwork, and six were reviewed on the basis of documentary analysis. Of the latter, four projects – AlbVet (Albania), the *Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle* (PAFP, Mali), the National Skill Testing Board Project (NSTB, Nepal) and *Capacitacion Laboral* (Nicaragua) – were executed as comprehensive case studies; and brief meta-evaluations of two to three pages were produced for the remaining two – the Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES, Bangladesh) and Reto Rural (Ecuador). Collection of data for a complementary quantitative analysis was possible in three countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Peru), where tracer studies were implemented. In the case of Moldova, no such data were collected as the project had an exclusive focus on changes at the national level. Quantitative data from surveys was primarily analysed in the form of descriptive statistics and statistical tests based on the comparison of means. For Burkina Faso, where the data provide the richest information, the simple comparison of means was complemented by propensity score matching. The four field studies were also based on qualitative data from two sources: firstly, from documents such as credit proposals, previous reports etc., to which the evaluation team had access, and secondly, from interviews conducted by members of the evaluation team with stakeholders who were associated with the VSD activities. Furthermore, consultants conducted interviews with beneficiaries, who were generally selected from among those who had been interviewed for the surveys. Interviews with employers were conducted in a similar way.

The results of the evaluation can be summarised as follows: very centrally, it was found that SDC's VSD activities are generally *well adapted to the respective national and local contexts* and the labour market realities where SDC is operating. The interventions generally focus on the skills development of the poor, particularly of those living in rural areas. Virtually all projects that were reviewed had a focus on linking theory and practice, and on including representatives of the private sector in curriculum development and certification processes; in some instances also in the provision of training itself. Given the lack of labour market relevance of many VSD systems where SDC is operating, this focus was found to be of tremendous importance. In this context, it was also noted that the emphasis of many VSD interventions is on employability of beneficiaries, and less on productivity increases in the respective economic sectors. International experience suggests that the

latter consideration would be important for technological change but, at present, SDC's VSD portfolio does not aim at contributing to such economic transformations, focussing instead, as already mentioned, on the employability of people trained.

In terms of the *relevance of SDC's VSD activities to those of other donors'*, the review shows that SDC belongs to those donor agencies that have consistently emphasised the importance of VSD driven by demand from the labour market, even though SDC is not, in comparative terms, a large donor in this domain. However, in some countries, SDC has become a donor of considerable weight in terms of strategic planning in VSD. This influence is higher in those countries where SDC's VSD activities are designed along pragmatic lines, breaking away from Swiss VSD traditions with which potential partners in the donor community are not usually familiar.

The evaluation team also found that the *targeted populations are reached in most cases, but not always*. In view of SDC's current strongly poverty-oriented VSD strategy, the fact that some projects fail to reach the poor and females (despite this being their prime intention) is particularly worrisome. Some VSD operations supported by SDC (e.g. VSD components of NFE programmes) have a *small outreach*. Evidence suggests that, in some of these cases, the benefits tend to be concentrated among a relatively small group of beneficiaries, who are unlikely to be the poorest and most vulnerable in their respective areas. The review also found that SDC-supported VSD programmes are considerably *more labour market-oriented* than most other formal TVET programmes in partner countries, and thus lead to comparatively high employability among trainees. One important reason for this is the fact that employers are often involved in the planning and delivery of training. However, in countries with a strong tradition of workshop-based apprenticeship systems, high employability and low unemployment rates are not unique features of SDC-supported VSD programmes. Furthermore, the review shows that the focus of many of SDC's VSD activities is on the immediate short-term skill needs of specific economic sectors, particularly of the artisanal sector. However, many countries are suffering from severe skills shortages in a number of potentially critical economic sectors, which SDC's current VSD activities are doing very little to reduce.

In some of its policy documents, SDC underlines the necessity of linking *basic education (BE) to VSD*. The review shows that those programmes which aimed at linking VSD with BE had lower dropout rates than comparable programmes. However, this finding needs to be put into perspective, as low dropout rates can only be attributed to this link if there exists a direct relation between the skill needs of specific labour markets and the VSD components of BE. This was the case with CMES in Bangladesh but not with the Burkinabé CBN 2. Supporting VSD components of BE should therefore be promoted with caution.

Generally, the *quality of training organisations* supported by SDC improved over the years, and in cases where the respective organisations previously had access to support from other donors, it was maintained at a high level. In this context, it was found to be a key feature of many of SDC's VSD programmes that they simultaneously intervene in different domains of VSD systems and at different levels of these systems (local/national), thereby often focussing on strengthening competency-based training processes.

Given the comparatively strong labour market-orientation of the training programmes, *beneficiaries of programmes are generally highly employable*; in many cases, employment rates of graduates benefiting from SDC's VSD programmes are considerably higher than those of graduates from conventional, i.e. more theory-driven TVET programmes. However, own data as well as existing reports suggest that only in three out of ten cases under review (i.e. Tin Tua, CMES, Reto Rural) did the beneficiaries actually earn higher incomes. In fact, only in the case of CMES did the evaluation team find convincing evidence

of a link between individual VSD trajectories and higher incomes. In the case of Tin Tua's CBN 2 programme, the evaluation team found that higher incomes were more a result of the respective BE components; and in the case of Tin Tua's FTS programme, they were found to be mainly a result of access to material and financial resources that complemented the VSD programmes.

The review found that the *value added by approaches that were designed strongly along the lines of the dual model of vocational training* was relatively limited. Indeed, this training format generally produces trainees who are more employable than their counterparts leaving school-based TVET programmes. However, evidence from Mali suggests that the income of apprentices trained in both schools *and* workshops is hardly higher than that of apprentices trained along traditional lines in workshops only. But the real challenge with this model is that it lacks sustainability; in fact, institutional arrangements of successful and sustainable dual training models in the West are generally not in line with the modes of skill formation in the workshops and enterprises in most developing countries, and are thus difficult to emulate. International experience with the dual model has therefore been mostly disappointing, a fact that has been confirmed by this evaluation.

Available information suggests that SDC's projects generally provide financial resources in a *very continuous manner*, sometimes over decades. Accordingly, human resources that are financed with SDC funds are secured for a long time. Although SDC, in this manner, gains a reputation as a reliable partner, there may be a risk that fundamental reflections on sustainability are being neglected. As a contrast, a number of projects seem to have been stopped in an overtly abrupt way. Nevertheless, there is evidence that some of the organisations or organisational processes that have been, or are being, established with SDC support have been sustained and/or show good prospects of continuing to be sustained. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the role the NGO Caplab (which was established with the help of SDC) is playing in Peru, even today, when it comes to promoting better linkages between training and the world of work. Furthermore, there are good prospects for organisational sustainability of supported reforms in the two West African countries – thanks to funding mechanisms that ensure high outreach.

Unfortunately, *monitoring and evaluation processes* are not well coordinated across regions and generally do not put sufficient focus on the requirements for sustainable impact. Nevertheless, the sustainable impacts of the efforts by SDC result from the fact that the agency has considerable influence on national VSD frameworks, despite its small VSD budget. In fact, it has contributed to the establishment of organisations that have become important actors in the governance structure of VSD. Furthermore, SDC has provided considerable support to already existing key agencies or associations, and inspired important legal changes at the national level. In this context, it's important to note that SDC is generally highly sensitive to the risks of establishing parallel structures. In some cases it is a risk that firm-based training programmes are developed in parallel to the common TVET structures. However, this parallel development can be considered important if promoted with an emphasis on a more systematic inclusion of representatives from the world of work in the process of developing VSD.

In sum, SDC's VSD activities can be rated as satisfactory. The main strength of the programmes under review is their orientation towards the needs of the relevant national and local contexts and labour market realities. The strong labour market-orientation of SDC's VSD activities is also the reason for its achievements in promoting access to employment and with regard to national-level policy reforms. The main weakness of the activities under review is that target populations are not always reached, particularly when it comes to socio-economically disadvantaged people and females. In a similar vein, evidence from this report shows that many of the activities are not contributing to higher incomes in a significant way. As we have seen, achieving significant impact remains a challenge, even more so if a long-term perspective is being adopted. In order to go on to achieve satisfactory results, it will thus be important to focus on the key strengths of SDC's VSD activities,

i.e. the strong context orientation and the efforts to involve representatives from the world of work (notably employers and self-employed) into planning and delivery of training. In order to improve performance, however, but also to be accountable and to shape strategies and good practices, it will be important to increase efforts to constantly and holistically monitor the effects of interventions, not only at the level of individual projects, but also across regions.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

Vocational skills development (VSD) has been an important theme in the portfolio of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for many decades. In fact, while many other donor agencies withdrew from this sub-sector in the 1990s, SDC's support to VSD has been comparatively more continuous. Between 2000 and 2008, SDC's VSD portfolio comprised around 58 projects that received approximately CHF 132 million in total, which equals 28% of SDC's support to education. VSD activities are guided by two sectoral policy documents (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008, 2009) that fall back on bills approved by the Swiss federal parliament, in which the overall political aims and objectives of Swiss development aid were formulated (Bundesversammlung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, 2007a, 2007b).

It is against this backdrop that SDC's senior management mandated a team independent of SDC to evaluate the agency's VSD activities, with the following main aims:

- to provide elements for informing SDC's senior management as well as SDC's operational units with regard to the definition of thematic priorities in the education sector for upcoming policy framework elaboration and programming processes.
- to provide information about outcomes and signs of impact that can be used by SDC and other interested organisations in partner countries, development partners and other VSD stakeholders for improving policy frameworks and programme designs.

Along the lines of the DAC evaluation standards, the evaluation was especially supposed to provide information on the extent to which SDC's VSD activities and interventions...

- ...reach the targeted segments of the population,
- ...contribute to higher employment rates and higher income of poor disadvantaged people, thus ameliorating their livelihoods,
- ...make use of appropriate context-specific modalities and cooperate with the relevant partners in order to produce demand-driven, sustainable, and significant VSD benefits,
- ...effectively influence national and decentralised VSD policy reforms in the partner countries and add value in terms of innovation to the specific approaches used. Of particular interest in this context was the dual model of vocational training, as it is prevalent in the Swiss vocational training system (see also the Terms of References in Annex 1).

The evaluation focused on SDC's bilateral portfolio in the field of VSD that is being managed within the departments Regional Cooperation and Cooperation with Eastern Europe. Following the conceptual work laid out in the Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development strategy of 2008, emphasis was laid on activities in three educational sub-sectors (basic education, non-formal education and post-primary education). VSD projects that mainly focused on either capacity building of employers and employees in the private sector, or on VSD related to the health and the agricultural sectors, were therefore not part of the pre-selection portfolio composed for the purpose of the evaluation. As the senior management was interested in hearing about results of bilateral aid, contributions to multilateral organisations and other global-level programmes, such as ILO, UNESCO and NORRAG, were not part of the evaluation.

1.2 Structure of the report

The report condenses the findings from both documentary analysis and fieldwork conducted in four countries between August and November of the year 2010. The report is structured as follows: the remainder of the introductory chapter provides a brief overview of the selected portfolio. Chapter 2 presents the methods applied for the evaluation. Chapter 3 discusses SDC's VSD strategy against the backdrop of some of its key documents and looks into the processes by which SDC implements these strategies. Chapter 4 forms the main part of the report, discussing the findings in detail and along the lines of the key

questions that were laid out in the inception report (IR). It closes with reflections on an ex-post results framework that was drafted in the course of the review. Chapter 5 concludes the report by bringing together some of the key issues and Chapter 6 points to a number of potential priorities for change. The annexes contain complementary documents. The underlying project case studies are available as separate documents (see Annex 9).

1.3 The portfolio

This evaluation report is based on findings from ten projects in four different regions – Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Four of these interventions were selected for field study (FS) and another four for desk-study analysis (DS). As it was found, during the inception phase, that it would be important to integrate the key findings of recent evaluations on two SDC projects, it was decided to include two brief meta-evaluation (ME) reports on both of these interventions. Table 1 provides an overview of the evaluation portfolio. Details of these VSD activities can be found in Annex 2.

Table 1: Portfolio of evaluated VSD activities

	SAP No.	Project name	Type of review document		
			FS	DS	ME
Africa					
Burkina Faso	7F-02316	Support to Association Tin Tua	x		
Mali	7F-00736	Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle (PAFP)		x	
Asia					
Bangladesh	7F-03284	Post Literacy and Continuing Education Project 2	x		
Nepal	7F 05036	National Skill Testing Board Project		x	
Bangladesh	7F-03333	Support to the Centre for Mass Education in Science			x
Latin America					
Peru	7F-02642	Caplab	x		
Nicaragua	7F-80027	Capacitacion Laboral		x	
Ecuador	7F-80018	Reto Rural			x
Europe					
Moldova	7F-04338	Technical Assistance to establish a Moldovan Occupational Standards, Assessment and Certification System	x		
Albania	7F-04687	Albanian Vocational Educational and Training Support Programme		x	

2 Methods

In the following section, we outline our approach in assessing SDC's VSD activities. This first requires a clarification of evaluation criteria. We then explain the case selection, and provide details of the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. We conclude the section with remarks on the limitations of this analysis.

2.1 Evaluation criteria

Following the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (see e.g. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development & Development Assistance Committee, 2010), this study examined the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the SDC's VSD activities. However, in line with the key questions outlined in the IR, we concentrated on particular aspects of these criteria (Annex 3). As not all VSD activities under review had the same objectives, not every key question was addressed for every project or programme. This is documented in the case study evaluation matrix (Annex 4). In order to

answer the key questions, the evaluation team developed indicators that were addressed in the course of the review. The indicators can be found in Annex 5.

Relevance

In this context, we assessed the extent to which SDC's VSD approaches corresponded to the needs of the target groups in the different local or regional contexts of its activities, and the relevance of its approaches to the respective countries' reforms processes. In addition, we examined the relevance of SDC's activities to other donors' projects and programmes in this field, and how they related to them.

Efficiency

A serious assessment of efficiency requires not only an examination of all benefits and costs of the SDC's VSD activities, but also information on costs and benefits of alternative approaches. Even though members of the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) had expressed interest in acquiring more information on the latter, SDC's evaluation officer, in agreement with the evaluation team, decided that it was not among the priorities of this study to collect this type of information. Therefore, the report does not provide any systematic assessment of efficiency, but contains a section on the topic, based on exemplary evidence from a few projects.

Effectiveness

We assessed the extent to which SDC's activities reached their direct objectives, i.e. the enhanced provision of education and training, especially for poor and disadvantaged people, women and girls, ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas. We then also attempted to assess the quality of the educational services provided by looking at the skills taught in these programmes and at the quality of training organisations.

Impact

The assessment of impact is understood in at least two different ways in the current literature. It is often understood as an assessment based on a research design that allows the attribution of truly causal effects. This requires an experimental or quasi-experimental approach. While the former requires the consideration of the final evaluation already at the ex-ante planning stage, the latter requires comprehensive and representative data on persons participating in the programme and on a control group. This kind of data is not available to us, so we cannot carry out an impact evaluation in this sense.

A second understanding of impact assessment is that it is simply the evaluation of the effects of a programme in a broader sense. From this perspective, while *effectiveness* focuses on direct programme objectives, *impact* refers to indirect objectives, overarching goals, and even unintended effects that may have been brought about by the aid activities. This definition corresponds largely to the definition provided by the OECD/DAC, and was adopted here. While our methodological approach did not allow us to look systematically for unintended effects, it did allow us to examine effects beyond the mere project participation, namely the effect of the SDC's VSD activities on income, labour market prospects and prospects for further schooling. This was examined for the different target groups mentioned above.

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the continuation of project or programme benefits at the end of donor financing. This may be assessed at different levels:

- Firstly, with respect to the effect on the graduates of the programmes. In our case (except for extreme events such as civil wars with major human damage), there was no reason to believe that these effects would fade out or vanish over time.
- Secondly, with respect to the impact of programme activities at the system level. This requires an assessment of the extent to which the role of VSD has been anchored formally, or in any other way that plausibly leads to further support of these approaches (e.g. through public-private partnerships, certification and accreditation etc.). In principle, it also requires an assessment of labour market developments, to see how the demand for the skills provided will develop in the future and what the effect of an increasing number of graduates on this market will be. However, this in turn requires an in-depth analysis of the national economies, which was beyond the scope of our study.
- Thirdly, with respect to project or programme activities themselves. This requires the assessment of whether the financial and human resources available are sufficient to guarantee the functioning of the programme in the long run even in the absence of SDC funding.

In our analysis, we concentrated on the second and third aspect, and discussed issues related to the sustainability of programme activities and their anchoring within the national education system.

2.2 Portfolio selection process

In a first step, the evaluation officer retrieved, from SDC's SAP database, 58 projects from the agency's education sector that had been implemented between 2000 and 2008 and pertained to the theme of VSD (see Annex 6, first section). These projects had been entered, in the SAP database, under three different educational sub-sectors, namely "vocational training", "basic life skills for youth and adults (including literacy)" and "education policy". Out of these 58 projects, the Core Learning Partnership (i.e. the group at SDC's headquarters in Berne that monitored the implementation of the evaluation) selected a set of 16 projects that it considered to be particularly pertinent to the theme of VSD (see Annex 6, second section). This list was then presented to the evaluation team, together with a set of documents on all these projects. The evaluation team then selected ten projects for further evaluation, four projects as fieldwork-based project case studies, four projects as desk study-based project case studies and another two as brief meta-evaluations. The selection process of the evaluation team was based on four selection criteria, which were a) relevance, b) data availability, c) previous / planned comprehensive evaluations and d) size of the interventions. The selected portfolio was then included in the IR and as such discussed with the CLP in a first meeting in August 2010. Based on feedback during this meeting, the final portfolio was decided upon.

2.3 Data collection and methods of evaluation for the quantitative analysis

The collection of data for quantitative analysis was possible in the three countries Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Peru. In each case, a team of local consultants set out to draw a representative sample of graduates and employers in order to administer detailed questionnaires on income and labour market prospects of participants in SDC-financed VSD activities. However, in none of the three countries were lists of graduates available from the institutions in charge of the programme. This led to a non-representative sampling process, starting with the institutions pointing to graduates with whom they were still in contact, and then a snow-ball system where additional graduates were found through the initial contacts.

Eventually, the overall sample contained 59 observations for Bangladesh, 102 observations for Burkina Faso (61 for the programme *CBN 2 Jeunes* and 41 for the programme *CBN 2 Adultes*), and 51 observations for Peru. Samples for employers were considerably

smaller, which was due, at least in part, to the predominant occupation of graduates either in further schooling or in self-employment. Samples of five and six cannot be examined sensibly in a quantitative analysis, so we instead decided to use the interviews with employers within the qualitative analysis.

The methods used for the quantitative analysis had to be adjusted to the data availability. As there was no ex-ante planning of the evaluation process there was no baseline information we could have relied on, nor was there any control group selected at the start of the different programmes. To be able to still make some plausible statements about the effects of the programmes we generated an artificial control group by asking graduates about their siblings as well as about friends and colleagues. For siblings we also asked for additional information on age, gender and education, so as to assess the extent to which they were indeed comparable to the respondents. In Burkina Faso we obtained relatively rich information on up to six brothers and sisters per respondent. In Bangladesh the same process was followed, but the number of children in each family was much smaller, so that the comparison was generally restricted to one sibling. In Peru, respondents were asked to select the most similar sibling, who would then be the person to whom the respondent would be compared.

The quantitative analysis based on the samples of graduates was carried out separately for each of the three countries. We relied primarily on descriptive statistics and statistical tests based on the comparison of means. For Burkina Faso, where the data provide the richest information, the simple comparison of means was complemented by propensity score matching which allowed us to control for a number of intervening characteristics such as education, gender and age of the sibling, as well as further background variables related to parental education and professional activities. Some of the siblings had also gone through the SDC supported CBN 2 programmes, which meant that they could be included in the analysis as programme participants. Finally, we used multivariate regression analysis to check the robustness of our comparisons, and to estimate the effect of additional variables such as the effect of years of professional training after programme completion on future income (as an example for the case of Burkina Faso).

The following textbox provides a brief definition and comparison of these methods.

Table 2: Methods of quantitative analysis

(1) Comparison of means

For any relevant outcome variable, we compute both the mean of the programme graduates, and the mean of the siblings. A t-test is used to establish whether the difference of these means is significantly different from zero. This allows us to state whether programme participants are significantly better off than their siblings. A variant of this procedure is to compare the graduates to only one sibling (the one with the most similar characteristics), or to restrict both groups to those persons with particular characteristics (e.g. in some cases, to check the robustness of our results, only persons with no formal education were compared).

(2) Propensity score matching

Propensity score matching refines/fine-tunes the comparison of means in that adjustments are made for all potentially relevant characteristics that may bias the comparison. These characteristics are selected firstly through the estimation of a probit model, i.e. a multivariate regression model in which the propensity (probability) to be selected in the programme is the dependent variable. Observations for which there is no appropriate match in the data are excluded from the analysis (lack of common support); other observations are weighed according to the quality of the match. Based on these adjustments, the programme participants (treated) are compared to the non-participants (untreated) with respect to any relevant outcome variable, just as in the simple comparison of means.

(3) Multivariate regression analysis

Multivariate regression analysis directly uses the outcome variable (e.g. income) as the dependent variable. The main explanatory variable is a dummy variable indicating programme participation. This variable takes the value of 1 for all respondents and some of their siblings (those who also participated in the program), and 0 otherwise. If the estimated coefficient of this variable is significantly different from zero, this provides some evidence for an effect of the programme. As compared to matching, we need to make assumptions on the functional form of the estimated relationship and we might compare persons with rather incompatible characteristics. This makes this procedure somewhat less reliable. At the same time, we directly see the effect of our control variables and can also easily introduce interactions of the programme participation dummy with some of these controls. This allows us to see whether the effect of the programme is stronger (or less strong) for persons with particular characteristics.

