



**Switzerland's international
cooperation is working.**
Final report on the implementation
of the Dispatch 2017–20



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Madam President of the National Council
Mr President of the Council of States
Members of Parliament

As we near the end of the 2017–20 strategy period for Switzerland's international cooperation, it is time to take stock of the outcomes achieved and the measures that have helped to deliver them. Both our own local impact assessments and independent evaluations confirm that **we have met the majority of our objectives and achieved the target outcomes with our programmes.** Swiss international cooperation has helped to save lives, give people living in poverty access to healthcare and education, create economic prospects, protect the environment as a basis for life, strengthen resilience to climatic, economic and financial crises and promote democracy, peace and respect for human rights.

However, global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, poor cross-border water management, epidemics, unemployment and armed conflict threaten to undo this progress. Consequently, countering these risks with innovative solutions and contributing to sustainable development are, and will remain, the primary concerns of Swiss international cooperation. **This commitment also benefits Switzerland's own security and prosperity.**

In the interests of effectiveness, it is important that Swiss international cooperation actions dovetail with the key concerns of priority and partner countries and are embedded in an international framework. **Such a universal framework is provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Swiss international cooperation assists partner and priority countries in achieving their own development goals.** Over recent years, multilateral cooperation has come to play an increasingly important role in this area, giving Switzerland's actions greater leverage. However, democratisation, the rule of law and human rights are coming under increasing pressure. This remains a challenge for Switzerland's international cooperation and for Switzerland itself, because our country depends on a peaceful and just international order.

This final report focuses on the outcomes specified in the Dispatch and is based on results for the years 2016–19. It also deals with the three areas in which Parliament,

through the federal decrees on the Dispatch and a motion put forward by the Council of States Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC-S), has more precisely defined Switzerland's international cooperation mission: **more robust impact measurement based on external evaluations, the strategic linking of international cooperation to migration policy, and the topic of mountains as a thematic priority.**

The system used to measure the impact of Swiss international cooperation has been further extended in recent years. A 2018 review by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee gave Switzerland a positive evaluation. Despite the generally high level of effectiveness of the SDC, the HSD and SECO, some results are less satisfactory and these are considered with a critical eye. **Several examples in this report show how we deal with difficulties in project implementation and learn lessons from them.**

Through programmes to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged people, create better economic prospects and jobs, develop good governance in priority countries and build peace, **Swiss international cooperation has specifically addressed the causes of conflict and migration.** Migration has been systematically included in all new cooperation strategies and enshrined in new framework agreements as a component of cooperation and political dialogue.

With this final report, the Federal Council proposes the dismissal of motion FAC-S 16.3624, which called for mountains to be considered a priority issue in the implementation of the Dispatch on International Cooperation 2017–20. Drawing on the valuable experience and expertise acquired in its own, often small, mountain regions, Switzerland has worked to promote better living conditions for population groups facing similar structural challenges.


In addition to governments and authorities in priority countries, key partners for Swiss international cooperation have included multilateral bodies such as UN organisations

and development banks, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and academia. **The period 2017–20 has seen cooperation with the private sector expanded, both by involving and promoting the local private sector and through project partnerships with Swiss companies committed to sustainable development.**

However, international cooperation efforts alone cannot deliver sustainable development: indeed, sustainability is an issue that transcends such cooperation. With developing countries often disproportionately affected by issues of policy coherence, Switzerland seeks to identify where international cooperation objectives may conflict with other policy areas, such as international financial flows and tax issues, trade, investment, the environment or health, and to find solutions that are as coherent as possible. The 2030 Agenda is an important reference framework in this respect.

In February 2011, Parliament voted to increase Switzerland's official development assistance (ODA) to 0.5 % of gross national income (GNI) by 2015. However, owing to the 2017–19 stabilisation programme, the Dispatch 2017–20 was based on a lower percentage of 0.48. In the 2018 budget, the Federal Council and Parliament decided to make further cuts to international cooperation funding. Based on available estimates, the average ODA rate for 2017–20 will work out at around 0.46 %.

With this generally positive assessment of the past four years, we conclude the Dispatch period at the end of 2020 while also looking ahead to the next Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2021–24 (International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24), which will see Swiss international cooperation build on its successes, further strengthen its effectiveness and become more focused both geographically and thematically. To this end, the SDC, the HSD and SECO will continue to work together in a strategic and operationally complementary way. These and other adjustments will enable Switzerland to go on making an effective contribution to sustainable development and to a peaceful world free of poverty.