2.4 Data collection and methods of evaluation for the qualitative analysis

- *Desk study-based project case studies:* The desk study-based project case studies were mainly based on findings contained in credit proposal documents and previous reports, some of which were evaluations. All documents were provided by members of the CLP, generally during the inception phase but in some cases also during the implementation phase of the evaluation. To complement this information, the consultants conducted interviews with representatives of implementing agencies.
- *Fieldwork-based project case studies:* The field studies were based on two different types of qualitative data: On the one hand, the evaluation team had access to documents provided by the CLP and of COOFs alike. Documentation included credit proposals, previous reports, national policy documents, contracts with local implementing partners, curricula etc. On the other hand, the members of the evaluation team interviewed stakeholders that were associated with the VSD activities, including representatives of SDC cooperation offices (COOFs), public sector officials, other implementing partners (NGOs) and donor organisations. In most cases, interviews were organised by the COOFs, on the basis of a programme that had been jointly developed with the consultants. In addition, consultants conducted interviews with beneficiaries of the programmes, who were generally selected from among those who had also been interviewed for the survey (see 2.3). Interviews with employers were similarly conducted.

Towards the end of their second missions the consultants for Bangladesh and Burkina Faso presented their qualitative findings in a de-briefing workshop, which provided an important opportunity to validate the findings and to avoid major factual errors in the report. In the case of Burkina Faso, the workshop was attended by many representatives of government agencies, donors and implementing partners. With this background of information, the consultants produced their reports.

- In order to better understand internal processes at SDC's HQ in Berne, the team conducted six interviews with representatives of the CLP (see Annex 7).

2.5 Limitations

The present evaluation has a number of limitations. They can be found at several levels:

- To form the *pre-selection portfolio* (58 projects), SDC considered only those projects which had been entered in the SAP database as education projects from three different sub-sectors. Projects from other SAP sectors (economy and employment / agriculture and rural development) but also from other educational sub-sectors (teacher training and secondary education / higher education) were not part of this portfolio, even though the evaluation team found (in a later phase) that these sub-sectors would have also contained potentially relevant projects.
- The *non-representative sampling process* (at all three levels: (1) country selection, (2) selection of projects within these countries, and (3) sampling of graduates of pro-

grammes carried out within the projects) obviously restricts the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis. If the availability of information is positively correlated with the effect of the intervention (such that there would be more information available for good projects), the case selection in itself, which was primarily based on the availability of information, may have led to more positive results, and so a distorted representation of the success of SDC's VSD activities as a whole. Similarly, the impossibility of drawing a random sample of graduates within the three countries selected for the quantitative analysis, may also lead to selection bias. For instance, if training organisations stay in contact primarily with their better students (for instance, as in the case of Tin Tua in Burkina Faso, by employing them in their own institution), the graduates in the sample will tend to show above average success with respect to income and labour market prospects.

- Other limitations of this study are related to the *lack of baseline information*. This prevented us from using a 'differences in differences' approach which would have rendered a causal interpretation of our results more plausible, even at given limitations with respect to the representativeness of the sample. Matching methods can be used in principle, but their credibility is affected by the limitations related to the ex-post selection of our artificial control group, i.e. the siblings who often do not show truly comparable characteristics. In statistical terms, this leads to a problem of common support.
- In general, the choice of *siblings as a control group* has the problem that parental choice of who to send into formal education, who to send to other educational programmes, and who to keep at home to care for smaller siblings or to help with agricultural chores, is certainly not a random choice. In addition, information on siblings is indirect, provided by the programme graduates themselves, and may be affected by expectations about the expected answer, by cultural factors and the like. This may again introduce bias into our estimations.

3 VSD within SDC: Strategy and implementation

3.1 Current VSD Strategy

SDC's mandate derives from two acts, one for development cooperation in general and one for cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe (Bundesversammlung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, 2007a, 2007b). The operations of the agency are, however, based on frame credits, which need to be passed by the parliament, which, in so doing, approves the respective bills formulated by the Federal Council every four years (Schweizerischer Bundesrat, 2006, 2008). Whereas VSD received relatively little attention in the last bill on cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe, the message on general development cooperation stated that VSD would be supported as part of SDC's efforts to improve a) employment and income and b) educational development (Schweizerischer Bundesrat, 2008, p. 2986). Against this backdrop, SDC's 2008 BE and VSD Strategy, which also provides the basis for the paragraphs on the VSD section in the Employment & Income Medium-Term Orientation 2009-2012, gives a broad rationale of VSD that includes "all organised learning processes for the development of technical, social and personal competencies and qualifications that contribute to the sustainable long-term integration of trained people in decent working conditions into the formal or informal economy, either on an employed or self-employed basis". These learning processes may take place in "schools or technical institutes, workshops or at the workplace in enterprises" and thus comprise more than classical TVET that mainly focuses on the formal sector of the economy (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008, p. 5). VSD activities are supposed to concentrate on three specific domains: on programmes at the secondary level (general, pre-vocational, vocational and technical education streams); on non-formal education; and on training programmes at the tertiary education level for teachers and VSD trainers, to promote widening of access to VSD and to increase the relevance of VSD (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008, p. 11).

In line with the Federal Council's bill on Swiss development cooperation, the overall approach of the 2008 BE and VSD strategy was characterised by a strong focus on poverty reduction (MDG 1, 2 and 8) and on the Declaration on Education for All (EFA), as well as SDC's human rights-based approach to development and an emphasis on the need for local relevance and for the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in planning and implementation of respective programmes (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008, pp. 4-7). Furthermore, the text underlines that it is important to address challenges related to the scale-up of innovations (due to insufficient strategic alliances and unfavourable political contexts), and also weaknesses in SDC's role in national policy dialogues.

The 2008 BE and VSD Strategy differed somewhat from the 1994 Sector Policy on Vocational Education, in that the latter document was more strongly rooted in an economic perspective on VSD, and mainly aimed at improving vocational education (VE) for the needs of small and medium sized enterprises, and for underprivileged people in the informal sector (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 1994, p. 17). However, in line with the document from 1994, the 2008 document certainly emphasised the need to provide skills for employment and income beyond the modern, industrial sector that had been at the core of the previous skills development strategy with its focus on centres of excellence (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 1994, pp. 6, 9). Nevertheless, the 1994 paper emphasised that SDC's VE strategy would not only cater to the poor, but also to the middle classes, which were considered "important for the democratic, social and economic development of a nation" (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 1994, p. 8).

3.2 Implementation of SDC's VSD strategies

Organisational structure: Even though planning, implementation and monitoring of SDC's VSD activities takes place within specific departments and divisions, SDC's organisational structure includes elements that ensure cross-departmental and cross-divisional exchange and collaboration on VSD issues. Today, this exchange and collaboration is mainly facilitated by the thematic Employment and Income (E+I) network. This network includes, on the one hand, thematic and geographic programme managers from all those divisions in which VSD is a thematic priority, and, on the other hand, national programme officers who are working on the topic. The activities of the E+I network are coordinated by three people (focal point) from the Latin America division. As VSD is one out of three sub-themes of this network (besides private sector development and financial sector development), one of the three is responsible for VSD within SDC (at 50%) and thus serves as a facilitator and knowledge manager for the network. At the institutional level, thematic support on VSD issues is therefore the responsibility of the head of the Latin America division, where the E+I network is located.

Apart from the E+I network, there is the Education network that also deals with aspects of VSD, specifically in the fields of BE and NFE. The focal point is located within the division West Africa. Both networks (or their respective focal points) are currently working jointly on a number of issues (e.g. results-oriented management, adaptation of the latest BE & VSD strategy). Both networks have web-based platforms that work monolingual: the one on employment and income mainly works in English (focusing on all regions but West Africa), whereas the one on education mainly works in French (with almost an exclusive focus on West Africa). This organisational structure seems to bring about a duplication of efforts, particularly in the domains of NFE and, surprisingly, teacher training.

This organisational structure is the result of SDC's reorganisation, which has been implemented since 2008. Previously, VSD was a theme dealt with by the Employment & Income division, which itself was part of a separate, thematically oriented department (with other divisions dealing with, for example, social development, etc.) and was dissolved in the course of the administrative reform. Today, the focal points have neither formalised responsibility in the formulation of new VSD projects, nor formative power, and therefore act rather as resource people in the relevant processes. Furthermore, they are

involved in knowledge management and policy dialogue, thereby representing SDC in international (including multilateral) platforms pertaining to VSD.

Policy formulation: The most important current document on VSD policy, the 2008 BE and VSD Strategy, was developed prior to SDC's administrative reform. At that time, the policy was elaborated by those responsible for education and VSD within the divisions Social Development and Employment and Income (respectively) and was approved at the director level. This strategy, for the first time, aimed at developing a comprehensive rationale for both BE and VSD. Only recently, SDC overhauled the 2008 BE and VSD Strategy (which is now to be called "guidelines") in order to ensure that it can be flexibly applied to the relevant country contexts. The document was in the course of being published when this evaluation report was written.

Implementation: Compared to other donor organisations and technical agencies (e.g. the World Bank, ILO, DFID), SDC is not an organisation driven by thematic policies. Relevance to local contexts is thus of foremost importance and, accordingly, regional divisions and individual COOFs are playing a crucial role in the formulation of both country strategies and specific projects. All regions have their own thematic priorities, and some of them work on separate strategies that are related to VSD; the Western Balkans division, for instance, has launched a joint process between the different country programmes on accentuating measures to promote youth employment (of which VSD is a core element). Approval of such strategies and projects takes place at the level of the specific divisions (at the HQ). In some cases, i.e. where projects are particularly large, approval also takes place at the departmental level. Generally, as discussed above, representatives of the corresponding thematic network play only a consultative role in this process, on request of the implementing division. In fact, there is no formalised process of involving them in project design and they do not play any formal role in the approval process either. The minor roles of the focal points and thematic programme managers certainly reflects the fact that a coherent implementation of thematic global strategies is not first priority for SDC, and that SDC decided to do without any action-plan to implement the 2008 BE and VSD Strategy. While many hold the view that this way of working on themes ensures local relevance, others (even within SDC) insist that the current networks are not a satisfactory substitute for the capacities of the previous organisational structure, and that, currently, scope for exchanges between different divisions and departments working on similar issues is still limited. In any case, it is important to note that the reform has only recently been implemented, and that it is too early to make a final assessment in this regard.

Monitoring: Currently, there are hardly any processes which would ensure minimal standards for conceptual coherence and monitoring in the field of VSD, and there is no organisational entity that would be in charge of applying these. Quite tellingly (and as the evaluation team has itself experienced), there is no mechanism within SDC to compile all those projects that actually pertain to the theme of the evaluation (VSD). In any case, the current SAP structure, oriented towards OECD criteria, considers VSD to be a sub-theme of education, whereas, within the organisational structure, VSD is a sub-theme of Employment and Income. In fact, there are a number of projects with a clear VSD orientation that have been entered (in SAP) as pertaining to the theme 'economy' (which lacks a sub-theme 'VSD'). Thus, a number of projects, PAB and PAFP in Burkina Faso, for instance, did not become part of the pre-selection portfolio.

3.3 Allocation of Swiss ODA to VSD

In the following section, we give a brief overview of the allocation of Swiss official development assistance (ODA) to VSD and other educational sub-sectors and compare it with the respective figures of 22 other OECD member states. In order to facilitate an international comparison of the respective figures, this section is based on data from OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) for the years 2002 to 2009 (though figures for Switzerland and many other countries are currently only available up to the year 2008) (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010). Certainly, the presented data need to be interpreted with some caution, as definitions underlying the terms

used may greatly differ between the different countries. However, we believe that the data provide some interesting insights, all the more because they reflect an important way in which SDC's activities are being perceived at the international level.

Reported data are for DAC member states only, which are basically those that joined OECD prior to 1990. Data for the European Union (EU), a multilateral donor and also a formal member of DAC, are not included. Similar to SDC's SAP database, this DAC database does not report figures on Vocational Skills Development, but rather on Vocational Training (VT). Further educational sub-sectors in the database are: Basic Education (BE), Secondary Education (SE), Basic Life Skills for Youth and Adults (BLSYA) and Advanced Technical and Managerial Training (ATMT).

3.3.1 The relative importance of VSD funding in Swiss ODA

Between 2002 and 2008, Swiss ODA increased by more than 100% from US\$723.17 million to US\$1561.85 million. In the meantime, funding to VT increased from US\$6.64 million to US\$15.68 million, which meant a slight percentage-wise growth in the importance of VT from 0.92% to 1%. For two years during this period (2004 and 2005), funding to VT was below 0.85% of total Swiss ODA. The data suggest that allocations in the field of VSD were virtually all dedicated to basic training (e.g. at the craft level), as no funds were allocated to ATMT between 2002 and 2008.

From 2002 to 2008, allocations to VT were lower than to SE (1.31%). The proportion of funding to VT in the 2002-2008 period was also less than that to BE (1.03%). However, it is important to state that, in 2008, funding to VT was (with 1% of ODA) greater than that to BE (0.61), but only slightly less than that to SE (1.03%). The relative importance of SE can be considered fairly surprising, given the fact that this educational sub-sector is not given any priority in any of the past or current strategies (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 1994, 1996, 2008, 2009). However, it may be at least partly explained by the fact that the figures on SE most probably also include activities that are also linked to VSD.

3.3.2 Allocation of Swiss ODA to VSD in international perspective

With US\$79.72 million allocated to VT, Switzerland belonged to the 7 largest donors in this educational sub-sector between 2002 and 2008, according to the DAC database. A number of other donors spent far greater amounts on VT, e.g. Germany (US\$634.99 million), Japan (US\$278.17 million), Spain (US\$234.78 million) and France (US\$90.81 million); but also the amount of funding from Belgium (US\$95.37 million) and Australia (US\$85.72 million) was considerably higher than that from Switzerland. The difference in total funding for VSD-related sub-sectors between Switzerland and the largest VT donor increases when Germany's funding for ATMT (US\$393.39 million between 2002 and 2008) is included.

Box 1: SDC's allocation to VSD: an enigma

The surprisingly small share of Swiss ODA allocated to vocational training (as reported in 3.3.2) is related to the fact that many VSD projects are entered in SDC's SAP database, not in the vocational training sub-sector, but in other educational sub-sectors (e.g. secondary and higher education) or in non-education sectors (e.g. economy and employment), which hinders SDC's ability to accurately document its efforts in the domain of VSD at an aggregate level. This problem of inaccurate documentation – and this is a much more serious matter – is associated with the lack of a strategy that would clearly define what VSD is, and what it is not. If these problems were resolved, SDC may emerge as one of the world's most important bilateral donors in the domain of VSD.

As the data suggest, a few more significant donors are rapidly emerging. One of them is Korea, which, in 2008, spent US\$30.66 million on VT, i.e. considerably more than Switzerland (US\$15.68 million). If only the figures for 2008 are considered, Switzerland drops to position 8 with regard to funding for VT. Another interesting example is Austria, whose allocation to VT increased by more than 5.5 times between 2002 and 2008 to US\$7.02 million, which is high in proportion to the overall growth of Austrian ODA by 3.3 times in that same period.

A comparison of the relative importance of allocation to VT in the ODA budgets for the years 2002 to 2008 suggests that the VT share of the Swiss ODA budget (0.93%) was much lower than that of Luxembourg (4.92%) and Korea (4.19%), but also lower than that of Spain (1.55%), Germany (1.21%) and Canada (1.08%).

Also interesting are comparisons with other educational sub-sectors. Even though BE, with a percentage allocation of 1.03, is somewhat more important than VT, the amount of Swiss funding to BE is minor in comparison to other countries. With this contribution, Switzerland is only the 16th largest donor in the BE sub-sector, out of the 22. There are enormous discrepancies, but they are not directly associated with the size of overall ODA budgets. The Netherlands, for instance, being the sixth largest bilateral donor between 2002-2008, and spending 200% more on ODA than Switzerland, spent US\$1907.81 million, i.e. 24 times more than Switzerland, on BE. Somewhat more surprising is the fact that Switzerland, which does not mention SE in any key policy document, spent more than US\$106.07 million on SE between 2002 and 2008, making it the 5th largest donor in this educational sub-sector, after Germany (US\$826.86 million), France (US\$683.15 million), Japan (US\$464.45 million) and Spain (US\$273.34 million).

4 Evaluation of key questions

The following section condenses the findings of this evaluation, which are available in a more detailed format in the underlying case studies. This section follows the key questions (Annex 3) that were laid out in the inception report and have also been discussed above, in section 2.1 of this report. In most cases, the following statements lack references, as the information comes from the corresponding sections in the case studies.

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 Relevance with regard to the needs of specific contexts

SDC's VSD activities are mostly strongly adapted to the national and local contexts and labour market realities where SDC is operating. For this reason, system-level stakeholders that were interviewed for this evaluation stated that SDC's projects were relevant, from their perspective. Relevance of projects may also be assessed with regard to a number of *key elements* of projects that were also underlined in the most recent policy documents (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008, 2009).

- In line with the MDGs and with SDC's key policy documents, 8 out of the 10 reviewed VSD interventions, i.e. all except those two that focus on transition countries in Eastern Europe, focused explicitly on VSD for the *poor* (i.e. the socio-economically most disadvantaged segments of the societies) and supported training programmes with less elitist entry barriers (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008, 2009). They are thus addressing one of the fundamental challenges of VSD systems in many developing countries, where large segments of the socio-economically disadvantaged young population are often excluded because of insufficient educational credentials (King & Palmer, 2006). In this

Box 2: Who's telling SDC what is relevant? The case of Moldova

Relevance of interventions is highly dependent on the perception of key stakeholders in the process of planning and implementing projects. In Moldova, SDC supported, in accordance with an already existing project by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the development of occupational standards, an activity which was highly welcomed by the Ministry of Economy and Trade (and, of course, had the support of the national government), but was considered less relevant by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The reluctance on the part of the latter almost entirely jeopardised the effective implementation of the project, and there were many consequent complaints by SDC and consultants. However, if one takes into account the fact that the MoE is in the process of implementing, in close cooperation with the EU, an NQF which, in many ways, reflects the key objectives of SIDA/SDC support, the MOE's position may appear somewhat more understandable (see: European Training Foundation, 2010, p. 25).

context, programmes that aim at strengthening VSD elements of NFE programmes (e.g. in Bangladesh and Burkina Faso) are of particular importance.

- Virtually all projects that were reviewed have a focus on *linking theory and practice* and on *including representatives of the private sector* in curriculum development and certification processes, in some instances also in the provision of training itself. Given the lack of labour market relevance of many VSD systems where SDC is operating, this focus is of tremendous relevance.
- The emphasis of many VSD interventions is generally on *employability* of beneficiaries. Even though the evaluation team acknowledges the importance of this objective and has evidence (see 4.4.1) that suggests that employability of supported beneficiaries is generally higher than that of the graduates of the conventional TVET system, it's important to note that in societies with low educational expansion, unemployment rates among the poor are similarly low. Furthermore, and equally important, is the fact that trainees coming from the traditional skill formation systems (e.g. in the artisanal sector) hardly ever face the problem of finding employment. Both statements put into perspective the focus on the employability of graduates. Accordingly, it would be important to more *strongly focus on employment generation, salary increases* and/or on the *effects of training programmes on the productivity of workshops and enterprises*.

Box 3: Improved productivity and firm competitiveness as key objectives in Nicaragua

One of the few projects which referred to improved productivity and firm competitiveness was the *Capacitacion Laboral* project in Nicaragua. This aim was spelled out at the level of the credit proposal as one of the key objectives of the project, which also stated clearly that progress in this regard would need to be assessed at the level of individual firms. However, so far, neither reporting processes nor evaluations systematically have tackled this issue.

While this evaluation suggests that SDC's overall VSD strategy and the analysed interventions are (with some exceptions) sufficiently relevant, the evaluation team considers it important to note that SDC's current focus is *not sufficiently relevant* from a *productivity improvement* and more comprehensive *economic transformation and growth* perspective. The team understands that VSD is not considered as the main instrument to achieve economic transformation, given that SDC and SECO focus on this topic through other activities related to the theme of "employment and income" (e.g. programmes focusing on private sector development and on economic framework conditions). Furthermore, the MDGs, which are the underlying rationale of most of SDC's activities, do not place particular emphasis on VSD either, and of course the development experience suggests that one needs to be sceptical vis-à-vis simplistic trickle-down models of economic change (Arndt, 1983; Grant, 1973). However, it remains true that newly industrialising economies in different parts of the world (e.g. Brazil, India, Malaysia and South Africa) invested in higher-level VSD, particularly when new economic sectors were slowly emerging and market forces were not leading to a sufficient supply of skills (see e.g. Lall, 1999; Tzannatos & Johnes, 1997). Indeed, the situation in many of the countries where SDC is operating is different from most of these Newly Industrialising Economies (NIEs), yet there are still skills shortages in a number of these contexts, which is seriously hindering economic growth in potentially important sectors, and which would need to be addressed through VSD interventions. A holistic, comprehensive approach to VSD would therefore probably not focus solely on poverty reduction as its only immediate objective (Arnold, 1989, 2010). Several of these points have been raised in a previous evaluation of SDC's VSD activities (Arnold, Gonon, & Schaltegger, 1992).

4.1.2 Relevance with regard to other donors' activities in the field of VSD

SDC belongs to those donor agencies that have consistently emphasised the importance of VSD being driven by demand from the labour market and, ideally, by the private sector. Today, as the donor community reinforces its efforts in the VSD domain, SDC's approaches are of particular interest to donor agencies in various regional contexts.

In comparative terms, SDC does not belong to the largest donors in the VSD domain, particularly now, as the theme re-emerges in the agenda of many bi- and multilateral agencies. However, in many countries where SDC is operating, VSD projects are being viewed as best practice both among policy makers and donor representatives, particularly as SDC has experience in operating both at the local and at the national levels, e.g. in Albania, Nepal and Ecuador. One of those projects that have certainly gained most prominence is Caplab, based on its approach to facilitating better linkages between training agencies and the labour market. The project not only served as a model for SDC activities in other countries in the region, but also inspired projects by other donors in Peru, and its approach is actively being discussed in fora of Latin American VSD experts (e.g. journals, conferences etc.). Furthermore, in some countries, SDC has become a *donor of considerable weight* in terms of overall strategic planning and coordination in the field of VSD, thereby strongly contributing to the application of the Paris Declaration in the various VSD sectors (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005). This influence seems to be higher when SDC's VSD activities are designed along *pragmatic lines* and do not exclusively focus on VSD approaches that are not familiar to potential partners in the donor community (see box 2).

Box 4: SDC as a key VSD donor in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is not only a priority country of Swiss ODA, but also one of the largest recipient countries in the world, where the most influential multilateral development agencies have recently launched VSD projects. SDC has become a key donor in the sector; particularly noteworthy are its role in the donor coordination group for education and training; the joint funding of a comprehensive Skills Development Project with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and its initiative to organise a Conference on Skills Development. SDC does not promote a particular Swiss VSD model, but has a relatively pragmatic approach (with a clear focus on the poor) which promotes the building of broad alliances with other key actors in the VSD sector.

4.2 Effectiveness

4.2.1 Outreach

Overall outreach

With the exception of the MOSAC project in Moldova, all VSD activities under analysis aimed at directly contributing to skill training programmes operating at the local level. Of course, this happened in a very diverse manner:

- *Focus of support*: Whereas, for instance, the project in Nicaragua (*Capacitacion Laboral*) provided skills training to mainly unemployed school-leavers, the project in Nepal (NSTB) did not support skills training as such, but rather skills certification.
- *Differing length*: Supported training programmes greatly differ in their length: whereas, for instance, the training programmes supported at Albanian vocational schools last four years, others (even some of those supported under the same programme) are much shorter, sometimes lasting no longer than five days. Often, long-term training programmes also involve a demanding examination and certification process, whereas the shorter ones do not.
- *Role of SDC*: Some initiatives are only partially funded by SDC (e.g. PLCE 2 in Bangladesh), whereas others solely rely on Swiss aid (e.g. *Capitacion Laboral* in Nicaragua).

Table 3 does not aim to compare the outreach of the ten VSD projects, but rather to present some of the key information that flows out from documentation on the projects:

Table 3: Outreach

Region	Country	Project	Notes on outreach
Africa	Burkina Faso	Association Tin Tua	Campaign 2008/2009: 41'138 beneficiaries of basic literacy courses and 6631 beneficiaries of short-term VSD programmes; BE programme with pre-vocational component enrolled 1077 students in the years 2000-2008.
	Mali	PAFP	Apprenticeship training designed along the dual model enrolled 15'481 apprentices between 2000 and 2009. In the same period, between 150 and 324 craftsmen were trained on a yearly basis.
Asia	Bangladesh	PLCE 2	Cumulative total enrolment of courses provided under PLCE II was at approx. 870'000 in February 2011 since 2008.
	Nepal	NSTB	SDC started supporting an ongoing testing service; in the years 2008-2010, 58'743 persons were tested.
	Bangladesh	CMES	In the years 2007-2009 BE with pre-vocational components was provided to 9823 students at the junior level and to 2756 students at the senior level; 2900 beneficiaries received short-term skills training.
Latin America	Peru	Caplab	Approximately 35'000 persons participated annually in employment and career counselling sessions during the project period (1996-2008).
	Nicaragua	Capacitacion Laboral	3000 young people benefited from skills training in the first phase of the project (2008-2010).
	Ecuador	Reto Rural	Skill training to 3004 youth and adults in rural areas was provided during the project period (2004-2009).
Europe	Moldova	MOSAC	Project operated at the conceptual level only.
	Albania	AlbVet	2414 trainees supported under voucher scheme in years 2006-2009; 400 students of vocational schools supported in years 2009-2010.

Assessing activities against this backdrop of information is problematic. Therefore, these figures need to be viewed with a particular consideration of whether a) the people reached were the ones who were targeted, b) the provided skills are improving the livelihoods of the beneficiaries and c) these achievements can be sustained after the phase-out of Swiss funding. We elaborate on the first aspect (reaching of target population) in the following paragraphs; the other two aspects are tackled in the sections on impact and on sustainability (replication of outreach) respectively.

Reaching of the targeted population

SDC's VSD policy documents state that the agency's VSD activities are supposed to cater to a) poor, i.e. severely socio-economically disadvantaged people, b) women and girls, c) people living in remote areas and d) ethnic minorities. The review shows that not every project focussed on all of these four potential target groups, or defined these key features of beneficiaries (i.e. socio-economic status, sex, geographical location or ethnicity) explicitly. Given the fact that SDC's mandate in countries in Eastern Europe does not explicitly focus on poverty reduction, the two projects based in this region did not consider the socio-economic status of their target groups. At the same time, some projects in other regions never aimed to enrol close to 50% of poor people (e.g. the NSTB in Nepal aimed at catering to minimally 35% poor people). Furthermore, ethnic minorities were specifically targeted in only one phase of one of the projects, i.e. in the social inclusion component of AlbVET's phase II.

Table 4 at the end of this section provides information on all 10 projects under review, but first we briefly look at the three projects (in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Peru) for which the evaluation team collected quantitative data. As a matter of fact, all three interventions mainly operated in rural areas, and therefore catered almost exclusively to individuals from their respective geographical locations.

Evidence is somewhat mixed when it comes to gender and socio-economic background. Whereas the gender balance among participants of our survey is about equal in Bangladesh, it tends more towards female participants in Peru (66%), and tends strongly towards male participants in the case of Burkina Faso (only 16% females in *CBN 2 Jeunes* and 34% females in *CBN 2 Adultes*). If these ratios reflect the gender balance of programme beneficiaries in general, women and girls do not seem to be specifically targeted, except maybe in the case of Peru. Certainly, it needs to be kept in mind that Tin Tua, the NGO running the CBN 2 programme, also offers basic literacy courses and post-literacy programmes (notably *Formation Technique Spécifique*, FTS) for which the gender ratio is considerably more balanced. However, that a flagship programme of a prominent NGO aiming to link NFE to formal basic education is revealed to be greatly disadvantaging girls and women, and to feature even less balanced gender ratios than formal primary and secondary education in the country, appears to be very problematic.

Box 5: Gender and VSD

Females have, for a long time, played only a marginal role in the VSD discourse. In fact, most traditional TVET programmes in developing countries mainly cater to males – often reflecting the gender-biased segregation of labour markets (Adams, 2007, p. 15). Access to the crafts and small trades, for instance, is often only open to males, who mainly access employment in this domain through the traditional apprenticeship system. Similarly, employment in the more skill-intensive positions of the (few) modern industries is a male reserve, and if there, indeed, exist VSD programmes for this segment of the labour market, they mostly exclusively cater to young men. Though many of SDC's VSD activities have been designed while taking these challenges into account, some of them still face difficulties in reaching females: the PAFP in Mali, for instance, operates mainly in male trades of the local artisanal sector; some of the VSD-oriented programmes of Tin Tua in Burkina Faso enrol considerably more males than females. In Albania, AlbVET's "Formal systems development" has, so far, only catered to males, but the outreach of some of the other components are more gender-balanced. Some others of SDC's VSD activities face the challenge of ensuring sustainable integration of females into gainful employment: the PLCE in Bangladesh, for instance, does indeed reach females, but it fails in most cases to provide them with sustainable access to self-employment. The evaluation team recommends addressing these weaknesses at the levels of conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring in a more systematic manner. What seems to be particularly important is to find ways of developing, on the one hand, VSD activities that strengthen the possibilities for females to achieve self-employment by promoting sustainable access to equipment, funding and markets. On the other hand, SDC should promote VSD of females at higher levels of the occupational ladder in those modern industries where females mainly work in low paid, low-skills jobs.

According to the graduates' self assessment of their families' income situation, beneficiaries of these three interventions are not particularly poor, either. In Bangladesh and Peru, about one third of the respondents consider themselves to be 'poor' or 'very poor', while all others consider themselves as 'average'. In Burkina Faso, 64% of the respondents consider themselves to be 'poor' or 'very poor', but out of the remaining 36%, the majority consider themselves to be quite well off, or even wealthy. On the basis of our interviews, the overall impression is that beneficiaries belong to a large extent to 'average' families, with the exception of Burkina Faso (CBN 2) where they include a large share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (but also a non-negligible number of relatively wealthy participants).

Going beyond our own fieldwork, table 4 condenses the information for all VSD activities under review. It was assumed that programmes and projects aim at minimally enrolling 50% of socio-economically disadvantaged, i.e. poor individuals, 50% of girls or females and 50% of individuals from rural areas. If this aim, according to information available to the evaluation team, was either reached or not reached, this was documented with either *yes* or *no* respectively. In some cases, data were lacking (l.d.) or projects did not explicitly cater to the respective target groups (n.c.t). In the case of the National Skill Testing Board Project in Nepal, the target group is being reached, as the project aims at catering to at least 35% socio-economically disadvantaged individuals.

Table 4: Reaching of target groups

Region	Country	Project	Effective target group			
			Poor	Girls / females	Rural population	Ethnic minorities
Africa	Burkina Faso	Association Tin Tua	partly	partly	yes	n.c.t.
	Mali	PAFP	no	no	no	n.c.t.
Asia	Bangladesh	PLCE 2	no	yes	yes	n.c.t.
	Nepal	NSTB	yes (48%)	l.d.	yes	n.c.t.
	Bangladesh	CMES	yes	no	yes	n.c.t.
Latin America	Peru	Caplab	no	yes	yes	n.c.t.
	Nicaragua	Capacitacion Laboral	yes	yes	yes	n.c.t.
	Ecuador	Reto Rural	yes	yes	yes	n.c.t.
Europe	Moldova	MOSAC	n.c.t.	n.c.t.	n.c.t.	n.c.t.
	Albania	AlbVet	n.c.t.	yes	no	i.o.

Legend

- i.o. implementation (of the respective component) ongoing
- l.d. lacking data
- n.c.t. no corresponding target group

This review suggests that the *targeted populations are, in the majority of the projects, being reached*. However, there do remain some important gaps: on the one hand, a number of interventions, particularly those VSD activities in developing countries (i.e. non-Eastern European countries) whose effectiveness in terms of outreach was also analysed on the basis of data from our fieldwork, had difficulties reaching the poor. On the other hand, a number of supported programmes (notably those in West Africa) have difficulties reaching females and girls (see also box 4). Given the fact that SDC's current BE and VSD strategy

is strongly poverty-oriented and also has a strong focus on integrating females into VSD, it is particularly important to more systematically ensure that VSD activities reach these groups of beneficiaries.

4.2.2 Skills provision and the labour market

High labour market relevance of VSD activities

Case studies suggest that SDC's VSD programmes are considerably *more labour market-oriented* than the majority of formal TVET programmes in their respective countries. The evidence of high employability among beneficiaries of the programmes (see section 4.4.1) is the main proof of this. There are numerous reasons for this strong labour market-orientation of SDC's VSD activities:

- Certainly, it is important that *employers* or *experienced employees* and self-employed individuals in the agricultural or artisanal sector are involved as much as possible in planning and delivery of training (which has in fact become a common practice in most programmes of other donor agencies).
- A further important factor positively influencing the strong labour market-orientation of SDC's VSD activities is the fact that the programmes often have *low educational entry barriers*. These low entry barriers are often associated with fewer opportunities for further formal education, so that the focus on theory becomes less important. Furthermore, the comparatively low socio-economic status of beneficiaries (which is associated with low educational backgrounds) makes them more willing to join the corresponding labour markets.
- In the case of VSD programmes in the NFE sector (catering mainly to adults), access to additional equipment and funding is often crucial, which puts into perspective the role of skills in the process of promoting self-employment through NFE.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that some of SDC's VSD activities have not resolved all the issues.

- In some cases (e.g. in the case of the PLCE 2 in Bangladesh), implementing partners, notably NGOs, lacked the capacity to orientate VSD to the needs of the labour market. This is, of course, a particular problem of large VSD programmes that are implemented in rural areas, where the formal labour market hardly exists, rendering it difficult for outside agencies to create links with artisans and other economically active individuals.
- In the case of BE programmes enriched with VSD components, these vocational components do not always increase the labour market relevance of programmes. In the case of Tin Tua's CBN 2 programmes, students generally aim to enrol at the secondary level upon finalising the *Certificat d'études primaires* (CEP), and, fully in line with Foster's (1965) observations, they hardly ever aspire to work in the trades on which the programmes focus. In contrast, findings on CMES (Bangladesh) suggest that a considerable number of students enter those trades which they have been prepared for (e.g. the garment industry). CMES' success may be explained in large part by the fact that in the rapidly growing urban industries in Bangladesh there is an increasing economic demand for literate labour with initial training, whereas in Burkina Faso access to employment in the much smaller, not rapidly growing artisanal labour market still mainly depends on contacts to employers.

Long term skill needs

The focus of many of SDC's VSD activities is on the *immediate short-term skill needs* of specific economic sectors (in West Africa, for instance, of the artisanal sector). Even though this may rather be an issue of broader reflections on development-economic strategies, it is certainly important to see that many countries suffer from *severe skills shortages* in a number of potentially critical economic sectors (at various occupational levels), which SDC's VSD activities are currently doing very little to reduce. The evaluation team is aware of the fact that conventional approaches to resolving such shortages are expensive, and that such VSD activities do not primarily focus on the poor. Both of these aspects were key to SDC's decision in the mid-1990s to withdraw from its strategy of mainly supporting centres of excellence. Given the high relevance of this issue (see also section 4.1.1), there may be scope for creating public-private partnerships with firms in the various sectors (some of which may rely on Swiss foreign direct investment, FDI), and even for reducing costs by organising in-firm training.

4.2.3 Reduction of school dropout by linking VSD with BE

In line with the Federal Council's 2008 bill on Swiss development cooperation, the 2008 BE and VSD policy strategy stated that VSD can contribute considerably to the overall relevance of BE. In this evaluation the team was mandated to analyse whether vocational components contributed to reducing school dropout, a question which was analysed mainly against the backdrop of information from only one project – the project to support Tin Tua in Burkina Faso. Further information was retrieved from documentation on CMES (Bangladesh).

Tin Tua runs a programme for both adolescents and adults that have gone through basic literacy training and are willing to go to school in order to pass the CEP. Additional to their education in the national curriculum, they are also introduced to a number of artisanal trades. Counting all students who do not complete the full four years of the training programme as dropouts, and who do not enrol in formal education instead, we obtained a dropout ratio of 13% for *CBN 2 Jeunes* and of 54% for *CBN 2 Adultes*. Considering that the dropout rate in formal primary education in Burkina Faso was as high as 30-40% in the early 2000s (World Bank, 2009), the *CBN 2 Jeunes* programme does remarkably well. In contrast, the *CBN 2 Adultes* programme shows relatively elevated dropout rates. Looking at the effect of *CBN 2 Jeunes* on further education, we again find the expected positive effect. Graduates from the *CBN 2 Jeunes* programme enrol in formal (secondary) education more frequently than their siblings. This effect is strongest (and clearly significant) for graduates from poor and very poor families.

However, even in the case of the comparatively successful *CBN 2 Jeunes* programme, it would be misleading to argue that the link between BE and VSD was the key underlying reason for low dropout rates. The main reasons for low dropout rates are rather the facts that a) the language of instruction is *Gourmantché* (and not French), b) the school-year is adapted to the seasonal economic activities in the area and c) beneficiaries don't belong to the absolutely poorest (who cannot afford the high opportunity costs of schooling). The effects of vocational components on the reduction of school dropout rates can therefore be considered quite minimal. In the case of Tin Tua, this is not a major problem, as the pre-vocational subjects are provided in a comparatively cost-effective way. However, the evaluation team came across similar supported activities which were far more costly, and do not promise to have much larger impact (see Box 5).

In the case of CMES, documentation suggests that dropout rates are lower than the Bangladeshi average, but still considerably high, particularly for the transitions between the different levels of the CMES programme. Furthermore, dropout rates are higher for the advanced levels than for lower grades, which may be related to the fact that unemployment rates are higher for those from higher levels. There is no evidence on how the pre-vocational components of the CMES programmes play into this picture. However, it can be assumed that the prime incentives for beneficiaries to join the CMES programme are the comparatively high quality BE, and the lower real costs of education. In the case of the

garments-oriented skills component, girls seem to view the programme as an avenue to higher-paid jobs in the garment industry. However, given the fact that access to higher level (e.g. supervisory level) jobs in the garment industry is generally reserved for promoted operators, motivation to stay on in the CMES programme declines over the course of the programme (Maurer, 2011).

Against the backdrop of these observations, the evaluation team comes to the conclusion that efforts to enrich basic education with vocational contents need to be promoted with some caution. They only seem to contribute to a reduction in school dropout rates if, as the CMES case suggests, there exists an obvious link between the vocational contents of the programme and the specific cognitive and practical skill needs of economic sectors where beneficiaries plan to seek employment. It's only under these circumstances that beneficiaries have an incentive to remain at school for more years than with a conventional education programme.

4.2.4 Contribution to the improvement of the quality of training organisations

Virtually all projects under review aimed at improving the quality of training organisations, either directly or indirectly. In fact, a key feature of many VSD programmes is that they simultaneously intervene in different domains of VSD systems (skill standards and curriculum development, teacher and instructor training, development of examination material) and at different levels (local/national) of these systems (see for example the outline of the VSD project in Albania). In the domain of curriculum development, SDC's VSD activities have always had a strong focus on involving the private sector, which is one of the reasons why labour market relevance of supported training programmes is comparatively high (see section 4.1.1 above).

Table 5: Assessment of SDC's contribution to quality aspects of VSD systems

Region	Country	Project	Type of intervention	Type of quality input	Assessment	Explications for notes on assessment
Africa	Burkina Faso	Association Tin Tua	PEP	EQU, TIT, CUR	satisfactory	Overall quality of literacy training is high; the focus of both Tin Tua and donors is, however, almost exclusively on literacy training, and hardly on the VSD components of NFE programmes. This also applies to support to FONAEF.
	Mali	PAFP	NDP	TIT, SST, CUR	good	However, there is insufficient information on the quality of the general education aspects of the programme.
Asia	Bangladesh	PLCE 2	NDP	EQU, TIT, CUR	satisfactory	Some NGOs seem to have limited technical capacity to orient VSD components of NFE programmes towards the needs of the labour market; lack of equipment for practical training
	Nepal	NSTB	NDP	EXM	good	-
	Bangladesh	CMES	PEP	EQU, TIT, CUR	good	-

Region	Country	Project	Type of intervention	Type of quality input	Assessment	Explications for notes on assessment
Latin America	Peru	Caplab	NDP	CGC, EQU, TIT, CUR	good	-
	Nicaragua	Capacitacion Laboral	NDP	EQU, TIT, CUR	good	-
	Ecuador	Reto Rural	NDP	EQU, TIT, CUR	good	-
Europe	Albania	AlbVet	PEP	EQU, TIT, CUR	satisfactory	Positive results particularly in one component (hydraulics programme in vocational schools); many other quality-related aims could not be achieved or are still in the process of being implemented.
	Moldova	MOSAC	NDP	SST	best practice documents; implementation failed	Political reasons (see box 1 in section 4.1.1)

Legend

CGC	career guidance and counselling	NDP	newly designed programme
CUR	curriculum material	PEP	previously existing programme
EQU	equipment	SST	skill standards
EXM	examination material	TIT	teacher and/or instructor training

Table 5 briefly summarises the findings with regard to this aspect of the evaluation. It does so by distinguishing those VSD activities that supported previously existing programmes (PEP) from others which were newly designed (NDP). The table shows that the quality of contributions by SDC's VSD activities can, with some exceptions, be rated as 'good'. However, this evaluation holds serious reservations with regard to the ability of some of the efforts to sustain their quality provision. In fact, developing skill standards, curricula and examination material of high standard and providing state-of-the-art training to teachers and instructors can be considered easy compared to implementing processes that ensure the long-term development of instructional and human resources. We will delve into this matter in more detail in sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3 below.

4.3 Efficiency

As laid out in the IR, questions on efficiency were not addressed systematically by the evaluation team. Nevertheless, in the course of the review process the team came across a few issues pertaining to this DAC criterion that need to be mentioned briefly, in view of the fact that many within SDC are critical of previous activities in the VSD domain which focused on providing comparatively expensive training to a limited number of beneficiaries; and they would emphasise that the focus should be on interventions which have a larger outreach and particularly cater to socio-economically disadvantaged segments of societies.

In sum, the efficiency (in terms of unit costs) of VSD activities is certainly gauged as higher than in the early 1990s when SDC focused on supporting centres of excellence. However, the review suggests that it remains important to consider efficiency issues, not with a narrow view on unit costs, but from a larger perspective that also reflects other DAC criteria. Particular attention should be devoted to the role of infrastructure and equipment, and to the administrative costs of activities that have a comparatively small outreach. We illustrate this point by briefly looking at SDC's support to two NGOs (see box 5).¹

Box 6: Efficiency issues with VSD activities

The *Fédération pour le Développement Communautaire* in Burkina Faso is involved in literacy training and also provides programmes that prepare students for the CEP. In this context, pre-vocational training plays a major role. For this reason, the NGO built a model village with the help of the EU, where students are introduced to traditional farming, namely crop cultivation, animal husbandry and fish farming. SDC currently provides funds to buy more land and to build a fishpond of considerable size, as the old fishponds were found to be dysfunctional. The evaluation team is critical of this support, not only on the grounds that unit costs are high. It is unlikely that students will be more attracted to village life and to the rural world of work because of these installations. Certainly, comprehensive approaches to BE may include pre-vocational components, but they should be designed this way more for the sake of a holistic education and less for the sake of keeping occupational aspirations (which is often the intention of policy makers) at a low level.

In the case of CMES in Bangladesh, infrastructure costs per child seem to be reasonable, and there is little doubt that pedagogical approaches are strongly student-centred and effective in the way that beneficiaries find employment. However, if compared to large-scale projects like PLCE 2, total unit costs of CMES can be considered high when administration costs (including those of SDC) and overseas technical assistance to the NGO are taken into account. This problem, of course, is not unique to CMES but to most other small NGOs that benefit from direct donor support.

4.4 Impact

The following section provides an overview of the evidence on signs of impact at the level of individuals. Given that the data on which statements could be based were of a very heterogeneous nature, the findings (for both access to employment and access to income) are presented in two sections, focusing on data from both fieldwork-based case studies and desk study-based case studies, which contain relevant information on this topic.