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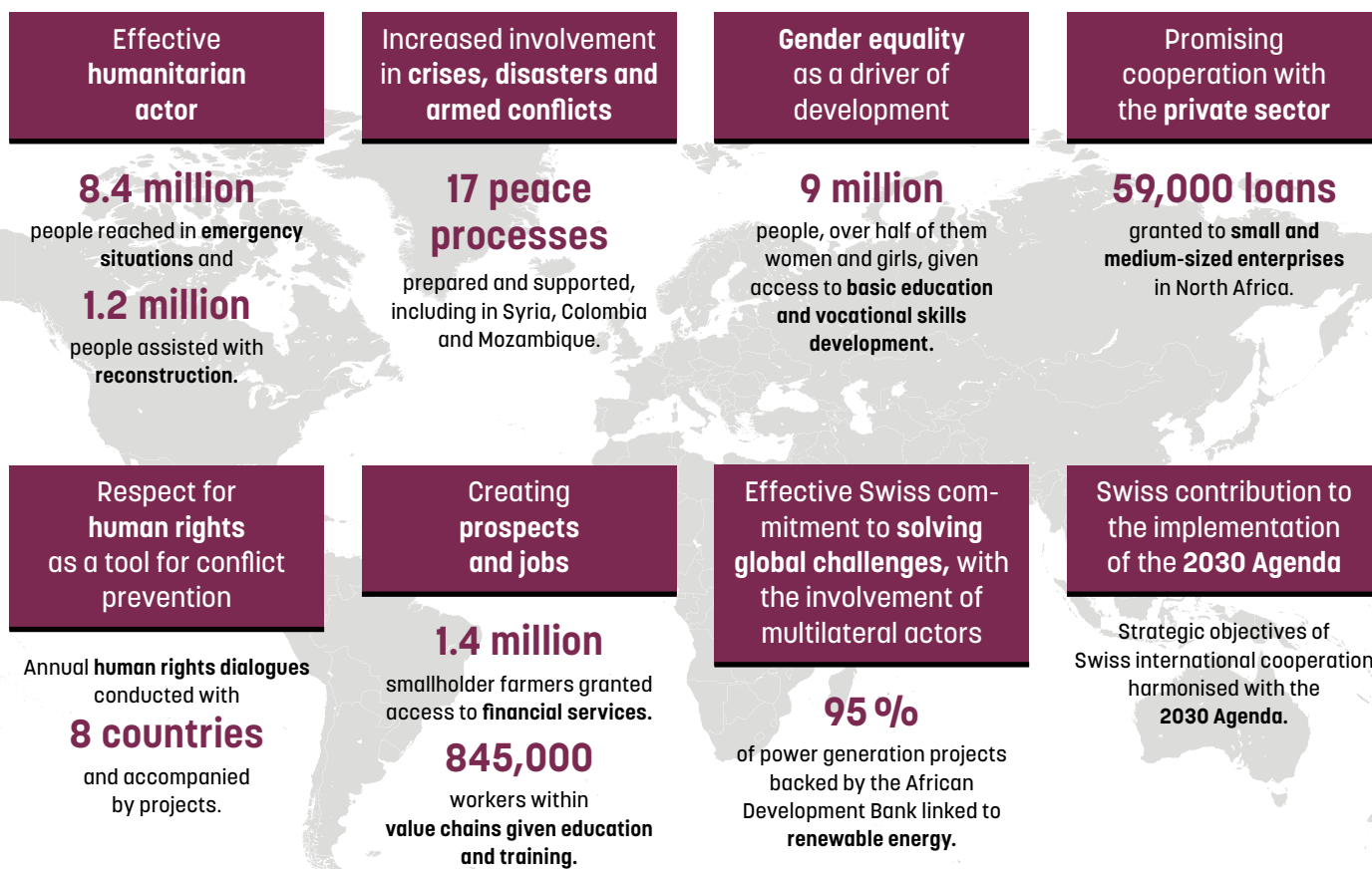
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Results at a glance

Swiss international cooperation achieved a strong set of results in the 2017–20 strategy period. In this final report, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Human Security Division (HSD) jointly outline the measures taken to achieve their objectives and discuss the challenges that lie ahead in the next Dispatch period (International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24). The following pages provide an overview of the strategic objectives and results achieved in the priority areas of Swiss international cooperation.



Impact

In recent years, Switzerland has been steadily expanding the system used to measure the impact of its international cooperation. In 2019, the OECD gave Switzerland good marks for the planning, implementation, management and evaluation of its projects and programmes. As learning organisations, the SDC, SECO and the HSD have used difficulties and unachieved objectives as an opportunity for continuous improvement. **In their respective annexes, each organisation presents not only successful measures but also projects that had to be suspended or adapted.**

Lessons for the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24

- ▶ Enhance effectiveness through greater geographic and thematic focus.
- ▶ With the effects of climate change being felt worldwide, focus more strongly on this issue and implement more cross-sectoral projects.
- ▶ Make targeted use of new technologies and digitalisation.
- ▶ Use financial resources more flexibly to engage also with non-priority countries on the issue of migration.
- ▶ Give scientific studies and impact analyses a greater role in international cooperation.

Taking stock of Switzerland's international cooperation

The Federal Council structured the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–20 around a number of strategic objectives. Swiss international cooperation has in large part achieved these objectives for the years 2017–20. Its effective engagement is reviewed in the following pages.

In terms of growth, health and quality of life, humanity has made great strides in recent decades, as evidenced by an unprecedented reduction in extreme poverty. Switzerland's international cooperation efforts have played a part in these successes, **with scientific studies, independent evaluations and reports on effectiveness all confirming their positive contribution.** Economic growth and increasing prosperity take a heavy toll on the environment and require a sustainable approach. Climate change and rapid declines in biodiversity pose new challenges for international cooperation, while armed conflict, human rights violations, poor governance, debt, financial and economic crises, epidemics, food and water crises, and an often disorderly approach to migration remain major issues in many developing countries.

Responses to global challenges

In 2017–20, Swiss international cooperation helped to address global challenges by means of global thematic programmes, contributions to multilateral organisations and international policy dialogue. This is borne out by numerous independent evaluations as well as reports by the Swiss Federal Audit Office¹ and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee.² Switzerland's contribution in this area also serves its own interests, as in a globalised, interconnected world our own prosperity, security and stability depend on the international environment. The effects of climate change or pandemics do not stop at national borders. Switzerland also shares responsibility for global sustainable development: 80 % of our water footprint and over 60 % of our greenhouse gas footprint³ is generated abroad as a result of the goods that we import.

International cooperation's contribution to the 2030 Agenda

Sustainable development and the complete eradication of extreme poverty by 2030 require action from the entire international community. The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provides this common framework for action, incorporating all three dimensions of sustainability – social, environmental and economic – in a balanced whole. **In the Dispatch 2017–20, Swiss international cooperation harmonised its strategic objectives with the goals of the 2030 Agenda.** Working with multilateral organisations, as well as local and Swiss businesses, research bodies and civil society, it has helped to implement the universal sustainability agenda in its priority countries over the past four years.

Through its six global programmes – climate change and environment, food security, health, migration and development, water, and finance and trade – Switzerland worked to find solutions to global challenges in 2017–20 (see SDC p. 5). It did so by combining local and regional solutions with international policy dialogue and by feeding Swiss expertise and experience from successful projects into the global dialogue in a meaningful way, for example through discussions in UN institutions and with multilateral development banks. In areas such as energy efficiency, health, food production and water management, Switzerland has proven expertise that is much in demand from the international community (see SDC p. 5, SECO p. 8).

In the water sector, Switzerland supported the creation and expansion of over 60 water and recycling start-ups. Innovative and sustainable solutions for the water sector are key to addressing the multiple challenges posed by the refugee crisis in the Middle East, for example. An independent evaluation of Swiss international cooperation in the water sector⁴ found that Switzerland, as a neutral country, was able to bring different parties together and work with them to develop political solutions to water conflicts. Through its commitment to cross-border cooperation and the peaceful management of water, Switzerland makes an effective and enduring contribution to international stability,

UN reform

In 2018, Switzerland scored a notable success as a credible mediator in the reform of the UN's development organisations. It chaired negotiations for the review of all UN development organisations, with a view to making them more efficient and complementary (see QR code). All 193 UN member states endorsed the reforms. The repositioning of the UN in its partner countries should allow for significant cost savings. Over the past four years, Switzerland has worked with multilateral organisations to advocate greater effectiveness (see SDC p. 5). This is all the more important given the growing political threat to multilateralism.



- 1 SFAO project audits of the global programmes on 'water' and 'climate change and environment', 2019, available (in German, summary in English) at: www.efk.admin.ch > Publications > International relations > 3 July 2019.
- 2 OECD Peer Review of Switzerland, 2019, available at: www.oecd.org > Countries > Switzerland > Switzerland country reviews > 5 April 2019.
- 3 Treibhausgas-Fussabdruck (Greenhouse gas footprint), 2018, available (in German) at: www.bfs.admin.ch > Statistiken finden > Raum und Umwelt > Umweltgesamtrechnung > Luftemissionen > Treibhausgas-Fussabdruck > 3 July 2019.
- 4 Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Water Sector 2010–17, 2019.



with water seen as a key means of fostering dialogue and peace. Switzerland's Blue Peace Middle East initiative helped to forge links between political and technical stakeholders and promoted economic growth, market integration and access to employment in the region.

As well as innovative partnerships, Swiss international cooperation also leveraged digitalisation and new technologies.