4.4.1 Access to employment

Access to employment by graduates of formal TVET programmes is low in many countries where SDC operates: in Bangladesh, for instance, a tracer study by the World Bank found that only 9.7% of male participants were employed and that the employment rate amongst females was found to be even lower (World Bank, 2006, p. 29). Similar challenges for formal TVET programmes are reported from countries in West Africa (Walther, 2009), from the Western Balkans (Bartlett, 2007; Fetsi, et al., 2007) and from Latin America (Jacinto, 2008). It is against this statistical backdrop that SDC's efforts need to be analysed. At first, we look at the most important findings from relevant case studies. Although the information in table 6 is based on data from very different types of sources, we see that beneficiaries of VSD programmes supported by SDC have better chances of finding

¹ The Burkinabe *Fédération pour le Développement Communautaire* was not in the main focus of the evaluation, but was visited in the course of one of the missions, as it is being supported – like Tin Tua today – through the *Programme Education de Base*.

employment, or of becoming self-employed, than the graduates of conventional TVET programmes.

Table 6: Access to employment by beneficiaries of different VSD activities

<p>A) Evidence from field-study based case studies</p> <p>Bangladesh: PLCE 2 Evidence shows that employment rates (which almost always reflect self-employment) among beneficiaries are close to 100%, which, however, is not higher than that of the control group. These figures conceal a high degree of underemployment (associated with poor income) among former beneficiaries. The underlying problem here is not only that skills training is not practical enough (see 4.2.4) and that the supply of skills becomes quickly saturated, but also that the programme does not provide access to equipment or starting capital, which would be necessary for many forms of self-employment.</p> <p>Burkina Faso: Tin Tua For Tin Tua's <i>CBN 2 programme</i>, evidence suggests that the unemployment rate among beneficiaries is below 2.6%. However, only few beneficiaries join the artisanal sectors towards which the vocational contents of the programme are oriented, and as their practical skills are not sufficient, students need to undergo apprenticeship training in a workshop. The large majority of the students of the youth programme pursue education at the secondary level and thus do not enter the job market. In the case of Tin Tua's <i>FTS programme</i>, beneficiaries earn their livelihoods to a considerable extent from subsistence farming activities, and do not look for formal employment, even after training; they continue to be self-employed. However, the training programmes and the access to equipment and financial capital that is linked to these programmes provide the beneficiaries with more opportunities for income generating activities, with a clearly positive impact on their revenues.</p> <p>Peru: Caplab It was found that only a small percentage of Caplab graduates remained unemployed (16.9%), and that 64.5% found employment in the field of work for which they had been trained. This unemployment rate is low compared to that of 73% among graduates of the <i>centros de educación</i>.</p>
<p>B) Evidence from desk study-based case studies and meta-evaluations</p> <p>Albania: AlbVET Prior to their being supported through AlbVET, 85% of interviewed trainees from one component (financing training delivery) had been unemployed; however, upon training the rate was at 11% (11 had full time employment / 35 being self-employed).</p> <p>Bangladesh: CMES In the case of CMES, unemployment rates of beneficiaries – with 14% at the junior level and 40% at the senior level – are considerably lower than the average rate of TVET graduates in Bangladesh.</p> <p>Mali: PAFP In the case of the PAFP, employability of beneficiaries is high – considerably higher than for the trainees of formal TVET programmes, but similar to that of those having undergone traditional apprenticeship training. Furthermore, reports suggest that many of the trainees stay on in the workshop at least for some time, many of them as apprentices. For more details see section 4.4.3 below.</p> <p>Nepal: NSTB 85% of interviewed beneficiaries consider the certificate helpful to finding employment.</p>

Particularly in countries with comparatively high enrolments rates in primary and secondary education (e.g. Albania and Peru), the programmes contribute to the creditability of SDC-supported VSD systems, as access to employment, in the eyes of beneficiaries, can become a means to a livelihood. However, the positive assessment needs to be put into perspective for those contexts where enrolment in formal education is comparatively lower (e.g. Bangladesh, Mali). Two points deserve particular attention:

- In these countries, *high employability and low unemployment rates are not unique features* of SDC's VSD programmes, when compared to the traditional, exclusively workshop-based apprenticeship system. Therefore it is particularly important that in these contexts training programmes also provide access to higher income.
- *Access to self-employment* is often dependent on access to additional funding and/or equipment; the potential of activities that exclusively focus on skills provision is therefore limited.

4.4.2 Access to income

Social demand for VSD programmes cannot be increased if potential beneficiaries only see that they will have better access to employment; training must also result in income increases. From the perspective of development cooperation, this is particularly important in those contexts where access to employment is (as described in the section above) high among beneficiaries of other, more traditional forms of skills training.

Table 7 provides a brief overview of achievements in the domain of income.

Table 7: Access to higher income by beneficiaries of different VSD activities

<p>A) Evidence from field-study based case studies</p>
<p>Bangladesh: PLCE 2 In terms of access to income, PLCE seems not to have been very successful. The majority of respondents believe that their siblings are financially better-off than themselves, and many (38%) believe that their siblings also enjoy greater social prestige. In addition, negative responses are relatively more frequent among female graduates and among the poor and disadvantaged. When asked to compare their progress to their siblings', 60% of female respondents state that their siblings do better, while the opposite is true for male respondents (80% estimate that their own progress has been stronger). For women, migrating to towns in order to work in the garment industry promises to be a far more attractive option than trying to get involved in self-employment through NFE.</p> <p>Burkina Faso: Tin Tua Graduates of CBN 2 courses are generally likely to have a higher income than their farming parents. These benefits through training are much higher in the case of the programme for adults than for the youth programme, a difference which seems to be driven by the simple fact that most graduates of the latter proceed with formal education which they haven't yet completed, so that they do not (yet) contribute much to family income (see section 4.2.3). Analysis further suggests that apprenticeships as a complement to the previous completion of the <i>CBN 2 Adultes</i> appear to open up particularly promising income opportunities. In the case of the <i>FTS programme</i>, there is strong evidence for increases in income. However, it is important to note that this positive impact is restricted to a very small number of beneficiaries. Furthermore, given the fact that increases in revenues are rather attributed to access to equipment and financial capital, the potential for individuals who have not participated in the training to profit from the skills of the direct beneficiaries (i.e. spillover effects) is limited.</p> <p>Peru: Caplab In Peru, the comparison of income among siblings does not yield any significant differences. However, all graduates assess their future prospects as at least as good as their siblings'. Moreover, it is notable that this positive assessment is most clearly given by graduates from poor and very poor family backgrounds, who respond without exception that they expect a better future than their siblings.</p>
<p>B) Evidence from desk study-based case studies and meta-evaluations</p>
<p>Bangladesh: CMES Documentation suggests that there is a positive correlation between grades achieved and incomes earned. The trend is reported to be consistent across the trades. In the case of the garment industry, for instance, junior level graduates earned Taka 500-1000 per month, intermediary graduates Taka 1500-2000 and senior graduates Taka 2500-3000 (Curtis, Alam, Wahab, & Sabur, 2010, p. 10).</p> <p>Ecuador: Reto Rural Incomes of the beneficiaries have improved tremendously; it was reported that some of them earn up to 5 times more than prior to training.</p> <p>Mali: PAFP Available information suggests that salaries for those having undergone training along the lines of the dual apprenticeship model are not higher than those of traditional apprentices, even though there is some evidence that productivity of those having undergone dual training is, in fact, higher than of those with traditional training. This finding may be explained by the fact that wages in the artisanal labour market are only loosely coupled with productivity, and are more reflective of practical experience and seniority. Furthermore, salaries of dually trained apprentices are certainly higher than those of the many graduates that leave public professional training without finding employment.</p>

The first part of the table, with evidence based on empirical data from our own fieldwork, suggests that VSD components of the programmes contributed to higher incomes only in a limited way. This is particularly true for Caplab and PLCE 2. It is noteworthy that this statement even applies to the two Burkinabe programmes, even though they indeed show positive results. In fact, in the case of CBN 2, a large majority of students do not enter the occupations for which they have been prepared, (see also section above) and, in the case of FTS, access to equipment and capital is at least as crucial as access to skills.

In contrast, documents feeding into our two meta-evaluations (i.e. CMES in Bangladesh and Reto Rural in Ecuador) report a positive impact on wages. While it must be pointed out that these findings are not based on an analysis that includes control groups, we nevertheless find the case of CMES particularly interesting. In fact, it seems that this NGO created a link between school-based VSD and the skill needs of factories in the area. The trainees profit from this link as they have access to employment and improved prospects for promotion within the firm. At the same time, firms seem to be realising the value-addition through increased productivity of trainees, and accordingly pay higher salaries. Obviously, such links were not created in the case of Caplab, the CBN 2 programmes and PLCE 2. It is suggested that such links be fostered in the future, through a stronger focus on productivity during project design.

4.4.3 Value added by the dual model

As a lack of relevance of training programmes is perceived to be one of the key challenges of many VSD systems in the developing world, cooperation agencies from German-speaking countries (particularly former GTZ) promoted the dual model as an important instrument to promote VSD reforms, all the more as the approach to involve the private sector in skills provision reduced the per capita costs for equipment at schools, because equipment could be used for many more students than with fulltime school-based VSD. However, this approach was often criticised for not being sensitive to local economic contexts, particularly as the private sector (e.g. artisans) was never organised in the same way as some European countries, and because training cultures were entirely different. It was also for these reasons that many of these initiatives were found not to be sustainable, particularly if they focused on introducing the dual model at the system level (Greinert, 2001; Lewis, 2007; Schaack, 1997; Stockmann & Kohlmann, 1998).

Box 7: Dual model of vocational training

The dual model of vocational training is generally used for an approach to VSD that is common in a number of mainly German-speaking countries of continental Europe. What many consider to be the key feature of the dual model is that training takes place to a considerable degree (in Switzerland often approx. 80%) within firms, where firm and industry-specific skills are provided, while schools impart occupation-specific skills and general knowledge (e.g. languages, mathematics, social sciences etc.) (King & Palmer, 2010; Wettstein & Gonon, 2009). Furthermore, the private sector is strongly involved in crafting the legal regulations and in designing curricula, and has a strong say in the examination process, which further contributes to the high relevance of training for the labour market.

Despite this critique, the dual model retained some of its attractiveness for development agencies. SDC itself does not promote the dual model of vocational training at the level of its global strategies; however, the approach is often referred to by representatives of SDC, and was the basis upon which a number of VSD interventions were designed. The current evaluation looked at two projects on the basis of available reports – AlbVET in Albania and PAFP in Mali – which were explicitly designed along the lines of the dual model. The following table provides a brief overview of the key findings of the desk study reports in this regard:

Table 8: Value added by the dual model

<p>Evidence from the PAFP (Mali)</p> <p>Access to employment: Employment rates of graduates are reported to be as high as 98%, which is high compared to the graduates of the state-run VSD programmes which often remain unemployed. However, a significant proportion of the trainees remain as apprentices in the workshops after the official end of training. Furthermore, the high employment rate is similar to the rate of those who undergo traditional, i.e. exclusively workshop-based and less formalised apprenticeship training in the Malian artisan sector.</p> <p>Access to income Evidence in this regard is limited. Available information suggests, however, that salaries of those having undergone training along the lines of the dual apprenticeship model in Mali are not higher than those of traditional apprentices.</p> <p>Productivity Despite the lack of higher incomes, skills of dually trained apprentices, suggests one study, were rated higher compared to traditional apprentices, thus rendering them more efficient (in terms of material and temporal resources), more responsible and in this way more productive (Ndiaye & Thiéba, 2004, p. 21f). If this were true, which is not what the author of a later study believes (Crole-Rees, 2009, p. 12), then productivity gains would be kept by employers, who would invest these gains in an expansion of operations and would thereby create additional employment opportunities. Evidence in this regard, however, is lacking.</p> <p>Technological innovation The programme does not in itself create paths to technological innovation, as apprentices are mainly socialised in the traditional production context. However, trained apprentices are more likely to react better to emerging technological innovations. For instance, most motorcycle repair workshops, used to two-stroke motors, lacked the skills to repair four-stroke engines. Thanks to training which was partly carried out in schools with the necessary equipment, apprentices could now cater to this demand from customers.</p>
<p>Evidence from the AlbVET programme (Albania)</p> <p>In the AlbVET programme, the current component “partnership for learning” (previously: cooperation and networking) is designed along the lines of the dual model, in the sense that it fosters training programmes that take place in training centres and within enterprises and workshops. At the same, it aims at strongly involving representatives of the private sector in the establishment and monitoring of training programmes. The programme’s achievements since 2007 have not been very promising, as only two training programmes, out of which only one is running with an intake of approx. 30 trainees, could be established. The main reason for the limited success of the component is discord between some representatives of the private sector and the AlbVET programme. In the case of the programme which is currently running, no graduates have been turned out yet, making an assessment in terms of higher access to employment and income impossible.</p>

This overview suggests that the experience with the dual model is not fully satisfactory: the evaluation team acknowledges the fact that employability of students (in Mali) was high compared to the graduates of the public secondary vocational schools. However, there is no evidence to suggest that these trainees would be in a considerably better position than the trainees of traditional apprenticeship training. The incentives for a student to enrol in such a programme are therefore not very strong. As experience from many other developing and transition countries shows, the real challenge will be to sustain the cooperation between workshops and schools after the phase-out of SDC support.

The evaluation team has learnt that many within SDC are aware of these difficulties and see different alternative approaches to the dual model. The following two are, from the perspective of the evaluation team, of particular importance:

- *Dual model as an underlying rationale for VSD activities:* Many of SDC’s VSD activities are inspired by the experience with the dual training model in Switzerland, strongly emphasising the *need to include representatives of the private sector* in the planning and implementation of training programmes and reforms, and to respect them as important actors that bear a considerable share of the responsibility in training their work-

force. This approach has become visible in projects as diverse as CMES (Bangladesh) and Caplab (Peru).

- *Traditional apprenticeship combined with literacy training:* Doing without vocationally-oriented school subjects, this model, implemented in contexts with low literacy rates, provides reading and writing skills to those already working in the labour market. Evidence from Burkina Faso suggests that this is a promising, very cost-effective strategy with large outreach and a positive impact on the incomes of beneficiaries.

4.5 Sustainability

Contributions to national-level VSD reforms and to sustainable organisational changes is a key objective of SDC's approach to VSD (see e.g. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2008), and is therefore also a main aspect of this evaluation. Given the fact that the majority of projects in the portfolio used for this analysis are ongoing, the following elaborations will mainly focus on a) aspects of planning with regard to the sustainable development of financial and human resources of the supported organisations, b) the way in which reporting and evaluation processes contributed to ensuring sustainable impacts of VSD activities and c) achievements with regard to changes at the national level in partner countries.

4.5.1 Sustainability in terms of financial and human resources

A brief look at project design & exit strategies

SDC's projects generally provide financial resources in a very continuous manner, sometimes over decades. In Nepal, for instance, SDC has been active in the sector since 1961; in Burkina Faso since the early 1980s; in Albania since 1994. Accordingly, human resources are secured for a long time. The approach involves some risks, however:

- As SDC gives so much weight to being a long-term partner, fundamental reflections on approaches and the potential for long-term sustainability of effects are relatively rare, even in those cases where projects are phased out, only to be continued almost immediately with only a slight difference in setup, yet under a totally different name (see also section 4.5.2). This was the case in Burkina Faso with the *Programme Alpha*, whose mission was basically carried on under the *Programme Education de Base*.
- In some cases (e.g. in Nepal, where SDC has been active for many decades), SDC pursues a somewhat callow programme approach that is characterised by a sequence of incrementally launched projects that lack explicit and clear-cut overarching programme objectives; this certainly allows a great deal of flexibility in the process but renders monitoring and evaluation (i.e. impact assessment) difficult.
- Political circumstances in Switzerland increasingly pressurise SDC into concentrating its activities on fewer countries. For this reason, exit and real phase-out of programmes is often not an outcome of technical, but rather of political, considerations, and is therefore not sufficiently reflected upon in many programme designs. A number of projects (e.g. the ones in Peru or in Moldova) seem to have been *stopped in a relatively abrupt way*, which is particularly worrisome if the interventions would have needed further, i.e. post-intervention support (e.g. in the field of instructor training, stipends, development of standards and curricula etc.).

Sustainable organisational development...

At the time of this evaluation, 8 out of 10 VSD activities under review are still in the process of being implemented; the two remaining projects are Caplab in Peru and MOSAC in Moldova. Against this backdrop, the following two tables separately analyse a) organisational sustainability in the two phased-out VSD activities and b) the prospects for sustainable organisational development in ongoing VSD activities.

Table 9: Organisational sustainability in phased-out VSD activities

	Assessment
Caplab (Peru)	<p>Ensuring sustainable organisational development was an important issue from the outset of the twelve year project. As a consequence of the growing prominence of the project and its model-like approach to increasing cooperation between different stakeholders in VSD, the conversion of the programme into an NGO was implemented already prior to the exit phase. When Swiss financial aid began to decrease, Caplab started to look for ways to retain its financial viability. One of their strategies was to offer courses and other similar services (consulting and know-how transfer to other organisations) in Peru and in other countries in the region. At the same time, the NGO began to expand its range of offers in related areas. Today, the NGO sells its services as an implementing partner to different development agencies, private firms and philanthropic organisations. As these services do not exclusively cater to the poor, and as the success of the organisation challenges other (mainly public) training providers in the country (all the more as it uses the name of a prominent donor-funded project), the NGO is often subject to critique, some of which is currently being shared by representatives of SDC, both at the HQ and in Peru.</p> <p>The evaluation team believes that SDC, through its support to Caplab, has supported the development of an organisation which has made a lasting contribution to making VSD in Peru more labour market-oriented.</p>
MOSAC (Moldova)	<p>In Moldova (see also box 1), SDC financed technical assistance to develop occupational standards. There was no intention to create new organisational structures as such, but rather to promote an existing administrative agency (MOSAC) to a key organisational role in the formulation of occupational and training standards. In the course of implementation, it became increasingly clear that there was no backing from the highest ranks of the government for this change, notably from the MoE, which is in the process of implementing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF).</p> <p>The evaluation team doesn't see any sign of sustainable organisational change and believes that failing implementation could have been averted through more systematic project design.</p>

This comparison shows that it is difficult to sustain organisational change. Certainly, the fact that Caplab still depends mainly on funding from external sources is not ideal. However, in view of the difficulties that many donor-funded projects face after phase-out, the achievement of having supported an organisation that continues to promote some of the core objectives of the former SDC project is remarkable.

It is against this backdrop that we now turn, in table 10, to the on-going VSD projects and their respective prospects for sustainable organisational development. Those projects whose prospects for sustainable organisational development were found to be promising or noteworthy by the evaluation team are marked with a *plus* (+); those with less promising prospects with a *minus* (-), and those with mixed prospects, with *plus/minus* (+/-)

Table 10: Prospects for sustainable organisational development in ongoing VSD activities

Region	Country	Project	
Africa	Burkina Faso	Association Tin Tua + / -	Though some of the funding still goes directly to the NGO Tin Tua – a kind of support which the evaluation team does not rate to be sustainable in the long run – SDC was crucial in setting up FONAEF, which pools funds from donors and the government in order to expand NFE in the country and to sustainably fund activities like those of Tin Tua. At the same time, some of the programmes offered by Tin Tua were taken over by the state, which is a further positive sign in terms of the sustainability of efforts.
	Mali	PAFP +	Training programmes by private training providers as well as investments in in-firm training are mainly financed by means (FAFPA) which existed prior to the programme.
Asia	Bangladesh	PLCE 2 -	Though the outreach of PCLE 2 is enormous, there's a danger that achievements won't be sustained. Originally it was thought that communities would provide funding to the NGOs offering training; however, financial capacities of the communities seem to have been overestimated and the prospect that the government will continue funding after the phase-out of PLCE 2 is not good.
	Bangladesh	CMES -	Funding to CMES was a classical type of support to an innovative but strongly donor-dependent NGO (see also the case of Tin Tua above). Currently, SDC, which was not involved in the establishment of the organisation, is phasing out, though in agreement with other donors who are continuing their support of CMES, whose existence continues to depend on ODA.
	Nepal	NSTB + / -	NSTB is partly financed through realistic fees as well as through government funding, which could be seen as a sustainable funding mechanism; however, the testing service currently offers its services almost exclusively to donor-funded training programmes, which casts doubt on whether NSTB will be maintained after the retreat of these donors.
Latin America	Nicaragua	Capacitacion Laboral + / -	A key aspect of the programme is to improve the dialogue between different stakeholders of the VSD system. The dialogue is mainly being promoted through the implementation agency of the project, located within the public administration, which, according to the current project design, will be dissolved after SDC support. Whether the dialogue will be continued in the absence of SDC is not certain.
	Ecuador	Reto Rural ² +	In the last phase, funding of the project was borne to a considerable extent (47%) by the government, which considered Reto Rural to be its own project. The government is now replicating the approach. Thus, activities supported by SDC are being scaled up by the government and continue even after SDC's withdrawal from the country.
Europe	Albania	AlbVet + / -	AlbVET is a highly complex programme with a number of components operating in different segments and at different levels of the country's VSD system. Some of the components of the first phase were phased out, with limited effects in terms of sustainable organisational change. However, there are signs that some of the approaches used (e.g. "partnership for learning") are being taken up by competitors of the supported training organisations, which is a very positive sign for sustainable bottom-up change in the country's VSD system.

² The project was only recently phased-out, which makes it difficult to assess the project's sustainability from an ex-post perspective; for this reason, Reto Rural is mentioned in table 10 (and not in the previous one).

... and its relation to the issue of replicating outreach

What the team considers to be noteworthy is the positive prospects for sustainable organisational development in the case of the two African projects under review. This positive assessment is based mainly on the fact that, in both cases, SDC considerably contributed to the development of funding mechanisms that have already gone beyond a sole reliance on donor support. At the same time, and this makes these activities particularly relevant, the funding mechanisms were the basis for a considerable increase in outreach, i.e. for increasing access to NFE (Burkina Faso) and practically-oriented VSD (Mali), and so for reaching more beneficiaries than SDC could ever have catered to with its comparatively limited resources. Also noteworthy are the effects of Caplab in Peru in this regard:

already during implementation, the project's approach was not only used for improving linkages between different stakeholders of the Peruvian VSD system, but was also taken up by other organisations in Peru and transferred to other countries. Whereas, in the case of the two West African countries, we see an expansion of outreach in quantitative terms (i.e. with regard to access), in the case of Caplab in Peru, there was a considerable enhancement of outreach in qualitative terms.