Through their efforts, software developed in Tanzania to manage health insurance funds has been made available globally and is already being used in five countries (see SDC p. 5). An independent evaluation of Switzerland's performance in social protection⁵ found that, thanks to this software, more people now have health insurance and their lives are sustainably improved as a consequence. In Ghana, Switzerland promoted access to mobile payment services, while an independent evaluation⁶ of Swiss activities in the field of energy-efficient cities showed that the introduction of new sustainable energy generation technologies had been successful (see SECO p. 8).

Gender equality as a driver of development

Gender equality was a key strategic objective of the Dispatch 2017–20, for only by including women can the goals of the 2030 Agenda be realised. Switzerland specifically tackled sexual and gender-based violence and promoted the economic empowerment and political participation of women. The strengthening of Swiss international

cooperation efforts in this area helped to implement SDG 5 on gender equality. The report on effectiveness in the field of gender equality found that three quarters of projects with an explicit gender focus and 31 % of projects with gender equality as a transversal theme had a positive impact on equality between women and men and helped make lasting improvements to the position of women.⁷

Multilateral development banks

Switzerland used its strong representation on the boards of development banks to address its concerns in many developing countries (see QR code). The International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's fund for the poorest countries, launched a new debt sustainability concept initiated by Switzerland. On climate change, massive investment has been made in renewable energy sources, often with the involvement of the private sector. Together with other members, Switzerland advised



development banks in Africa and Asia on how to systematically include the management of fragility, including migration issues, in their programmes (see SECO p. 9).

In the mountain regions of Honduras, Georgia and Armenia, for example, Switzerland's efforts led to the creation of 16,000 new jobs for women. Women's access to financial services is also very important (see SDC p. 11, SECO p. 6), and is considered a catalyst for their economic participation. By the end of 2017, over 106,000 female entrepreneurs in Egypt had accessed loans as a result of international cooperation projects. The OECD's peer review of Switzerland recommended that international cooperation implement more gender-specific projects in order to bring about long-term, structural changes.

5 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Social Protection 2013–17, 2019.

6 Independent Evaluation of Energy-Efficient Cities, 2019.

7 Report on Effectiveness Swiss international cooperation in the field of gender equality 2007–16, 2018.

For sustainable growth, better education/training and employment

Between 2017 and 2020, Switzerland expanded its commitment to basic education and vocational skills development by 50 %.

High-quality education is a goal of the 2030 Agenda in its own right (SDG 4) as well as a driver of poverty reduction (SDG 1), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and peace (SDG 16). Switzerland passed on its proven expertise in basic education and vocational skills development to priority countries and gained further experience in working with the private sector. In collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), it strengthened national education systems in its priority countries by supporting innovative financing mechanisms. The GPE helps developing countries to increase their national education budgets and mobilise additional private funding: for every three dollars raised from private funds, it provides another dollar. Switzerland's experience in the coordination and interaction of basic education and vocational skills development, and the latter with the needs of the private sector, represents an added value which it intends to leverage further in the future. The SDC's focus in this area is on employability and it works closely with the local private sector, business associations and educational institutions. As a complement to this, SECO is active in professional education and training, fostering the necessary conditions and promoting specialisations tailored to market needs. In Indonesia, Switzerland assisted five polytechnic schools in overhauling and redeveloping 12 curricula in various subject areas and ran numerous training courses for teachers, school managers and associated companies.

Switzerland contributed effectively to the economic development of its priority countries and to job creation, thereby helping to implement SDG 8.

An external report looking at Switzerland's employment projects gave these activities a positive evaluation, with almost 85 % of the projects examined achieving satisfactory to very good effectiveness. Vocational education and training programmes that work to establish agricultural value chains, as well as projects to improve working conditions were particularly successful. As well as boosting productivity, the projects examined also promoted gender equality.⁸ Swiss international cooperation projects supported the creation of 65,000 jobs (see SECO p.6). Efforts focused in particular on promoting support networks (mentoring), financial services and better production conditions. In mountainous regions of Georgia, Switzerland supported small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the dairy and meat processing industries. As a result of the enhanced value chain, a total of 91,600 farmers (27,600 women and 64,000 men) now have regular access to the market and generated additional income of CHF 6.5 million by selling their produce (see SDC p.8).

Promising cooperation with the private sector

In line with SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), Swiss international cooperation also increased involvement with the private sector in 2017–20, with good results.

In Indonesia, Switzerland is working with the public and private sectors to make cocoa production more sustainable. The producers involved were trained in sustainable production methods and given access to investment capital, leading to an average productivity increase of 22 % in 2018 and boosting their

income by an average of over 16 %. With a mean annual income of USD 1,244, the families now have around USD 205 more to live on. Furthermore, the CO2 emissions generated by the cocoa processing companies supported have fallen by 30 % since 2016. The project assisted over 153,000 producers between 2016 and 2018 (see SECO p.7).