From such a perspective, the impressive outreach of PLCE 2 in Bangladesh is in danger of creating a flash in the pan instead of lasting change. Undoubtedly, the project reaches hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries and it does so by strongly involving government agencies in this process. However, success is virtually exclusively dependent on tremendous sums of donor funding, without putting the central government, the communities or other potentially important stakeholders in the position to sustain the achievements.

4.5.2 Reporting and evaluation processes

Generally, reporting and evaluation processes do not focus sufficiently on the requirements for impacts that can be sustained, even in the absence of donor intervention. The evaluation team considers the challenges to be at two different levels: at the level of individual projects, and at the corporate SDC level.

Project level

- *Lack of baseline data:* Not a single one of the projects under review had produced baseline data prior to the start of the intervention. We understand that the collection of such data may not be considered very relevant in the case of projects that mainly operate at the national level. In any event, the lack of such data renders the implementation of meaningful monitoring and ex-post evaluations difficult. Furthermore, data that are produced during implementation do not consequently focus on the same variables, such as gender, socio-economic status of households, educational background of parents etc. One important exception in this regard is the AlbVET project in Albania (and its predecessors), for which the implementation agency collected comprehensive tracer data on the beneficiaries (though not for control groups).
- *Overt focus on employability of trainees:* If quantitative data are being produced in the context of reporting, monitoring or evaluation processes, documents often refer to employability or to employment rates, which are mostly very satisfactory, particularly compared to those of graduates coming from the formal, i.e. mainly school-based TVET programmes. However, they do not sufficiently take into account that some pro-

Box 8: Focusing more prominently on outreach?

Development agencies find themselves under increasing pressure to document their achievements. Being able to point to outreach can therefore be crucial. However, these figures are generally difficult to compare and lack information about quality of training, sustainability of achievements and the potential to expand outreach.

Against this backdrop, the team considers those VSD activities particularly promising which achieve to contribute to change of VSD systems with the potential to cater to stakeholders at the local level (e.g. trainees or employers) during project duration and beyond. From such a perspective, achievements of a project like PLCE 2 (with a high outreach) appear to be considerably less satisfactory.

jects have a strong focus on enterprise-based training, for which potential control groups would be trainees undergoing traditional workshop-based training, who generally do not have a problem finding employment. Even for those projects which provide support to more school-based VSD, it would be important to also consider other aspects of impact, such as increases in income and, potentially, in productivity, which is of course difficult to measure (see also box 8).

- *Issues with long-term commitment.* SDC's interventions in many countries are often long-term commitments and, in some cases, an array of support mechanisms that aim at strengthening VSD systems both at the national and at the local level. Though this approach is mostly highly appreciated by stakeholders in the respective partner countries, it entails the risk that SDC, its partners organisations, and even evaluators, are not sufficiently reflecting on the potential barriers to the sustainable development of supported VSD organisations. In many cases (e.g. in the case of Bangladesh and Mali), it is being hoped that the public sector will start to show its readiness to fund the various initiatives, which is seldom the case.

Box 9: Risks of increasing impact orientation

DAC evaluation quality standards are becoming more important across the globe and they also have increasing influence on thinking within SDC. This trend may be an opportunity for SDC to more comprehensively promote common standards of result-oriented planning, implementation and evaluation. At the same time, the trend could also lead to an overt focus on short term impact, particularly as long as there are no regular mechanisms that look at the sustainability of impact over a longer period of time after the intervention. This risk is certainly greater for projects with a relatively small outreach that are likely to produce positive impact with regard to small groups of beneficiaries in a protected, sophisticatedly laid out intervention context.

Global level

- *Use of SAP:* Even though VSD is the responsibility of the E&I network (and had, prior to SDC's reorganisation, been dealt with by the E&I division), vocational training projects are entered as education sector projects. This system may be responsible for the fact that a number of projects which clearly pertain to VSD do not become visible at a more aggregate level as VSD projects. This also caused a problem for this evaluation, as the pre-selection portfolio did not contain a number of key projects (e.g. the PAFP in Burkina Faso). How it might be possible, under these circumstances, to effectively steer and further develop VSD within SDC has remained elusive to the evaluation team. Many in SDC argue that SAP is only an administrative tool that is used for statistical purposes, but that is not quite the way the evaluation team sees it: obviously, as the portfolio selected for this evaluation shows, the database is being used by the senior management as one of its bases for decision-making.
- *Insufficient exchange across regions:* In the context of the recent reorganisation, SDC's staff, which was directly and on a full-time basis working on specific themes, was considerably reduced, as was pointed out in section 3.2. Currently, VSD issues are discussed within and between the Education and Employment and Income networks, the activities of which are coordinated by two respective focal points. This organisational setup has the enormous advantage of directly linking SDC's staff in Berne with the programme officers in the COOFs, and has considerable potential for capacity building across regions. However, the new structure is also considered to have some significant limitations, both by representatives of SDC and by the evaluation team. *Firstly*, the temporal and financial resources to effectively promote capacity building in the field of VSD are minimal. *Secondly*, exchange between officers of the different regional divisions (e.g. between West Africa and South Asia where SDC strengthens VSD components of BE and NFE programmes) within the networks is difficult. This is at least partly also a consequence of the monolingual approaches of the respective websites. *Thirdly*, there are virtually no officers that would have the authority to ensure that projects in the field of VSD are designed along common lines in order to ensure a minimal standard of conceptual coherence, also in terms of prospects for evaluation.

4.5.3 Influence on national VSD frameworks

An important aspect of SDC's efforts in the VSD domain is the fact that the agency has, despite its small VSD budget, considerable influence on national VSD frameworks. This happens mainly through a) contributions to the establishment of organisations that have become important actors in the governance structure of VSD, b) support to already existing key agencies or associations, and c) the backing of important legal changes at the national level. The following section briefly points to a number of these aspects which are crucial for the sustainable development of VSD systems.

General awareness with regard to the role of VSD and legal changes

In the contexts where SDC operates, it has consistently promoted awareness of the importance of VSD in general, or of specific forms of VSD. Specific examples could be cited from virtually all countries under review.

A further important aspect is support (in the form of technical advice) for the development of sector policies, be it in Albania (VT Policy), Bangladesh (SD Policy), Burkina Faso (Literacy and NFE Policy), Ecuador (VT Policy), Nepal (SD Policy) or Peru (role of VSD in the Education Policy). Support for the development of sectoral policies is, in many cases, backed by efforts to strengthen key stakeholders (e.g. NGOs) which can then influence political changes.

Box 10: Increasing the demand of students for relevant VSD in Albania

Fundamental changes to VSD systems need not only be promoted through national-level reforms and initiatives, but also by increasing social and economic demand for training programmes, a bottom-up process which cannot be entirely planned. In Albania, AlbVET's partnership for learning component, for instance, which promotes the combining of school-based and enterprise-based learning among private stakeholders (training centres and associations), resulted in competitors setting up their own programmes, without being supported by SDC, as they realised that there is in fact social demand (by students) for training that is strongly labour-market oriented. This creates incentives for other private training centres to develop.

Establishment of, and support to, key organisations at the national level

Despite its small VSD budget, SDC has contributed to the establishment of organisations that have become important actors in the governance structure of VSD. Similarly important are activities that provide support to previously established, yet still not sufficiently solid key organisations in the VSD system. These efforts pertain to several domains of VSD policy.

- *Funding*: In virtually all countries under review, shortages in financial resources seriously hinder the development of VSD systems. SDC has supported a number of important initiatives. Particularly noteworthy are the FONAEF in Burkina Faso and the FAFPA in Burkina Faso and Mali, to which SDC has contributed in a substantial way, in terms of development and institutionalisation (see 4.5.1).
- *Curriculum development and certification*: The support of agencies with the capacity to develop relevant and recognised curricula and certification processes has been a key concern of many of SDC's activities. Many of them managed to successfully involve employers. In some cases it was difficult to sustain the achievements, however. The experience in this domain of intervention is therefore quite mixed, as can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11: Sustainability in the field of curriculum development and certification

±	In <i>Burkina Faso</i> , SDC, in conjunction with other donor agencies, supported the development of the CAFPP, which produced curricular material of good quality in cooperation with rural artisans. After phase-out of donor support, the agency was dissolved and the staff re-integrated into the Ministry of Employment and Youth. Observers believe that, under these circumstances, the work of the agency will not be continued.
-	In <i>Moldova</i> , SDC supported the development of the Institute for Moldovan Occupational Standards, Assessment and Certification (MOSAC). Due to a lack of commitment, particularly on the part of the Ministry of Education, the project was phased out without having produced sustainable results. The problem was related to the fact that the Ministry of Education of Moldova started a process of formulating an NQF, thus creating both overlaps and contradictions with the MOSAC approach.
±	In <i>Nepal</i> , SDC supported the development of the National Skill Testing Board (NSTB). This organisation may indeed have the potential to play a key role in the future development of a NQF. However, it currently seems that the agency is mainly an organisational complement of other agencies that have been developed with SDC assistance.
+	In <i>Nicaragua</i> , the support to the <i>Instituto Nacional Tecnológico</i> (INATEC) rendered this organisation more capable of developing relevant curricula in cooperation with representatives of the labour market.

De-concentration and decentralisation reforms

A number of countries where SDC is operating are in the process of implementing de-concentration and decentralisation reforms. In this context, SDC is supporting efforts that promote such political and administrative changes in the domain of VSD. The review, covering three such VSD activities, showed that these efforts are certainly very relevant, but face difficulties at the level of implementation:

Table 12: Achievements with regard to de-concentration and decentralisation

±	One of the key objectives of the original outline of the AlbVET programme in <i>Albania</i> was to support decentralisation in the country's VSD system by promoting the autonomy of vocational schools. However, the lack of commitment from the side of the government seriously hindered implementation. Nevertheless, an ongoing revision of VET legislation may lead to some aspects of school autonomy being enshrined in legislation.
-	The PLCE in <i>Bangladesh</i> promotes a community-based and needs-oriented approach to NFE and attempts to render centres truly "community-owned", at least to some extent. However, the provision of training through the NGOs has remained almost exclusively dependent on national-level project funding, and there are currently no signs that this would change after phase-out of the initiative.
-	In <i>Mali</i> , the current programme risks falling behind the achievements of previous efforts, as there is a) a lack of genuine commitment by the government to effectively devolve political and administrative responsibilities, b) a high number of public servants at the local level that lack experience in the field of training (in all but one province) and c) a lack of financial and human resources on the part of the implementing organisation to effectively guide this process.

4.5.4 Sensitivity to the risk of establishing parallel structures

Generally, SDC is extraordinarily concerned with avoiding the establishment of parallel structures. As pointed out in the previous section, the agency contributed to the establishment of key agencies or strengthened important existing organisations, often in alignment with other donors and on the basis of serious policy dialogue. Many of these efforts take place in the face of strongly segregated education and training systems that suffer from the divisions between different ministries (mainly those in charge of education and labour). Necessarily, SDC is forced to take sides in these debates; in many cases of course aiming to overcome such barriers. In *Burkina Faso*, for instance, SDC considerably contributes to increasing the linkages between NFE and BE. This increases avenues for social mobility and increases the social demand for education. In *Moldova*, the agency supported the development of the MOSAC, which initially was a joint initiative by the Min-

istry of Education and the Ministry of Economy and Trade, which then failed. And in *Peru*, one of the key achievements of Caplab was strong involvement of representatives from the ministries in charge of education and labour.

Our review suggests that difficulties are greatest in the field of certification. Clearly, this is a real challenge, as most traditional TVET certification systems are strongly theory-oriented. In such contexts, SDC's aim to support VSD programmes that are more labour market-oriented and have lower educational entry barriers led to the development of training programmes that stand "in opposition" to the common VSD structures. This is particularly visible in the West African context, where TVET systems are highly elitist and theory-driven. In *Mali*, for instance, the certificates of beneficiaries are not awarded by an existing national body, but instead by a commission that was established in the context of the project – the so called *Commission d'Organisation des Examens de Fin d'Apprentissage dans le Secteur de l'Artisanat*. In *Burkina Faso*, support to the CAFP led to comparatively strongly labour market-oriented curriculum and testing material, but the certificates lead neither to the qualifications under the Ministry of Education, nor to the *Certificat de qualification professionnelle* (CQP). SDC's support in these cases may increase the dichotomy between two VSD approaches, and it is difficult to foresee whether or not this would be helpful for the sustainable development of a comprehensive VSD system. However, there is also scope for such interventions to contribute to more labour market-orientation, even among other VSD programmes.

4.6 A comment on critical assumptions underlying SDC's VSD activities

The evaluation of SDC's VSD activities in the previous sections revealed a number of key challenges for SDC's contribution to the sustainable development of relevant and effective VSD systems, such as in reaching target groups or with regard to ensuring financial viability of programmes upon phasing out. Many of these challenges are not only associated with implementation difficulties, but also with the fact that some of the common assumptions that underlie theories of change, i.e. the implicit or explicit causal frameworks that link outputs of VSD activities to outcomes and impact, though not necessarily false, are not well founded. Such a theory of change is also reflected in the ex-post results framework for the VSD sub-sector which can be found in Annex 8. It was elaborated as a working document during the portfolio analysis for this study along the lines of a paper on contribution analysis by Mayne (2008), and against the backdrop of SDC's policy documents and of credit proposals of some of the reviewed VSD activities. Of course, theories of change look different for each individual project.³ However, the risks and the key assumptions behind the design of many of these projects are very similar, and they deserve to be critically reviewed in the following paragraphs, in closing the analytical chapters of this report. The various assumptions are presented in an order that reflects the hierarchy of causal linkages between input, output, outcome and impact.

Assumption 1: Governments are committed and politically stable; scaling-up is possible and happens spontaneously

One of the key assumptions of many interventions is that governments are genuinely committed to developing VSD and are politically stable, which will lead to (ideally spontaneous) scaling up of programmes once SDC decides to phase out, particularly if a project or programme yields a positive impact. However, governments often lack the financial means to scale-up or to continue innovations that are funded by donor agencies, and they are, in many cases, not willing to prioritise VSD at the expense of other domains of public

³ Many VSD activities (e.g. support to Tin Tua and CMES, PLCE 2, AlbVet, Caplab etc.) focus on producing what is labelled outputs 4 and 5 in Annex 8, be it for public training centres or from those of the civil society. Some of them (e.g. Caplab) also include policy dialogue (output 5) in order to, for instance, lobby for changes in the legal framework, for scaling up educational innovations etc. These activities generally increase the number of VSD graduates (outcome 7), the skills of which indeed enable them, at least in a number of reviewed cases, to find employment and to increase their incomes (impact 1), which may lead to reduced poverty.

policy. This is not only a problem of large-scale interventions but also of smaller ones. In fact, many innovations are at least partially dependent on additional financial resources. In the field of VSD equipment is often crucial. This equipment not only needs to be purchased (for schools not supported under the intervention) but also maintained (in schools supported under the intervention).

The team sees that those who design SDC's VSD activities are often aware of many such difficulties and therefore try not only to render projects less resource-intensive, but also to promote alternative funding mechanisms, e.g. by developing public-private partnerships or by getting communities more involved in the funding of VSD. The review shows, however, that the challenges often persist, as neither private sector representatives nor communities have the means or incentives to sustain the efforts after phase-out of funding. Against this backdrop, SDC's achievement in Burkina Faso of contributing to the establishment of the FONAEF is particularly noteworthy (see also section 4.5.1), even though the fund is still considerably dependent on donor organisations. Nevertheless, the commitment by the government has been growing, all the more as social demand for NFE – stimulated also by SDCs activities – is augmenting pressure on the government to increase funding.

Assumption 2: Efforts to improve the relevance and effectiveness of VSD systems do indeed lead to more sustainable social demand for VSD

A further important assumption of many VSD activities, both by SDC and other donor agencies, is that efforts to improve the relevance and effectiveness of VSD systems will increase social demand for such programmes; good programmes, goes the assumption, lead more students and parents to believe that they will benefit from VSD, for instance by gaining a comparative advantage to enter the labour market. In contrast to this assumption, experience shows that public opinion cannot be influenced that easily. In fact, the general public in developing and transition countries (as in many more industrialised countries) mostly does not view VSD programmes as a promising avenue, as the social status of more academically oriented educational programmes, particularly at the secondary level, is higher. Considering the high unemployment rates among the graduates of such programmes, this choice may seem to be irrational to observers. However, in many countries, entering the higher echelons of the public and private sectors is dependent upon exactly these qualifications, and not on those from VSD. In Albania, for instance, experts are of the view that support to VSD at the secondary level will lead to neither more social demand for VSD (from students), nor to more economic demand (from employers) for skilled VSD graduates, even if the quality of training can be improved, as all the more successful secondary level students enrol in the academic courses for status reasons. With this in mind, it may be more reasonable to invest in better linkages between higher technical education and the labour market needs of comparatively more value-adding sectors of the economy.

Assumption 3: Trainees are capable of using acquired skills for earning a livelihood

A further critical assumption underlying the rationale of many VSD projects and programmes is that trainees will be capable of using acquired skills for earning a livelihood upon leaving the programme. However, labour market structures in many developing and transition countries restrict the opportunities for graduates to employ their skills. Often, difficulties in entering the formal labour market (as employees) exist as recruitment practices are organised in clientelistic ways, or along the lines of familial bonds. Against this backdrop, VSD activities inspired by the dual model (such as the ones designed in Albania and Mali) can be quite attractive, as they see employers as key stakeholders who need to decide who to train or not to train, thus producing trainees with good prospects for employment. At the same time, positive reports on these achievements tend to conceal the fact that enrolment in exactly these VSD programmes favours those close to the em-

ployers, who would therefore most probably have had access to apprenticeship training anyway.

When it comes to training for self-employment, shortage of capital is often a serious barrier to beneficiaries' attempts to transfer their acquired skills to their own businesses. The team believes that this particular problem could be addressed by combining VSD programmes more consistently with financial sector development (including micro-credit schemes). In general, it would be important to develop a more comprehensive view on the transition from school to work and to better assess the barriers hindering job market entry.

Assumption 4: Improved income leads beneficiaries out of poverty and brings decent living standards and therefore improves well-being

Virtually all development projects and programmes which aim at improving the income prospects of beneficiaries, i.e. not only those oriented towards VSD, are based on the assumption that improved incomes lead beneficiaries out of poverty and bring decent living standards. However, depending on overall economic conditions and social infrastructure, this assumption is erroneous in many cases, as the costs of living often rise faster than incomes. Governments in developing countries which are aware of this problem often try to address it either through social policy instruments that lead to stronger redistribution of wealth and/or through reforms that trigger more rapid economic growth. VSD activities could, if they were more strongly oriented towards productivity development, potentially contribute more to the second of these political reform processes.

5 Key findings

In sum, SDC's VSD activities can be rated 'satisfactory'. The main strengths of the programmes under review are their strong orientation towards the needs of the respective national and local contexts and labour market realities. Strong labour market-orientation is also the basis for SDC's contribution to higher employment rates through its VSD activities, as well as for achievements in bringing about more fundamental changes to VSD systems. The main weakness of the activities under review is that target populations are not always being reached, particularly when it comes to socio-economically disadvantaged people and females. In a similar vein, evidence from this report shows that many of the activities do not contribute to higher incomes in a significant way. As we have seen, achieving impact remains a challenge, even more so if a long-term perspective is adopted. In order to continue to achieve satisfactory results, it will thus be important to focus on the key strengths of SDC's VSD activities, i.e. the strong context orientation and the efforts to involve representatives from the world of work (notably employers and the self-employed) in planning and delivery of training. In order to *improve* performance, the team believes that it will be important to increase efforts to constantly and holistically monitor the effects of interventions at the level of individual projects as well as across regions. The following section provides an overview of the achievements in detail.

5.1 Relevance

5.1.1 Relevance with regard to the needs of specific context

- + SDC's VSD activities are generally strongly adapted to the national and local contexts and labour market realities where SDC operates.
- + VSD interventions generally focus on enhancing the skills of the *poor*, particularly of those living in rural areas.
- + Almost all projects that were reviewed have a focus on *linking theory and practice* and on *including representatives of the private sector* in curriculum development and certification processes, in some instances also in the provision of training itself. Given the lack of labour market relevance of many VSD systems in countries where SDC operates, this focus is of tremendous relevance.
- ± The emphasis of many VSD interventions is on employability of beneficiaries but *less on productivity increases* in the respective economic sectors. International experience

suggests that the latter would be important for technological change, and it is not clear to what degree SDC's current VSD portfolio is aimed at sustainably contributing to such economic transformations.

5.1.2 Relevance with regard to other donors' activities in the field of VSD

- + SDC belongs to those donor agencies that have consistently emphasised the importance of *demand-driven VSD*. Today, as the donor community reinforces its efforts in the VSD domain, SDC's approaches (see 5.1.1) are of particular interest to donor agencies in various regional contexts, e.g. West Africa and South Asia.
- + In comparative terms, SDC is not a large donor in the VSD domain, particularly now, as VSD comes back to the agenda of many bi- and multilateral agencies. However, in some countries SDC has become a *donor of considerable weight* in terms of overall strategic planning and coordination in the field of VSD. This influence seems to be greater when SDC's VSD activities are designed along *pragmatic lines* and do not focus exclusively on VSD approaches that are not familiar to potential partners in the donor community (e.g. apprenticeship training along the lines of the dual model).

5.2 Effectiveness

5.2.1 Outreach

- The *targeted populations are not always being reached*. In view of SDC's strongly poverty-oriented current VSD strategy, the fact that some projects fail to reach the poor and females, is particularly worrisome.
- ± Some VSD operations supported by SDC (e.g. VSD components of NFE programmes) have a relatively *small outreach*. Evidence suggests that in some of these cases benefits tend to concentrate among a relatively small group of beneficiaries, who are unlikely to be the poorest and most vulnerable in the respective areas.

5.2.2 Skills provision and the labour market

- + Case studies suggest that, since employers are often involved in the planning and delivery of training in SDC-backed VSD programmes, these skills training programmes are considerably *more labour market-oriented* than the conventional formal TVET programmes in the respective countries.
- ± High employability and low unemployment rates are comparable to the traditional, workshop-based apprenticeship system; they are *not unique features* of these VSD programmes, which somewhat puts into perspective the potential to sustainably provide incentives to young people to make them join the SDC courses.
- ± The focus of many of SDC's VSD activities is on the *immediate short-term skill needs* of specific economic sectors (in West Africa, for instance, on those of the artisanal sector). Many countries are suffering from *severe skills shortages* in a number of potentially critical economic sectors, however, which SDC's VSD activities are doing very little to reduce, in most countries.

5.2.3 Reduction of school dropout by linking VSD with BE

- ± Those programmes that aimed at linking VSD with BE had lower dropout rates than comparable programmes. However, this link was only the underlying reason for low dropout rates if there was a direct link between the skill needs of specific labour markets and the VSD components of BE. This was the case with CMES in Bangladesh, but not with the CBN 2 programme in Burkina Faso. Supporting VSD components of BE therefore need to be promoted with caution.

5.2.4 Contribution to the improvement of the quality of training organisations

- + Generally, the quality of training organisations that have been supported by SDC has improved over the years, or was maintained at a high level, in cases where the organisations had previously had access to support from other donors.
- + A key feature of many VSD programmes is that they simultaneously intervene in different domains of VSD systems (standards and curriculum development, instructor

- training, vocational and entrepreneurial guidance) and at different levels of these systems (local/national), often focussing on strengthening competency-based training processes.
- However, several of SDC-backed VSD programmes have a small outreach, and innovative approaches, though they increase training quality, can not be replicated beyond the scope of SDC's interventions at the national level.

5.3 Impact

5.3.1 Access to employment and income

- + *Access to employment:* Given the comparatively strong labour market-orientation of the training programmes, beneficiaries of VSD programmes are highly employable. In many cases, employment rates of graduates benefiting from SDC's VSD programmes are considerably higher than those of graduates from conventional TVET programmes. However, comparisons with those undergoing traditional apprenticeships suggest that employment rates of SDC's beneficiaries are not higher.
- ± *Access to income:* Own data and existing reports suggest that only in three out of ten cases under review (i.e. Tin Tua, CMES, Reto Rural) did beneficiaries actually earn higher incomes. In fact, the evaluation team only found information that reported a link between individual VSD trajectories and higher incomes in the case of CMES. In the case of Tin Tua's CBN 2 programme, the evaluation team found that higher incomes were rather an effect of the respective BE components. In the case of Tin Tua's FTS programme, higher incomes were found to be mainly a result of access to material and financial resources that complemented the VSD programmes.

5.3.2 Value added by the dual model

Even though SDC does not officially promote the dual model of vocational training at the global level, the approach has underlain the rationale of a number of SDC's interventions. Given the strong context-orientation of SDC's VSD activities, three main forms of dual training models can be discerned.

- ± *Traditional apprenticeship combined with vocationally-oriented schooling:* This classical format of the dual model generally produces trainees who are more employable than their counterparts who graduate from public vocational schools. However, evidence suggests that the average incomes of apprentices trained at schools as well as in workshops are hardly higher than those of apprentices trained along traditional lines in workshops only. A further challenge with this form of dual training is that it is not fully sustainable; in fact, the preconditions of successful dual training models are very complex, not in line with the modes of training in the workshops and enterprises in most developing and transition countries, and therefore difficult to transfer. International experience with this form of the dual model has been disappointing. Still, such VSD activities have the potential to inspire innovations at the national or local level that more strongly orientate training towards the needs of the world of work.
- + *Traditional apprenticeship combined with literacy training:* Doing without vocationally-oriented school subjects, this model, implemented in contexts with low literacy rates, provides reading and writing skills to those already working in the labour market. Evidence suggests that this is a promising, very cost-effective strategy with large outreach and positive impacts on the incomes of beneficiaries.
- + Beyond these two interpretations of the dual model, many of SDC's VSD activities are inspired by the experience with the dual training model in Switzerland, as they strongly emphasise the *need to include representatives of the private sector* in planning and implementation of training programmes and reforms, and to respect them as important actors that bear a considerable share of the responsibility in training their workforce. In many cases, this approach seems to be far more effective than trying to implement the dual model in a more narrow sense that is so obviously rooted in the traditions of a few European economies.

5.4 Sustainability

5.4.1 Sustainability in terms of financial and human resources

- ± SDC's projects generally provide financial resources in a *very continuous manner*, sometimes over decades. Human resources that are financed with these funds are secured for a long time. Whereas SDC gains a reputation as a *reliable partner* through this approach, it may entail the risk that deeper reflections on sustainability issues become neglected.
- ± In one of the phased-out VSD activities under review (Caplab), the institutionalisation of the programme was considered to be good, but in the other case (MOSAC) there was no visible organisational sustainability after phase-out. Prospects for organisational sustainability in projects that have not yet been phased out are mixed. Unfortunately, they are bleak for the project with the largest outreach (PLCE 2).
- + Particularly noteworthy are the good prospects for organisational sustainability in the two West African countries, thanks to funding mechanisms that ensure the replication of high outreach.
- A number of projects seem to have been *stopped in a relatively abrupt way*, which is particularly worrisome if the interventions would have needed further post-intervention support.

5.4.2 Reporting and evaluation processes

- Generally, reporting and evaluation processes do not focus enough on the requirements for *sustainable* impact.
- In some instances, it was found that there are only insufficient processes to ensure that VSD components of SDC projects are constantly monitored and evaluated according to the same guidelines across regions.

5.4.3 Influence on national VSD frameworks

- + Despite its small VSD budget, SDC has contributed to the establishment of organisations (or the strengthening of already existing ones) which have become important actors in the governance structure of VSD. Furthermore, SDC has provided considerable support to already existing key agencies or associations, and inspired important legal changes at the national level.
- In some countries, communication between SDC (or implementing partners) and government agencies was difficult, which had or may have a negative impact on the prospects for long-term institutional development. Some of the potential reasons identified were the lack of consistent project design and insufficient inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in implementation strategies.

5.4.4 Sensitivity to the risk of establishing parallel structures

- + SDC generally has a high sensitivity to the risk of establishing parallel structures.
- ± In some cases there is a risk that firm-based training programmes are developed “in parallel” to the common TVET structures. However, this type of bottom-up change to VSD systems can stimulate competition between different approaches to VSD and so be important in the promotion of efforts to include representatives from the world of work in the process of VSD.

6 Priorities for change

The following chapter provides an overview of challenges that came out of the evaluation of SDC's VSD activities and discusses potential ways in which to address them. It consists of two sections, the first of which is dedicated to the strategic choices related to VSD, while the second covers issues of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The different topics are presented in descending order of relevance as perceived by the evaluation team.

6.1 Strategic choices related to VSD

6.1.1 Developing a more comprehensive and differentiated VSD strategy that makes explicit reference to secondary and higher education

The challenge

- VSD is re-emerging as a key-theme in development cooperation, and Switzerland, given the high recognition of the Swiss vocational training system internationally, clearly has a comparative advantage in this sector; however, Swiss ODA to vocational training currently does not even exceed 1% of total Swiss bilateral ODA (according to OECD data).
- This surprisingly small allocation to vocational training is related to the fact that many VSD projects are entered into SDC's SAP database under educational sub-sectors other than the vocational training sub-sector (e.g. secondary and higher education), or under non-education sectors (e.g. economy and employment), which hinders SDC's ability to accurately document its efforts in the field of VSD at an aggregate level.
- This problem of inaccurate documentation is associated with a much more serious matter – a lack of a strategy that could a) clearly define what VSD is, and what it is not, and b) outline the priorities to be set in the different domains of VSD. In this context, the evaluation team sees the failure to refer explicitly to VSD at the secondary and higher education levels as a particular weakness.

The way forward

- Establish a *clear overview of all your current activities* related to the theme of VSD, and, through this internal process, begin to generate a more explicit and commonly agreed understanding of the theme.
- Develop a *more comprehensive VSD strategy* which outlines the priorities to be set in the different domains of this theme of intervention.
- Ensure that, in this strategy, *explicit reference is made to VSD at the secondary and higher education level*. Following on from this, you may then decide a) to provide additional support to labour market-oriented secondary education and higher technical education, for instance in the form of support to internships in industry (see also section on dual model below) and b) to reduce funding to those forms of secondary and higher education that are not related to VSD.
- Find technical solutions to ensure that, in future, all VSD activities are documented accordingly at an aggregate level and that *VSD projects are entered into SAP in a harmonised manner across regions*. This will also make it easier to monitor the entire VSD portfolio along the lines of criteria defined in the strategy.

6.1.2 Considering VSD as a contribution to economic change

The challenge

- Current key policy documents as well as project documents strongly focus on VSD as a means to reducing poverty by lowering unemployment, but pay insufficient attention to the potential contribution that VSD can make to productivity and economic development in general. This particularly undermines prospects for sustainably involving (profit-oriented) employers in the training venture.

The way forward

- Depending on the economic structure in the different regions and partner countries, investments in VSD should also be designed as instruments which a) support *processes of overall productivity development* and b) contribute to the *reduction of skill shortages* in critical economic sectors.
- In this latter context, national VSD strategies should acknowledge more systematically that economic *demand for skilled labour can also be stimulated* by the supply of relevant skills.

- Accordingly, processes of *project design, monitoring and evaluation* would need to systematically take into account all contributions to productivity improvement and economic transformation (through qualitative and quantitative assessments).

6.1.3 Develop a realistic and sustainable approach to the dual model

The challenge

- Undoubtedly, the dual model is considered to be an important feature of the Swiss VSD system, and expectations of Swiss policy makers are high that this approach is duly reflected in SDC's VSD strategy.
- However, evidence from the evaluation, as well as experience with the approach from other donors operating in developing and transition countries, suggests that it is difficult to sustainably involve representatives of the private sector (in a formalised way) in the delivery of training along the lines of the dual model.

The way forward

- Avoid a narrow focus on the dual model as a panacea solution; but rather promote the idea that VSD programmes can only sustainably link up with the labour market when a) they have a *strong practical component*, b) there are *strong networks between the private and the public sector* and c) the *interests of the private sector* (e.g. in productivity gains, in increasing turnover etc.) are respected.
- Consider strengthening the development of *cost-effective links between training and higher value-adding industries* at the higher technical education level. SDC could also involve Swiss investors in such initiatives.

6.1.4 Finding a Swiss approach to qualifications frameworks

The challenge

- In many of SDC's partner countries, governments are in the process of formulating National Qualifications Frameworks, mainly with the aim to increase transparency of VSD systems and to create pathways for upwards occupational mobility.
- However, evidence from this evaluation as well as from other literature suggests that this process is often supply-led and insufficiently takes into account the needs of employers. This undermines the future recognition of qualifications in the labour market.

The way forward

- Depending on the needs in the specific contexts, SDC could participate in this process, as a partner that genuinely *strengthens the role of representatives of the private sector*.
- In partner countries where this rationale has already become established, focus should be on the development, implementation and evaluation of *sector-specific qualifications frameworks* for key economic areas, elaborated and implemented in close consultation with the private sector.
- In partner countries where governments plan to adopt a qualifications framework, SDC may even take a *more pioneering role* that would particularly focus on a) involving all major stakeholders (particularly private sector representatives) in the process, b) ensuring that the framework does not lead to overt regulation of the VSD sector and c) convincing decision makers that implementation of such frameworks needs time, should focus on a number of key economic sectors, and should include feedback mechanisms that help to detect weaknesses in the design of the frameworks.

6.1.5 VSD components of NFE and BE

The challenge

- Support to NFE can be an important instrument to increase literacy rates or to support the integration of socially marginalised groups into the labour market. Both international experience and data from this evaluation suggest that there is a strong positive link between literacy skills acquired through NFE, and income. At the same time, the

results of the evaluation show that VSD components of NFE programmes which aim to stimulate self-employment in developing countries are often not very effective, unless skills training is tied to (comparatively expensive) infrastructural and/or financial support. The latter strategy, however, often reduces the outreach of these activities.

- In line with other studies, this evaluation does not find evidence that VSD components of BE, i.e. pre-vocational training, significantly improve prospects for higher income and employment, or would be an effective means to orient youth towards “the rural way of life”.

The way forward

- Scale-up programmes that are designed to increase *reading and writing skills* of individuals working in the informal sector of countries where literacy rates are low.
- In the case of non-formal VSD programmes which support beneficiaries’ access to self-employment, not only by offering training, but also by providing necessary equipment and/or financial capital, funding for these additional benefits must not be provided at the cost of reducing outreach. In such cases, one option would be to make more systematic *use of micro-credit schemes* to ensure larger and more sustainable outreach.
- *Consider pre-vocational training primarily as an element of comprehensive BE* and less as an instrument of actual preparation for the world of work. When pre-vocational training is being supported, ensure that representatives of the respective economic sectors (even farmers) (co-) finance equipment and consumables.

6.2 Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDC’s VSD activities

6.2.1 Streamlining project design, implementation and evaluation processes

The challenge

- Approaches to project design are highly heterogeneous. They often lack:
 - a common understanding of basic definitions (e.g. output, outcome, impact) and of overarching goals and evaluation processes,
 - a systematic integration of all activities under a country VSD strategy (exhibiting a sometimes very incremental and piecemeal approach to VSD country strategies),
 - a systematic reflection on exit strategies.
- Beyond this, there are heterogeneities in further fields of project/programme cycles:
 - Lack of commonly agreed approaches to monitoring and evaluation of VSD activities, particularly in the case of projects that operate at the local level. This often leads to a serious shortage of data on beneficiaries (and control groups) which cannot be resolved ex-post through comprehensive evaluations.
 - Lack of commonly agreed roles between HQ and COOFs in the project/programme cycle.

The way forward

- Ensure that VSD projects across regions are designed in a more harmonised manner, by developing:
 - commonly agreed definitions of key terms (e.g. programme approach, target group, output, outcome, impact),
 - commonly agreed sets of indicators that are clearly located at the respective levels of the result chain (e.g. output, outcome, impact), but reflect the diversity of SDC’s VSD activities,
 - commonly agreed approaches to evaluation processes.The focal points or assigned representatives of the network should play a crucial role in this context.
- Consider introducing a *peer review process for new credit proposals* where network members comment on the documents, perhaps already at an initial stage. This will

also increase awareness that the implementation of VSD projects in different regions often faces very similar challenges.

- Ensure that *baseline data* (quantitative and qualitative, for the different dimensions of expected outcomes and impact) are collected during the preparation phase of each newly designed project, even for the ones operating at the national level. Potential results should then be formulated against the backdrop of this information.
- In cases where activities are at the local level, see that implementing partners keep databases on beneficiaries (with at least some basic information).

6.2.2 Ensuring females' access to VSD

The challenge

- Females have for a long time played only a marginal role in the VSD discourse. In fact, most traditional TVET programmes in developing countries mainly cater to males, often reflecting the gender-based segregation of labour markets (King & Palmer, 2010). Access to the crafts and small trades, for instance, is often only open to males, who mainly access employment in this domain through the traditional apprenticeship system.
- At the same time, employment in the more skill-intensive positions of the (few) modern industries is similarly a male reserve, and if there are VSD programmes for this segment of the labour market, they mostly exclusively cater to young men. Though many of SDC's VSD activities have been designed with these realities in mind, some of them face difficulties in reaching females or face the challenge of ensuring the sustainable integration of females into gainful employment.

The way forward

- The evaluation team recommends that more systematic attention be paid to these weaknesses at the levels of conceptualisation, implementation and monitoring.
- What seems to be particularly important is to find ways of developing VSD activities that stimulate female self-employment opportunities by providing sustainable access to equipment, funding and markets, and also to promote VSD programmes for females to reach higher levels of the occupational ladder in those modern industries where they mainly work in low paid, low-skills jobs.

6.2.3 Sustainable changes to VSD systems

The challenge

- Many SDC interventions do not primarily focus on maximal direct outreach, but are instead oriented towards the promotion of more fundamental changes to VSD systems. The review suggests that, although this ambition is still very valid, expectations in this regard are sometimes too high.
- In order to reach sustainable changes in VSD systems, activities are often designed in an open-ended manner, featuring changing intervention modalities but a lack of exit strategies.
- To the evaluation team this approach seems to be problematic, as it not only creates dependencies in partner countries, but also greatly increases the risk of making phase-out dependent on political considerations (e.g. SDC's changing thematic or geographical priorities), rather than on technical ones, and of the phase-out being inevitably conducted in an overly hasty manner. This is particularly problematic if activities are initiated with excessively ambitious goals.

The way forward

- Acknowledge that fundamental changes to VSD systems *need time*. Insist, nevertheless, on the formulation of exit strategies at the level of credit proposals. This may even go as far as clearly stating in the proposals that a) it is unlikely that neither the government nor other stakeholders will be in a position to sustain some of SDC's efforts after the agency's exit and that b) it is therefore important to envisage a longer

project duration or, in case really necessary, an explicitly open-ended assistance strategy.

- Focus, as you mostly do, on project designs that do not exclusively aim at changing the regulatory framework at the national level (e.g. legal changes, curriculum development) but also support implementation processes at the sub-national level.
- Promote *comprehensive inception phases* which more systematically consider political-administrative structures and existing training cultures, and also assess the underlying motivations of key stakeholders for engaging in fundamental changes to VSD systems. The latter would ensure that the goals of the interventions are supported by a broad alliance of actors, and not only by a small group of government representatives that may evaporate after the next elections.
- Ensure that *contested changes in legal frameworks* (which may not be enacted) are not an indispensable basis for project implementation, but rather consider stimulating legal changes as potential (by-)products of VSD activities, which are only able to be achieved by particularly dynamic implementing agencies.

6.2.4 Strengthening networks in charge of VSD

The challenge

- The network structure is relatively new within SDC and there are still a number of challenges which hinder SDC to exploit the full potential of this structure.
 - The theme VSD is formally under the responsibility of the E+I network; yet at the same time, the Education network also deals with VSD matters.
 - The networks are virtually monolingual (either French or English), thus hindering fruitful exchanges between all members.
 - The network structure has not resolved the problem of a deficient institutional memory in the field of VSD.

The way forward

- Think about one of the following solutions to overlapping in the network structure:
 - Create one education network with a sub-network on VSD (preferred option by the evaluation team).
 - Create one single VSD network.
 - Divide the duties between the existing networks. The current Education network may then be in charge of “VSD components of NFE” whereas the E+I network would be in charge of the other aspects of VSD.
- A part of the resources of the networks should be used a) for strengthening SDC’s institutional memory in the field of VSD (i.e. documentation of lessons learnt over the years, changes in key concepts etc.) and b) for training SDC staff assigned to VSD activities in order to familiarise them with the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of such interventions.
- Ensure that networks systematically cover all regions where SDC is operating. In this context, it is particularly important to introduce multilingual sharewebs, which would better facilitate cross-regional exchange (e.g. in the field of VSD components of NFE between West Africa and South Asia).
- Focal points, assigned representatives of the network (ideally one for each region) and regional advisers need to be given a say in the process of developing project proposals.

7 Literature

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8 Annexes to Final Report

Evaluation of SDC's Vocational Skills Development Activities

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

**Zurich/Kaiserslautern/Landau
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Annex 1: Terms of References

Context

SDC's Board of Directors has mandated SDC's Corporate Controlling Division (CDD) to commission an evaluation of SDC's vocational skills development (VSD) activities.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is:

- to provide elements for informing SDC senior management as well as SDC operational units in regards of the definition of thematic priorities in the education sector for upcoming policy framework elaboration and programming processes
- to provide information to an interested public audience about achieved results and performance of SDC's VSD portfolio.
- to provide information about the outcomes and signs of impact that can be used by SDC and other interested institutions in partner countries, development partners and other VSD stakeholders for improving policy frameworks and programme designs.

Objectives

Based on well-documented and robust evidence, the evaluation shall provide information as to what extent SDC's VSD activities and interventions:

- reach the targeted segments of the population (youth, schools drop outs, adults, women and men, in urban and rural areas)
- contribute to higher employment rates and higher income of poor disadvantaged people, thus
 - ameliorating their livelihoods and empowering them for active social participation and
 - promote economic development by providing trained and specialised work force in specific trades.
- make use of appropriate context-specific modalities and cooperate with the relevant partners in order to induce demand-driven, sustainable, and significant VSD benefits.
- are effective in influencing national and decentralised VSD policy reforms in the partner countries

In addition, the evaluation shall provide information of added values of the Swiss interventions in terms of innovation and particularities in its approaches used.

Focus

The evaluation shall provide a cross-section analysis of the SDC bilateral portfolio of in the sector of VSD. Contributions to multilateral organizations such as ILO, UNESCO, NORRAG are not part of the evaluation.

The focus will be on interventions managed within the SDC departments of "Regional Cooperation" and "Cooperation with the East", reflecting on the one hand the geographical distribution of the SDC interventions between Eastern Europe / Central Asia, Asia, Africa and Latin-America.

On the other hand the various methodological approaches and interventions levels of SDC's VSD activities need to be accounted for. Methodological approaches and interventions comprise:

- fostering the access to VSD through inclusion of disadvantaged people (e.g. women and girls, people in remote or conflict-affected areas, working children, ethnic minorities)
- the interlinking of VSD with basic education (BE) and life skills development in the sense of combining school- and workplace-based training with the particular aim to contribute to an increased inclusion and participation of illiterate adults and "school dropouts" in the labour market
- the promotion of participatory mechanisms between public-sector and private-sector actors in order to align VSD with market demand and local economic development

- the promotion of adequate and sustainable public and private financing of VSD programmes on national or local level.
- the adaptation of the dual VSD system, as particularly known in countries such as Switzerland, Germany or Austria, to the specific contexts in the partner countries.

The evaluation will analyze a number of interventions (projects or phases of projects) that have been implemented between 2000 and 2008. Inclusion of interventions with a time frame prior to 2000 may be included, if considered as particularly relevant. A representative sample of bilateral interventions will be chosen reflecting the above mentioned aspects such as the geographical distribution, the methodological approaches reflecting the evaluation's key questions stipulated in chapter 4 (key questions).