Swiss contribution to climate financing

Enhanced collaboration between Swiss international cooperation and the private sector is set to mobilise additional funds for climate financing. Developed countries have pledged a total of USD 100 billion a year, from both public and private sources, for climate change action in developing countries from 2020 onwards. The Federal Council considers Switzerland's fair share to be CHF 450–600 million per annum from that date, including both public and mobilised private funding. Mobilising private climate financing remains a challenge in poorer developing countries, so in future greater consideration will be given to innovative new financial instruments.

Working to mitigate crises, armed conflicts and disasters

The Dispatch 2017–20 saw Switzerland step up its activities in fragile contexts, crises and armed conflicts, and make a general and concerted effort to implement SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Worldwide, some 1.8 billion people in more than 40 countries are affected by crises, disasters and armed conflicts. According to the OECD, around 80 % of all people in extreme poverty will live in fragile contexts by 2030.⁹ Experience in international cooperation has shown that there are no magic solutions for dealing with fragility and armed conflicts. International cooperation priorities and working methods must be able to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing political context and to the security situation.

A number of priority countries have seen a growing trend towards authoritarianism in government.

Where citizen participation and fundamental rights were severely curtailed, Switzerland scaled back its cooperation with state institutions, adapted its projects or suspended them altogether (see SDC p.10). If cooperation with central government was no longer possible, support was shifted to regional or local authorities and efforts were made to promote civil society organisations championing citizen participation and accountability. Projects directly benefiting the population were continued. Work to support SMEs helped to supply citizens with required goods and services at affordable prices. Where there was a risk of armed conflict, Switzerland also tendered its good offices in mediation and peacebuilding.

Switzerland closely supervised the negotiations leading up to the comprehensive peace agreement signed by the government and the armed opposition in Mozambique (see HSD p.4). In the Syria conflict, Switzerland facilitated the involvement of over 400 Syrian citizens in the UN peace process. Civilian peacebuilding measures and measures to prevent violent conflict and strengthen human rights effectively complemented development cooperation and humanitarian aid instruments (see p.13). In its international cooperation, Switzerland makes strategic use of its expertise in mediation, fostering dialogue between parties to a conflict, ceasefire negotiations and human rights dialogue. It has also built up additional expertise in the prevention of election-related violence (see HSD p.4).

⁸ Report on Effectiveness Swiss International Cooperation in the Field of Employment 2005–14, 2017.

⁹ OECD, *States of Fragility 2018*, 2018.

Strategies for safe, orderly and regular migration

According to UN data, there were 258 million international migrants worldwide in 2018,¹⁰ equivalent to around 3.4% of the world's population.¹¹ Some 71 million people had to flee armed conflict and persecution: 41 million within their own country, 26 million as recognised refugees and 3.5 million as asylum seekers awaiting an asylum decision. Eighty per cent of these displaced people live in countries neighbouring their countries of origin.¹²

During the debate on the Dispatch 2017–20, Parliament decided to strategically link international cooperation and migration policy, "by tackling the sources of conflict and migration".

A significant proportion of international cooperation measures in 2017–20 are indirectly relevant to migration policy. These programmes operate in areas such as peace policy, private sector development, vocational skills development and basic education. Programmes of direct relevance to migration are those that support migrants, displaced persons and refugees (see p. 12). Through its initiatives, Switzerland worked to provide emigrants, such as migrant workers from South and South East Asia in the Gulf States, with access to protection and legal assistance. At the same time, its involvement in international political dialogue helped to promote safer, more orderly and more regular migration. In the future, this strategic link will be strengthened and efforts made to sustainably reduce the causes of migration: from armed conflict and natural disasters to the lack of local prospects. Furthermore, experience has shown that a degree of flexibility is needed in the way that financial resources are deployed, in particular as regards ad hoc engagement in countries that are not priority countries for bilateral development cooperation.

Switzerland as a strong humanitarian actor

Since the beginning of 2016, Switzerland has delivered emergency relief to 8.4 million people living in precarious circumstances and assisted 1.2 million people with reconstruction, in keeping with its humanitarian tradition. It has acted flexibly and quickly, providing emergency relief following disasters such as the earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi, Indonesia, in 2018 and the two cyclones in Mozambique in 2019 (see SDC p. 14). Switzerland's involvement in the Syria crisis is its largest humanitarian operation. Around CHF 60 million has been spent each year on assisting the people affected, half on those in need in Syria itself and the rest on refugees and host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. The emphasis is on projects providing emergency relief, protecting the civilian population and strengthening their resilience.

A well-functioning humanitarian system is needed to reach people in need. Switzerland is appreciated internationally as a credible and competent actor (see SDC p. 13). As a member of the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board, it worked with other donors to revise the WFP's strategy and working methods, prioritising protection of the civilian population, adherence to humanitarian principles and accountability to the affected population.