Consultant Mandate

Team composition

Dr. Markus Maurer (University of Zurich) and Mr. Uwe Wieckenberg (Bildungstransfer GmbH) will act as Co-team leaders and, together with their associates, will execute this evaluation under the overall supervision of the SDC evaluation officer and in conformity with the Approach Paper (see Annex) and the technical offer (see annexe).

Dr. Markus Maurer, will act as liaison person to the evaluation officer in order to ensure a smooth communication between the evaluation team and SDC.

Dr. Markus Maurer and Mr. Uwe Wieckenberg will assume responsibility for the quality of the evaluation. They will ensure the implementation of the evaluation in accordance with all the evaluation outputs requested in the Approach Paper. They will coordinate, guide and supervise the work of the evaluation team and ensure that the key questions are adequately addressed. They are responsible for the deliverables (see below).

Prof Dr. Rolf Arnold (Technical University Kaiserslautern), Prof. Dr. Philipp Gonon (University of Zurich) and Prof. Dr. Katarina Michaelowa (University of Zurich & ETH) will act as additional team members; their contributions will ensure that the evaluation will be based on a sound theoretical and methodological framework.

Portfolio to be analysed

Dr. Markus Maurer and Mr. Uwe Wieckenberg will coordinate, conduct and supervise the field studies and desk studies and will lead interviews at SDC Headquarters and with relevant partners. It is foreseen to define 4 field mission destinations, one in Eastern Europe / Central Asia, one in Africa, one in Latin-America and one in Asia. The definite selection of the 8 case studies (field and desk studies) will be defined during inception phase, representing SDC's VSD activities in respect of a) the key questions, b) the various types of activities and modalities c) geographical distribution and d) the data quality. The final selection will be made by the evaluation team on the basis of a pre-selection of key interventions by SDC ensuring that the sample is relevant, representative and, to the extent possible, unbiased. Thereby, key interventions refer to SDC project phases (note that a project consists of a number of phases) either started or terminated between 2000 and 2008 and with a budget larger than CHF 1 million.

Interaction with the Core learning Partnership

In regard of the institutional learning the evaluation will be accompanied by a Core learning Partnership (CLP). CLP members are direct stakeholders of the analysed portfolio such as SDC HQ and field staff as well as partners in the partner countries.

As a result of the inception phase, the evaluation team members will present their finding in a inception report which will be discussed with the CLP during a "kick-off" workshop.

At the end of each field study, the evaluation team will present their findings during a debriefing workshops in the country to relevant SDC staff in the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) as well as to partners concerned. Note that the SDC evaluation officer will participate in at least one of these debriefing workshops.

Furthermore the evaluation co-team leaders will present the draft evaluation report to the Core CLP in December in Switzerland. They will also follow-up on CLP feedback as ap-

appropriate. The evaluators' recommendations (priorities for change) should be submitted in a form suitable for the elaboration of the "Agreement at Completion Point" and Management Response. The case studies should integrate recommendations for SCOs related with the implementation in the local context of the country.

Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected by the evaluation team:

- Aide Memoirs of the kick-off meeting during Inception Phase with the CLP in August 2010,
- Inception Report, not exceeding 25 pages plus annexes including an ex-post intervention logic for each intervention and the Aide Memoirs of the kick-off meeting,
- Case study reports of each of the 4 field visits incl. Aide Memoirs of the Debriefing workshop,
- Aide Memoirs of the Debriefing workshop with the CLP on the Draft Evaluation Report,
- A fit to print Final Evaluation Report in English, not exceeding 40 pages plus annexes and including an executive summary of maximum 4 pages, findings, conclusions and priorities for change, corresponding to SDC's Formatting and Submission Guidelines for External Evaluations (see annex).
- A short and a long Evaluation Abstract according to DAC-Standards for the DAC De-Rec database.
- Facilitation of the Agreement at Completion Point Workshop with the CLP including elaboration of recommendations and lessons learned (in collaboration with the SDC Evaluation Officer),

The deliverables shall be submitted as electronic files to the SDC evaluation officer.

Time allocation and time frame

Dr. Markus Maurer, Dr. Uwe Wieckenberg and the team members will commit a total of 48 days on mission and 992 hours (= 124 days) of desk work to the assignment as agreed and noted in the offer form Type B.

The evaluation team will undertake this assignment between July 2010 and January 2011, in accordance with the timetable below (based on the approach paper).

Due date	Task	Resp.
June / July 2010	Contract with evaluation team	CD & ETL
July – August 2010	Inception Phase	ET
09.08.10	Submission of draft Inception Report	ETL
	Analysis draft inception report	CD & CLP
17.08.10	Kick-off workshop Bern	ETL, CD & CLP
20.08.10	Submission of revised Inception Report	ETL
23.08.10	Agreement on Inception Report	CD & CLP
24.08.10 – 10.12.10	Implementation Phase: field missions, data analysis, etc.	ET
30.11.10	Submission of a summary of key findings	ETL
10.12.10	Submission of draft report	ETL
	Analysis draft report	CD & CLP
20.12.10 (tbc)	Synthesis / Debriefing workshop Bern °	ETL, CD & CLP
	Revision on draft report	ET
14.01.2010	Submission of final draft report	ET
January 2011	Agreement on final draft report	CD & CLP

Annex 2: Short outline of VSD activities in the evaluation portfolio

Projects selected as fieldwork-based project case studies

Fieldwork-based project case study 1 (Africa)

Country	Burkina Faso
Project name	Association Tin Tua
SAP No.	7F-02316
Short description	The association Tin Tua is an NGO, launched in the late 1980s, that aims to reduce poverty by investing mainly in literacy training and VSD. Initially, the group of beneficiaries consisted of adults, but in the last couple of years, the organisation started to cater to young people as well. The organisation is said to have raised literacy levels in the regions where it has been operating to far higher than in other parts of the country. The project is co-financed by SDC, the Netherlands, SIDA, a philanthropic organisation and the association itself.
Data availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compared to the project in Mali, there is somewhat less data on output, outcome and impact of this intervention. Compared to the project in South Africa, the documentation on this project is somewhat better.
Reasons for selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tin Tua is a provider of non-formal education and therefore represents one of SDC's approaches to VSD. There are several reasons why it is interesting to choose the Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative (7F-01359) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus of the project is on important aspects of vocational skills development (compared to the project in BF) Interesting parallels may be drawn to the project in India by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET), which can tell us more about the role of Swiss companies as partners in implementing VSD projects. However, documentation on the SA-project is comparatively meagre. An evaluation was made in 2005. More recent documents available are a) a capitalisation of the project (December 2008) and strategy paper for 2010 (March 2009). There is abundant documentation on the project in Mali (7F-00736) which enables the composition of a desk study-based project case study.
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some parts of the country the security situation is somewhat tense at the moment.
Additional comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there are organisations very similar to Tin Tua that are also funded by SDC and operate in similar geographical areas, then the scope of fieldwork will include such organisations as well.

Fieldwork-based project case study 2 (Asia)

Country	Bangladesh
Project name	Post Literacy and Continuing Education Project
SAP No.	7F-03284.02
Short description	In the 1990s the PLCE was designed by the government and other donors (notably the World Bank) to cater to semi-literate youth and adults by providing them with post-literacy and, notably, vocational training. A further important aspect of the project was the implementation of policy reforms in the non-formal education (NFE) arena. In the second phase (since 2001), SDC has been an important co-donor to the project, focusing particularly on continuing education. Given the fact that the project is implemented through government agencies, it operates in 29 districts, both urban and rural. The main emphasis is on community-based and needs-oriented education and training practices.
Data availability	Raw data rather weak
Reasons for selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh is a focus country for SDC • Close interaction between SDC, World Bank and the Government, which is an interesting point to analyse.
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We believe that there have been evaluations of the project which have, so far, not been made available to the project team. It is for this reason that we could also consider a project from Nepal (e.g. 7F-05036.01). • However, given the fact that Bangladesh is an important country for SDC, we suggest a more meta-evaluative perspective on the project, perhaps even on all three projects in BD (UCEP / CMES) • The vocational part of the programme is not as central as with UCEP.

Fieldwork-based project case study 3 (Europe)

Country	Moldova
Project name	Technical Assistance to establish a Moldovan Occupational Standards, Assessment and Certification System
SAP No.	7F-04338.03.01
Short description	The project aimed to establish a demand-driven TVET reform in Moldova with focus on the development of occupational standards (OS) and a related system for assessment and certification. The project is being implemented in three phases, starting with a focus on institution and capacity building in phase one, for two years, followed by a two years institutionalisation phase and a two years market penetration phase. All four components of demand-driven TVET (occupational standards [OS], OS-based curriculum development, training implementation, assessment and certification of graduates) have been successfully tested and approved in a pilot project with the Ministry of Education and Youth.
Data availability	No evaluation and no data with regard to impact available. However, there are a number of progress reports and external assessments available.

Reasons for selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has been phased out, thereby allowing us to obtain an ex-post perspective. • Clear description and availability of target groups (teachers and instructors of the three pilot VET schools, practitioners from companies) who were trained as assessors, and then assessed 52 students with specific items.
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents provide evidence on uneasiness of the Ministry of Education with the project and also a lack of commitment on the part of the ministry. This may also hinder the carrying out of an evaluation. • Given the fact that SDC support has been phased out, it may be difficult to relate the impact of the project to SDC's intervention alone. • Unstable overall political situation

Fieldwork-based project case study 4 (Latin America)

Country	Peru
Project name	Caplab
SAP No.	7F-02642
Short description	The project, initiated in 1996, aims at providing labour market relevant training to youth in general, and young women in particular. Thus, the project caters to those social groups which are most disadvantaged in the labour market (and therefore both economically and socially marginalised). Available documentation shows that the impact of the project has been quite considerable, given the fact that more than 50 percent of all trainees find suitable employment (compared to 20 percent with the control group) and that 19 percent started their own businesses. Furthermore, available documentation produces evidence that the Caplab Model has been replicated in other regions of the country. This suggests that the impact of the intervention is comparatively sustainable.
Data availability	Data availability is sufficient. There are a large number of project documents and mid-term evaluations, whose results will be combined from a comparative perspective.
Reasons for selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has been phased out, which enables us to get an ex-post perspective. • It was the largest intervention in the Latin American VSD sector between 2000 and 2008.
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the fact that SDC support has been phased out, it may be a mistake to relate the impact of the project to SDC's intervention alone. • The project is considered to have been very successful; however, there have been some tensions between SDC's country office and the implementing organisations, which is a matter that should not be overlooked during fieldwork.

Projects selected as desk study-based project case studies***Desk study-based project case study 1 (Africa)***

Country	Mali
Project name	Programme d'appui à la formation professionnelle (PAFP)
SAP No.	7F-00736
Short description	Implemented by Swisscontact since 1998, the PAFP aims at easing young people's transition into the labour market by fostering vocational training programmes along the lines of the dual model. In the focus are local trades in rural areas. Support is provided to administrative units, employers' associations and to vocational schools (trainers' training / curriculum development).
Data availability	Even though the project is well documented, there is a lack of both quantitative and qualitative data with regard to the impact at the local level. Assessments generally focus on institutional development, and occasionally, there are references to enrolment rates. It thus remains unclear who is joining the programmes, what school leavers are doing, and in which way they are being integrated into the labour market.
Reasons for selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus of the project is on important aspects of vocational skills development (compared, e.g., to the projects in Burkina Faso) • Strong dual training component • Project has been running for a long time (compared, e.g., to the project in South Africa)
Risks	None

Desk study-based project case study 2 (Asia)

Country	Nepal
Project name	National Skill Testing Board Project (NSTB)
SAP No.	7F 05036.01
Short description	For a long time, the certificates of the National Skill Testing Board lacked broad recognition. For this reason, the project aims at providing better access (notably for disadvantaged groups) to these certificates, improving assessment systems, and strengthening the organisational and financial structures of the board.
Data availability	The project is well documented, and there is a recent external review (April 2010). Nevertheless, it is important for resource persons (e.g. former or current consultants) to provide access to more documentation.
Reasons for selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is an integral part of SDC's VSD portfolio in Nepal, and thus strongly interlinked with a number of other initiatives. • Skill standardisation is one of the key themes of the current VSD debate and it has become an important aspect of what SDC is doing, or is intending to do, in a number of other countries (e.g. with regard to the implementation of qualifications frameworks in South Eastern Europe)
Risks	None

Desk study-based project case study 3 (Europe)

Country	Albania
Project name	Albanian VET Delivery Support Program (AlbVET)
SAP No.	7F-04687
Short description	<p>The programme's long-term goal is to contribute to the development of a decentralised, coherent and relevant Albanian TVET system, providing a diversified, flexible, labour market-oriented and widely accessible course portfolio of adequate quality.</p> <p>The project consists of six major lines of intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Decentralisation of VET delivery</i> b) <i>Cooperation and networking</i> c) <i>Diversification of the course portfolio</i> d) <i>Financing training delivery</i> e) <i>Mobile training delivery</i> f) <i>Capacity development</i>
Data availability	Very good documentation of the project as well as clear description of different target groups and beneficiaries.
Reasons for selection	Large and comprehensive programme with different areas of intervention and good accessibility for stakeholders and beneficiaries.
Risks	None

Desk study-based project case study 4 (Latin America)

Country	Nicaragua
Project name	Capacitación Laboral (INATEC)
SAP No.	7F-80027
Short description	<p>The project aims at improving the employability of young people and their transition into the local labour markets. The intervention is based on a three-dimensional competency profile (competencias básicas, competencias genéricas, competencias específicas). The project has been running for five years and seems to have been recognised as an important contribution to local economic and social development, both by young people and entrepreneurs.</p>
Data availability	The available documentation includes both planning and implementation documents as well as evaluations, which is sufficient material for a desk study-based project case study.
Reasons for selection	Given the current context and small amount of documentation on the other two projects (SDC closed the programme in Ecuador at the end of 2009 and phased out from the country in 2010, and in Bolivia the new programmatic approach has not been implemented long enough), the option to select the Nicaragua project as a second project case study was preferred.
Risks	None

Brief meta-evaluations***Brief meta-evaluation 1 (Asia)***

Country	Bangladesh
Project name	CMES
SAP No.	7F-03333
Short description	CMES is a NGO in Bangladesh which has been working over three decades in different parts of the country and has a central Service Centre in Dhaka. CMES stands for Centre for Mass Education in Science. Its aim is to arrange facilities of mass education for the common people, encouraging thoughts and actions in science and technology.
Data availability	Sufficient number of previous evaluation reports on the NGO
Reasons for selection	Classical type of support to an NGO
Risks	None

Brief meta-evaluation 2 (Latin America)

Country	Ecuador
Project name	EC 52 Reto Rural
SAP No.	7F-80018
Short description	Reto Rural supports VSD among the poor rural population of three provinces in the sierra region. Beneficiaries of it were first and foremost young and female, a group that used to have barely any access to the labour market in these regions.
Data availability	Sufficient number of previous evaluation reports on the NGO
Reasons for selection	There are a number of relevant previous reports on the project, the results of which should be reflected in a more comprehensive sector evaluation.
Risks	None

Annex 3: Key questions

With the rationale laid out in section 2, the evaluation focuses on a number of key questions from which the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of SDC's interventions in the VSD sectors are assessed.

Relevance

- To what extent are SDC's VSD approaches relevant to the needs in the specific contexts where SDC is active?
- To what extent are SDC's VSD approaches relevant to other donors' activities in the field of VSD, and how do they relate to them?

Effectiveness

- To what extent have the outcomes of SDC's VSD interventions been achieved with regard to:
 - reaching the targeted population, especially by promoting the inclusion of poor and disadvantaged people, women and girls, ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas in VSD programmes?
 - providing beneficiaries with the skills demanded by the labour market?
 - reducing school dropout by linking VSD with BE?
 - improving the quality of training organisations (curricula, trainers, etc.)?

Efficiency

- With respect to the particular objectives of the current evaluation, and considering the limited resources available, questions on efficiency are not first priority.

Impact

- To what extent have employment rates and incomes of targeted beneficiaries increased as a result of SDC's interventions?
- Which is the value added by programmes that were designed along the lines of the dual model of vocational training?

Sustainability

- To what extent do SDC's activities and interventions provide sustainable VSD benefits; in particular, is there ensured continuity of financial and human resources?
- How have reporting and evaluation processes led to higher awareness vis-à-vis sustainable, long term impacts of the projects (meta-evaluation)?
- What is SDC's influence in strengthening national VSD frameworks (e.g. public-private partnerships, certification and accreditation of VSD courses, curriculum development, career guidance)?
- Are SDC's VSD interventions sensitive to the risks of establishing parallel structures?

Annex 4: Case study evaluation matrix

	Fieldwork-based country case studies			Desk study-based country case studies				Meta-evaluations		
	Burkina Faso Tin Tua	Bangladesh PLCE 2	Moldova MOSAC	Peru Capiab	Mali PAFP	Nepal NSTB	Albania AlbVET	Nicaragua Capacitacion Laboral	Bangladesh CMES	Ecuador Reto Rural
1.1 Relevance										
To what extent are SDC's VSD approaches relevant to the needs in the specific contexts where SDC is active?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
To what extent are SDC's VSD approaches relevant to other donors' activities in the field of VSD, and how do they relate to them?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1.2 Effectiveness										
To what extent have the outcomes of SDC's VSD interventions been achieved with regard to:										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reaching the targeted population, especially by promoting the inclusion of poor and disadvantaged people, women and girls, ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas into VSD programmes? 	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing beneficiaries with the skills demanded by the labour market? 	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing school dropout by linking VSD with BE? 	x	x								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving the quality of training organisations (curricula, trainers, etc.)? 	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
1.3 Impact										
To what extent have employment rates and incomes of targeted beneficiaries increased through SDC's interventions?	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x

	Fieldwork-based country case studies			Desk study-based country case studies				Meta-evaluations		
What is the value added by programmes that were designed along the lines of the dual model of vocational training?				x	x		x			
1.4 Sustainability										
To what extent do SDC's activities and interventions provide sustainable VSD benefits; in particular, is there ensured continuity of financial and human resources?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
How have reporting and evaluation processes led to higher awareness vis-à-vis sustainable, long term impacts of the projects (meta-evaluation)?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
What is SDC's influence in strengthening national VSD frameworks (e.g. public-private partnerships, certification and accreditation of VSD courses, curriculum development, career guidance)?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Are SDC's VSD interventions sensitive to the risks of establishing parallel structures?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Annex 5: Overview of indicators

Key questions	Indicators	
1.1 Relevance		
To what extent are SDC's VSD approaches relevant to the needs in the specific contexts where SDC is active?	Relevant: Non-relevant:	interviewed key stakeholders (representatives of government agencies, NGOs, and VSD experts in partner countries) consider SDC's VSD approaches relevant interviewed key stakeholders consider SDC's VSD approaches irrelevant or not very relevant
To what extent are SDC's VSD approaches relevant to other donors' activities in the field of VSD, and how do they relate to them?	Relevant: Non-relevant: <i>In addition:</i>	programmes of donors in partner countries take up some and/or are aware of SDC's VSD approaches programmes of donors in partner countries do not take up and/or not aware of SDC's VSD approaches <i>qualitative description of SDC's VSD approach in relation to the global donor discourse on VSD</i>
1.2 Effectiveness		
To what extent have the outcomes of SDC's VSD interventions been achieved with regard to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reaching the targeted population, especially by promoting the inclusion of poor and disadvantaged people, women and girls, ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas in VSD programmes? 	Achieved: Not achieved:	1. interviewed beneficiaries feature characteristics of defined target group 2. different interviewed non-SDC stakeholders (employers, NGO representatives) state that beneficiaries feature characteristics of defined target group 1. interviewed beneficiaries do not feature characteristics of defined target group 2. different interviewed non-SDC stakeholders (employers, NGO representatives) state that beneficiaries do not feature characteristics of defined target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing beneficiaries with the skills demanded by the labour market? 	Achieved: Not achieved:	employers and self-employed leavers of training programmes consider skills provided by programmes to be sufficient and to be relevant in terms of the requirements of the labour market employers and self-employed leavers of training programmes consider skills provided by programmes not to be sufficient and not to be relevant in terms of the requirements of the labour market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing school dropout by linking VSD with BE? 	Achieved: Not achieved:	1. dropout in the respective locality reduced 2. reduction can be attributed to SDC's intervention 1. dropout in the respective locality not reduced Or: 2. reduction cannot be attributed to SDC's intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving the quality of training organisations (curricula, trainers, etc.)? 	Achieved: Not achieved:	interviewed key stakeholders (representatives of government agencies, NGOs, and VSD experts in partner countries) consider the quality of training organisations (curricula & trainers) to be improved through SDC's VSD activities interviewed key stakeholders (representatives of government agencies, NGOs, and VSD experts in partner countries) consider the quality of training organisations (curricula, trainers, etc.) not to be improved through SDC's VSD activities

Key questions	Indicators
1.3 Impact	
To what extent have employment rates and incomes of targeted beneficiaries increased through SDC's interventions?	<p>Employment increased: 1. Targeted beneficiaries report that they found employment upon leaving the SDC-funded training organisation. 2. Control group individuals have reportedly not found employment.</p> <p>Income increased: 1. Targeted beneficiaries report that they increased their income upon leaving the SDC-funded training organisation. 2. Control group individuals have reportedly not increased their income.</p> <p>Employment not increased: Targeted beneficiaries report that they haven't found employment upon leaving the SDC-funded training organisation.</p> <p>Income not increased: Targeted beneficiaries report that they haven't increased their income upon leaving the SDC-funded training organisation.</p>
What is the value added by programmes that were designed along the lines of the dual model of vocational training?	<p>High value addition: 1. Targeted beneficiaries report that they found employment upon leaving the SDC-funded training organisation. 2. Control group individuals have reportedly not found employment 3. Interviewed key stakeholders (representatives of government agencies, NGOs, and VSD experts in partner countries, and employers in particular) are of the view that the dual model has (compared to other training models) strongly contributed to the skill development of trainees.</p> <p>No / limited value addition: 1. Targeted beneficiaries report that they haven't found employment upon leaving the SDC-funded training organisation. 2. Interviewed key stakeholders (representatives of government agencies, NGOs, and VSD experts in partner countries, and employers in particular) are of the view that the dual model has (compared to other training models) not strongly contributed to the skill development of trainees.</p>
1.4 Sustainability	
To what extent do SDC's activities and interventions provide sustainable VSD benefits; in particular, is there ensured continuity of financial and human resources?	<p>Sustainable: continuous provision of financial and human resources</p> <p>Not sustainable: provision of financial and human resources not continuous</p>
How have reporting and evaluation processes led to higher awareness vis-à-vis a sustainable, long term impact of the projects (meta-evaluation)?	<p>Awareness increased: key stakeholders (SDC representatives, implementing NGOs) report that reviews and evaluation of the respective programmes led to changes in the overall project design that aimed at better ensuring long term impact of the project.</p> <p>Awareness not increased: key stakeholders (SDC representatives, implementing NGOs) report that reviews and evaluation of the respective programmes led to no changes in the overall project design that would have aimed at better ensuring long term impact of the project.</p>

<p>What is SDC's influence in strengthening national VSD frameworks (e.g. public-private partnerships, certification and accreditation of VSD courses, curriculum development, career guidance)?</p>	<p>Strong influence:</p> <p>Little influence:</p>	<p>1. key stakeholders (representatives of government and donor agencies) are of the view that SDC programmes have influenced the VSD discourse in the country, thereby impacting on the overall orientation of government programmes and those of other donors.</p> <p>2. SDC has formal leadership positions when it comes to donor coordination in the VSD sector</p> <p>1. key stakeholders (representatives of government and donor agencies) are not of the view that SDC programmes have influenced the VSD discourse in the country.</p> <p>2. SDC lacks formal leadership positions when it comes to donor coordination in the VSD sector.</p>
<p>Are SDC's VSD interventions sensitive to the risks of establishing parallel structures?</p>	<p>No parallel structures</p> <p>Parallel structures</p>	<p>Analysis of documents and interviews suggests that in the context of SDC programmes organisations or organisational structures were established that did not lead to / exacerbate organisational fractionalisation in the VSD framework of the respective country.</p> <p>Analysis of documents and interviews suggest that in the context of SDC programmes organisations or organisational structures were established that led to / exacerbated organisational fractionalisation in the VSD framework of the respective country.</p>

Annex 6: Pre-selection portfolios

As a first step, the evaluation officer retrieved 58 projects from SDC's education sector in its SAP database that had been implemented between 2000 and 2008, and pertained to the theme of VSD (see "Pre-selection portfolio 1"). These projects had been entered in the SAP database under three different educational sub-sectors; namely, "vocational training", "basic life skills for youth and adults (including literacy)" and "education policy". Out of these 58 projects, the Core Learning Partnership (i.e. the group at SDC's headquarters in Bern that monitored the implementation of the evaluation) selected a set of 16 projects that it considered to be particularly pertinent to the theme of VSD (see "Pre-selection portfolio 2"). This list was then presented to the evaluation team, together with a set of documents on all these projects. It was against this backdrop that the evaluation team then selected ten projects for further evaluation. The selection process by the evaluation team was based on four selection criteria: a) relevance, b) data availability, c) previous / planned comprehensive evaluations and d) size of the interventions. The selected portfolio was then included in the IR and discussed with the CLP in a first meeting in August 2010. Based on feedback during this meeting, the final portfolio was decided upon.

Pre-selection portfolio 1 (58 projects)

Geo_Fr	WBS_Action	Project_Name	Description_En
Western Africa	7F-00438	INADES – FORMATION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
	7F-00446	FORMATION MASS MEDIA	Vocational training
Western Africa Total			
South Africa	7F-01359	SSACI Swiss SA Cooperation Initiative	Education policy and administrative management
		Swiss-South African Coop. Initiative	Vocational training
South Africa Total			
Albania	7F-00576	ALB : Entwicklung Ausbildung	Vocational training
		Entwicklung Ausbildung Albanien	Vocational training
	7F-04687	ALB:Strengthening Alb.VET Delivery Syst.	Vocational training
Albania Total			
Bangladesh	7F-03284	DIRECTORATE OF NONFORMAL EDUCATION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
		Post Literacy and Continuing Education	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-03322	UCEP	Vocational training
	7F-03333	EDUCATION PROGRAMME, CMES	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Vocational training
	7F-03826	ROSC Reaching out of school children	Basic life skills for youth and adults
Bangladesh Total			
Benin	7F-00606	B13 - BENIN ALPHABETISATION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
		BENIN ALPHABETISATION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
Benin Total			
Bhutan	7F-03170	Rural Development Training Project	Vocational training
Bhutan Total			
Bolivia	7F-80003	BO81 Procap	Vocational training
Bolivia Total			

Geo_Fr	WBS_Action	Project_Name	Description_En
Bosnia & Herzegovina	7F-00226	SLPG(3.02)	Basic life skills for youth and adults
		Sozial-pädagogische Lebensgemeinschaften	Basic life skills for youth and adults
	7F-02412	Education for Peace - World	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
Bosnia & Herzegovina Total			
Brazil	7F-04158	Brasilien/TdHL-Strassenkinder (EASR)	Vocational training
Brazil Total			
Bulgaria	7F-02168	BUL : Intégr. des jeunes en institution	Education policy and administrative management
			Vocational training
Bulgaria Total			
Burkina Faso	7F-00780	BF39 - PROGRAMME ALPHABETISATION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
		PROGRAMME ALPHABETISATION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
	7F-02316	BF58 - Association Tin Tua	Basic life skills for youth and adults
	7F-02656	BF59 - Contrib. fonds Alpha. et Educ.	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
Burkina Faso Total			
Ecuador	7F-80018	EC 52 PROCEDE	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Vocational training
		EC 52 RETO RURAL	Vocational training
Ecuador Total			
South-eastern Europe	7F-04116	REG: Roma Education Fund	Education policy and administrative management
South-eastern Europe Total			
India	7F-00850	DALITS GUJARAT	Basic life skills for youth and adults
	7F-02890	NETWORK ELECTRONICS EDUCATION	Vocational training
	7F-03002	HIDECOR	Vocational training
India Total			
Kosovo	7F-03341	KOS: Vocational Education Support (VES)	Vocational training
		Kosovo, Vocational education support	Vocational training
Kosovo Total			
Macedonia (ERYM)	7F-00263	MAC : PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
		PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
Macedonia (ERYM) Total			
Mali	7F-00736	M37-FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE	Vocational training
		M37-FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE (PAFP)	Vocational training
Mali Total			

Geo_Fr	WBS_Action	Project_Name	Description_En
Moldova	7F-04338	MOL: Vocational Education and Training	Vocational training
Moldova Total			
Nepal	7F-00631	TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT (TfE)	Vocational training
	7F-01751	Franchising SKILL Approach (F-SKILL)	Vocational training
	7F-03146	TECHNICAL INSTRUCTORS TRAINING	Vocational training
Nepal Total			
Nicaragua	7F-80027	NI 22 Capacitacion Laboral	Vocational training
Nicaragua Total			
Niger	7F-03124	N48 - Progr. d'éduc. non formelle PENF	Basic life skills for youth and adults
			Education policy and administrative management
Niger Total			
Non-ventilated (DDC)	7F-00992	IDE - Formation à distance	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-01272	Diplofoundation	Vocational training
		Diplofoundation 2005-2006	Vocational training
	7F-01552	CASIN relations internationales	Vocational training
	7F-03752	GeSCI - Global e-Schools & Comm. Init.	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-03941	SKIP Programmbeitrag	Education policy and administrative management
		SKP Programmbeitrag	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-04165	GE BOURSES ETUDES IUED	Vocational training
	7F-04174	FORMATION RELATIONS INTERNATIONALES	Vocational training
	7F-04242	CIEA Centre Int'l d'Etudes agricoles	Vocational training
7F-05843	UNESCO Capacity Building for Education	Education policy and administrative management	
Non-ventilated (DDC) Total			
Uzbekistan	7F-01289	Vocational and Educational Training	Vocational training
Uzbekistan Total			
Pakistan	7F-03221	UNICEF PAKISTAN: PROGRAM FOR ADVOCACY	Basic life skills for youth and adults
	7F-03222	COMBATING CHILD LABOUR	Vocational training
Pakistan Total			
Peru	7F-02642	PE78 CAPLAB PERU	Vocational training
Peru Total			
Senegal	7F-00834	FORMATION RURALE	Education policy and administrative management
		SE26-FORMATION RURALE	Education policy and administrative management
Senegal Total			
Switzerland	7F-03964	STIFTUNG BILDUNG UND ENTWICKLUNG (CH)	Education policy and administrative management
Switzerland Total			

Geo_Fr	WBS_Action	Project_Name	Description_En
Chad	7F-00455	T49 - Biltine, développement régional	Education policy and administrative management
		T49 - Wadi Fira	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-00457	T50 - Batha	Education policy and administrative management
		T50 - Batha, développement régional	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-00458	T51 - Kanem	Education policy and administrative management
		T51 - Kanem, développement régional	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-00459	T52 - Ennedi	Education policy and administrative management
		T52 - Ennedi, développement régional	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-00464	T53 -Moyen-Chari	Education policy and administrative management
		T53 -Moyen-Chari, développement régional	Education policy and administrative management
	7F-00465	T54 - Bassin du Logone (PDR/BL)	Education policy and administrative management
		T54 - Logones, développement régional	Education policy and administrative management
Chad Total			
Turkey	7F-00058	MEKSA MAENNER	Vocational training
	7F-00067	MEKSA FRAUEN	Vocational training
Turkey Total			
Viet-Nam	7F-03427	VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRES -SVTC	Vocational training
Viet-Nam Total			
Palestinian territories	7F-02776	INTEGRATIONSPROGRAMM FUER GEFANGENE	Education policy and administrative management
Palestinian territories Total			

Pre-selection portfolio 2 (24 projects)

Country	SAP	Project name	Exp. ⁴	Pref. SDC
Africa				
South Africa	7F-01359	SSACI Swiss SA Co-operation Initiative	4.037	
		Swiss-South African Coop. Initiative	4.000	
Burkina Faso	7F-00780	BF39 - PROGRAMME ALPHABETISATION	5.953	Suitable for field visit. Data on results not very good
		PROGRAMME ALPHABETISATION	3.051	
	7F-02316	BF58 - Association Tin Tua	2.509	
		BF59 - Contrib. fonds Alpha. et Educ.	1.491	
	7F-02656		1.497	
		3.913		
Mali	7F-00736	M37-FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE	2.021	Pref. SDC , tangible results available
		M37-Formation professionnelle (PAFP)	1.589	
Asia				
Bangladesh	7F-03284	Directorate of nonformal education	4.363	Pref. SDC , strong VSD focus country for SDC, 7F-03284: Government partner raw data rather weak, 7F-03333: NGO partner, raw data good
			1.327	
		Post Literacy and Continuing Education	3.189	
	7F-03322	UCEP	2.082	
	7F-03333	EDUCATION PROGRAMME, CMES	4.796	
			3.136	
Nepal	7F-05036.01	National Skill Testing Board Project ⁵		
	7F-00631	TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT (TfE)	3.214	
	7F-01751	Franchising SKILL Approach (F-SKILL)	3.985	Interesting intervention
Latin-America				
Bolivia	7F-80003	BO81 Procap	2.854	Large Programme, up-scaling phase
Ecuador	7F-80018	EC 52 RETO RURAL	2.133	Interesting Programme, but no structure available on site
Nicaragua	7F-80027	NI 22 Capacitacion Laboral	1.697	
Peru	7F-02642	PE78 CAPLAB PERU	9.300	Pref. SDC , large programme, abundant documentation

⁴ Total expenditures between 2000 and 2008

Country	SAP	Project name	Exp. ⁴	Pref. SDC
Europe				
Albania	7F-00083	ALB : Verbesserung der Berufsbildung	0.120	Pref. SDC: large programme, abundant documentation
			0.941	
		Verbesserung der Berufsbildung	0.841	
	7F-00576	ALB : Entwicklung Ausbildung	5.588	
		Entwicklung Ausbildung Albanien	0.853	
	7F-04687	ALB: Strengthening Alb.VET Delivery Syst.	4.163	
Moldova	7F-04338	MOL: Vocational Education and Training	1.854	

Annex 7: List of SDC representatives interviewed at the HQ

Mary-Luce Fiaux Niada	Advisor Education, WA Division
Brigit Hagmann	Divisional Head, Western Balkans Division
Ruth Huber	Departmental Head Global Cooperation
Simon Junker	Focal Point Vocational Skills Development, Latin America Division
Valérie Liechti	Focal Point Education, Western Africa Division
Malte Lipczinsky	Desk Internal Training, Section Quality Control
Hansruedi Pfeiffer	Advisor Employment and Income, South Asia Region

Annex 8: Ex-post results framework

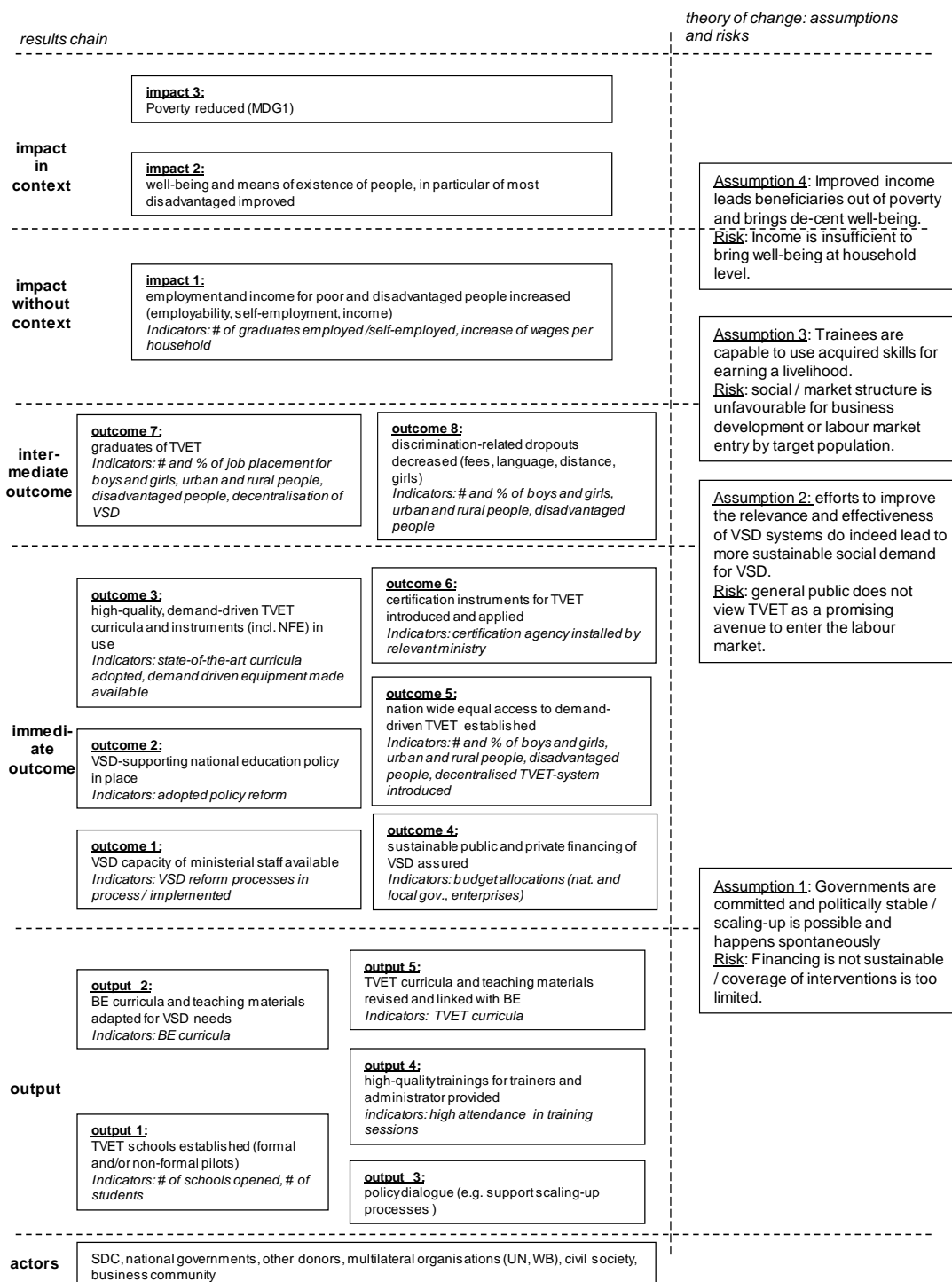
On the following page an ex-post results framework is presented. It forms the backdrop of the elaborations in section 4.6, which deals with different assumptions underlying the rationales of many of SDC's VSD activities. The framework represents a theory of change that causally links outputs of VSD activities to outcomes and impact. It has been designed along the lines of a paper on contribution analysis by Mayne (2008), and against the backdrop of SDC's policy documents, and of credit proposals for some of the reviewed VSD activities. Of course, theories of change look different for each individual project. Many VSD activities (e.g. support to Tin Tua and CMES, PLCE 2, AlbVet, Caplab etc.) focus on producing what is labelled outputs 4 and 5, be it for public training centres or for those of the civil society. Some of them (e.g. Caplab) also include policy dialogue (output 5) in order to, for example, lobby for changes in the legal framework, scale up educational innovations, etc. These activities generally increase the number of VSD graduates (outcome 7), whose skills enable them (at least in a number of reviewed cases) to find employment and to increase their incomes (impact 1), which may lead to reduced poverty.

Readers should note the following: firstly, the framework distinguishes between two dimensions of impact, a context-neutral (impact 1) and a context-specific one (impact 2 and 3); the measurement of the first impact dimension has been one of the objectives of this evaluation. Secondly, it is important to underline that access to TVET (i.e. reduction of dropout) is considered here to be an intermediate outcome (7 and 8), even though access to education is a separate, self-standing MDG (MDG 2). Thirdly, not all the different aspects and indicators outlined in the framework were considered in detail in the reports (e.g. attendance of teachers and administrators in training sessions).

A first draft of the framework was produced by SDC's evaluation officer prior to the inception phase of the evaluation and was, later on, slightly modified by the evaluation team.

Illustration 1: Ex-post results framework

According to: Mayne, J. (2008). *Contribution Analysis - an approach to exploring cause and effect*, ILAC Brief 16. Rome: Institutional Learning and Change Initiative/Biodiversity International.



Annex 9: Overview of project case studies

Project name		Type of review document			Authors
		FS	DS	ME	
Africa					
Burkina Faso	Support to Association Tin Tua	x			Markus Maurer & Katharina Michaelowa
Mali	Programme d'Appui à la Formation Professionnelle (PAFP)		x		Markus Maurer
Asia					
Bangladesh	Post Literacy and Continuing Education Project 2	x			Philipp Gonon
Nepal	National Skill Testing Board Project		x		Philipp Gonon
Bangladesh	Support to the Centre for Mass Education in Science			x	Philipp Gonon
Latin America					
Peru	Caplab	x			Rolf Arnold
Nicaragua	Capacitacion Laboral		x		Rolf Arnold
Ecuador	Reto Rural			x	Raphael Cabrera
Europe					
Moldova	Technical Assistance to establish a Moldovan Occupational Standards, Assessment and Certification System	x			Uwe Wieckenberg
Albania	Albanian Vocational Educational and Training Support Programme		x		Markus Maurer & Uwe Wieckenberg

Recent SDC Evaluations

EVALUATION 2011/1	SDC' HUMANITARIAN AID: EMERGENCY RELIEF
EVALUATION 2010/1	SDC'S RESEARCH RELATED ACTIVITIES
EVALUATION 2009/5	SDC'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS BIODIVERSITY: Impact in the Andean Region
EVALUATION 2009/4	SWITZERLANDS' BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION: To what extent do operational synergies exist?
EVALUATION 2009/3	TWO RURAL FINANCE AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA
EVALUATION 2009/2	KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING IN SDC
EVALUATION 2009/1	EVALUATION OF SDC'S PERFORMANCE IN MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY
EVALUATION 2008/1	SDC HUMANITARIAN AID IN ANGOLA 1995–2006
EVALUATION 2007/2	DECENTRALISATION IN SDC'S BILATERAL COOPERATION Relevance, Effectiveness, Sustainability and Comparative Advantage
EVALUATION 2007/1	SDC'S PERFORMANCE TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE RECIPIENTS' PERSPECTIVE
EVALUATION 2006/1	EVALUACIÓN INDEPENDIENTE DEL PROGRAMA REGIONAL DE AMÉRICA CENTRAL 1999–2005
EVALUATION 2005/3	INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE SDC/seco MEDIUM TERM CONCEPT 2002–2006 IN SERBIA & MONTENEGRO
EVALUATION 2005/2	INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF SDC NEPAL COUNTRY PROGRAMMES 1993–2004 Building Bridges in Nepal – Dealing with deep divides
EVALUATION 2005/1	AUFGABENTEILUNG ZENTRALE – KOBÜ
EVALUATION 2004/4	SDC'S INTERACTION WITH THE SWISS NGO'S (for internal use only)
EVALUATION 2004/3	QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF SDC'S EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORTS (not published)
EVALUATION JR 2004/2	SWISS-SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2000–2003 Joint Review
EVALUATION 2004/1	SDC'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS INFLUENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE WITHIN SDC
EVALUATION EE 2003/6	SDC – COUNTER TRAFFICKING PROGRAMME MOLDOVA
EVALUATION EE 2003/5	SDC – HUMANITARIAN AID IN ANGOLA
EVALUATION EE 2003/4	12 JAHRE OSTZUSAMMENARBEIT BAND 1 DIE TRANSITION UND IHR SCHATTEN BAND 2 BILANZ DER ÖFFENTLICHEN SCHWEIZERISCHEN ZUSAMMENARBEIT MIT OSTEUROPA UND DER GUS 1990–2002
EVALUATION 2003/3	PROGRAMME DE LA COOPERATION SUISSE AU NIGER 1997–2002
EVALUATION 2003/2	SDC'S INTERACTION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)
EVALUATION 2003/1	DC'S BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER (PRSP) PROCESS
EVALUATION 2002/1	EIN JAHRZEHNT CINFO 1990–2001

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