¹⁰ The term 'international migrant' is used here to refer to anyone who resides for a prolonged period in a country other than their country of origin. In other words, no distinction is made between people who have fled their country of origin (refugees) and those who emigrate for other (primarily economic) reasons.

¹¹ UN, *International Migration Report 2017*, 2017.

¹² UNHCR statistics, 2019, available at: www.unhcr.org > About us > Figures at a Glance > 25 June 2019.



Championing human rights and the rule of law

Respect for and promotion of human rights and effective rule of law are indispensable for social and economic development. Accordingly, Switzerland stepped up its efforts to ensure respect for human rights and promote the rule of law in 2017–20, helping to implement SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) in its priority countries. In South Asia, Switzerland supported several national human rights institutions in their reporting on human rights violations (see SDC p. 10). These institutions help vulnerable groups to understand their rights and assert them vis-à-vis the government. Switzerland also worked with the private sector and civil society to develop guidance on raw materials, giving Swiss companies a practical tool for preventing human rights violations in the commodities sector (see HSD p. 5).

Switzerland is widely respected internationally for its long democratic tradition. **It shared its experiences with its priority countries and contributed to good governance and the implementation of SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.** In Tunisia, Swiss international cooperation supported more than 7,100 municipal councillors and judges, over half of them women, in the exercise of their duties, with the aim of strengthening the rule of law, access to justice and civil society. Switzerland also engaged with its partner countries in the fight against corruption. In Ukraine, for example, the potential of digitalisation as an effective means of combating corruption was harnessed with Swiss support (see SDC p. 12).

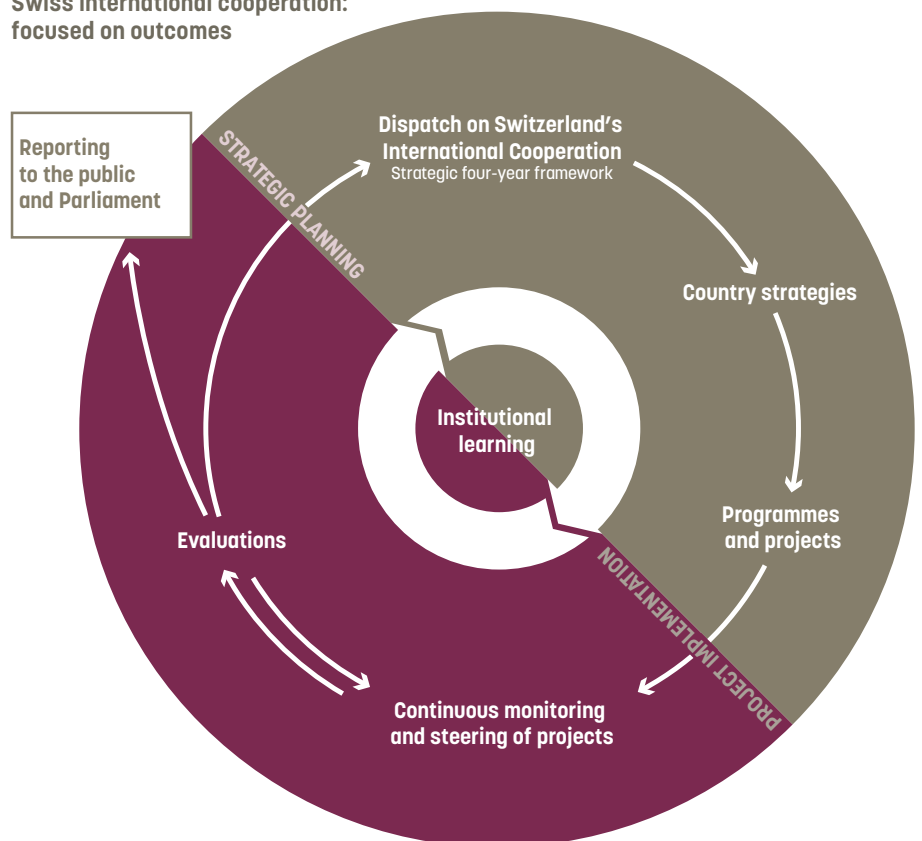
Social integration for all

A number of international cooperation projects sought to improve the lives of people with disabilities, with a focus on physical rehabilitation and promoting social integration. In 2017, over 44,000 people with disabilities, primarily landmine victims, were rehabilitated at health centres run by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). As part of its educational work in Chad (see SDC p. 7), Switzerland supports efforts to raise awareness among teachers about working with children with disabilities. The children stay in their own classes and receive one-to-one support, which helps to foster integration and mutual understanding.

Making an impact

In its 2019 review of Swiss international cooperation, the OECD gave Switzerland good marks for the planning, implementation, management and evaluation of its projects and programmes.¹³ The first step when engaging with a priority country is to develop a country strategy. The resulting projects are embedded in this overarching programme and complement one another. Accurate problem analysis and clear objectives are key to ensuring that these projects achieve the desired impact in an efficient way. The SDC, SECO and the HSD systematically measure their impact (see diagram). **In so doing, they take the Dispatch as a strategic framework, which they translate into their country strategies and projects. The implementation of country strategies and projects is continuously monitored and regularly evaluated. Learning experiences from the monitoring and recommendations from the evaluations are implemented in order to improve the projects.**

Swiss international cooperation: focused on outcomes



The impact of a strategy, programme or project is measured by independent experts based on international criteria developed by the OECD.¹⁴ Questions include: Does the project meet the needs of the local population (relevance)? Were the objectives achieved (effectiveness)? Were the results achieved as cost-efficiently as possible (efficiency)? Will the results persist when Swiss support comes to an end (sustainability)? These analyses are important because they provide an opportunity to adapt the strategies if necessary and to better target the next phase of the project or future projects.

While recording the results of individual projects is comparatively simple, quantifying Switzerland's contribution to the desired social and political change remains methodologically

challenging. In certain areas, such as health or education, comparable project results can be combined, enabling conclusions to be drawn on quantitative outcomes such as enrolment ratios. In other areas of international cooperation, such as the promotion of the rule of law or peacebuilding, accurately measuring the Swiss contribution is more difficult. In any case, independent evaluations and their recommendations help to improve the work done. In some cases it may also be useful to conduct a scientific impact study with control groups, as with education in Benin (see SDC p. 15). While such studies are very expensive and labour-intensive, they can provide scientifically sound evidence of how much impact was due to the programme and how much depended (solely) on the local context.

The SDC, SECO and HSD reports detail not only successful outcomes but also difficult projects and other challenges faced during the 2017–20 Dispatch period. Switzerland's international cooperation uses the lessons learnt from these difficulties and successes in order to continuously improve projects, their monitoring and effectiveness.

¹³ OECD Peer Review of Switzerland, 2019, available at: www.oecd.org > Countries > Switzerland > Switzerland country reviews > 5 April 2019.

¹⁴ DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance, available at: www.oecd.org > OECD Home Development Co-operation Directorate > Evaluation of development programmes > 3 July 2019.

Priority countries and regions for international cooperation

Selected project examples

Coordinated disaster risk reduction by the SDC and SECO in North Macedonia

In North Macedonia, the SDC and SECO are taking complementary action to tackle flooding. The SDC, for example, supports early warning systems and works more in rural areas, while SECO's work focuses on towns and cities and includes the provision of modern infrastructure (see p. 13).

A Swiss strategy in North Africa

In North Africa, Switzerland's international cooperation joined forces with the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) to implement a common strategy, supplemented by work on three priority issues: democracy and human rights, economic growth and employment, and protection and migration (see p. 12).

Investigating human rights violations in Nicaragua

In its priority countries in Central America, respect for and promotion of human rights is a key element of the SDC's work. In Nicaragua, with Swiss support, international expert groups were convened to investigate allegations of human rights violations (see SDC p. 10).

Teaching in local languages leads to better learning outcomes in Chad

In Chad, the SDC supported basic education provision in local languages, which not only led to more successful learning and faster acquisition but also saw fewer children dropping out of school early (see SDC p. 7).

■ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation * Humanitarian Aid
■ State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
■ Human Security Division



Urban development in Ukraine

SECO helped Ukrainian cities to improve their energy efficiency and to involve the population in urban planning. Two cities received the European Energy Award label (see SECO p.8).

Peace process in Syria

The HSD, in close collaboration with the UN special envoy, enabled Syrian civil society to participate in the peace process and was involved in ascertaining the fate of some 100,000 to 200,000 missing persons (see HSD p.4).

Cooperation with the private sector in Cambodia

In Cambodia, the SDC works with a Swiss firm that provides financial support to a local trading company. The company buys certified organic rice from smallholder farmers for export. Thanks to SDC-funded training in organic farming techniques, producers can sell their crops to the trading company at a higher price than they would otherwise receive (see SDC p.8).

Migration dialogue in the Horn of Africa

The SDC, HSD and SEM are engaged in dialogue with a regional organisation representing eight countries in the Horn of Africa. They work together on migration issues, taking account of Switzerland's domestic and foreign policy interests (see p.13).

Emergency relief in Mozambique

In 2019, Swiss Humanitarian Aid undertook emergency relief operations in Mozambique following cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Experts from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit were on the ground within a very short time (see SDC p.14).

Sustainable tourism in Indonesia

Tourism is high on the Indonesian government's agenda. SECO contributed to the sustainable development of tourism in the country by, among other things, means of training, better marketing and enhanced tourist offerings (see SECO p.6).

Synergies and complementarities

To implement the Dispatch 2017–20, Switzerland worked closely with the governments and authorities of its priority countries, multilateral organisations, local and Swiss NGOs, the private sector and research institutions. Only through joint action with governmental and non-governmental actors at all levels and across sectors can the goals of the 2030 Agenda be achieved. **To leverage context-appropriate synergies and complementarities, Swiss international cooperation relies on a whole-of-government approach to implementing programmes as well as close coordination between the three instruments of international cooperation (humanitarian aid, development cooperation and the promotion of peace and human security).**

A Swiss strategy

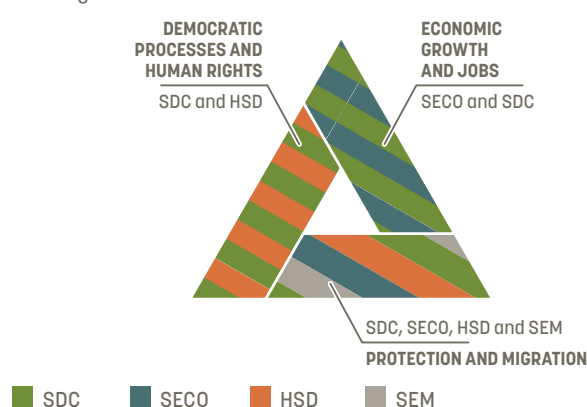
Swiss international cooperation implemented the whole-of-government approach effectively in country and regional strategies, with the SDC, HSD, SECO and SEM coordinating work. Switzerland has created synergies in North Africa by, for example, having the HSD conduct human rights dialogue with governments and the SDC assist with good governance training while SECO builds the countries' organisational and decision-making capacities by strengthening public sector finances (see diagram). In the Middle East, an external evaluation confirmed the positive impact of this joint strategic commitment by all Swiss actors.¹⁵ The whole-of-government approach yielded good results, allowing Switzerland to address the multiple challenges faced by the crisis-hit region and to link international cooperation strategically with migration policy.

Action in Ukraine delivers good outcomes^{17/18}

The complementary activities of the SDC, HSD and SECO allow Switzerland to address the challenges posed by the conflict in eastern Ukraine from multiple angles and effectively support reform processes in the country, including the separation of powers, the fight against corruption and the dismantling of centralised structures. SECO's actions mean that municipal authorities are better able to perform their delegated tasks (see SECO p. 8). As part of peacebuilding efforts, the HSD worked at the political level to deliver progress on humanitarian challenges (see HSD p. 4), while Swiss Humanitarian Aid organised convoys that provided drinking water to millions of people on both sides of the contact line. Meanwhile, the SDC helped internally displaced entrepreneurs to develop new businesses. On the recommendation of the team of experts, Swiss international cooperation will in future coordinate its instruments even more closely and operate in the same regions on a more regular basis (see SDC p. 12).

Synergies and complementarities in North Africa thanks to the whole-of-government approach

The Swiss agencies HSD, SDC, SECO and SEM work together, complementing each other on three focal issues:



Strategic linking of international cooperation and foreign policy on migration

In line with the mandate from Parliament to strengthen the strategic links between international cooperation and migration policy,¹⁶ the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) and the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) worked together closely within the Interdepartmental Structure for International Cooperation on Migration (ICM). They took action at three levels. At the political level, migration issues were discussed in consultations with partner countries, leading to migration partnerships such as that with Sri Lanka in 2018. At a geographical level, all newly developed cooperation strategies since 2017 have been systematically examined to identify their potential for incorporating migration. The vast majority of these new strategies include substantial migration-related activities. At the thematic level, a number of new projects, focusing directly on migrants, were launched. In future, the migration cooperation structure should be involved even earlier in the project planning process. Moreover, experience in recent years has shown that migration policy opportunities are not always flexibly exploited. In future, the SDC intends to set aside funds for more flexible, ad hoc engagements outside its priority countries, reflecting the concerns of the entire migration cooperation structure. Based on its core competencies, SECO is also able to respond flexibly to specific migration policy opportunities through complementary measures.

¹⁵ Regional Evaluation Cooperation Strategy Middle East 2015–18, 2018.

¹⁶ BBl 2016 8097 and 8103

¹⁷ Evaluation Cooperation Strategy Ukraine 2015–19, 2019.

¹⁸ OECD Peer Review of Switzerland, 2019, available at: www.oecd.org > Countries > Switzerland > Switzerland country reviews > 5 April 2019.

Strategic partnership in the Horn of Africa

Switzerland has been working to protect refugees in the Horn of Africa for over 20 years. The region has more international migrants than almost any other part of the world. Switzerland has a strategic partnership with the regional organisation IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development). It is the first initiative jointly funded by three of Switzerland's leading players in foreign policy on migration (the SDC, HSD and SEM). This support enables Switzerland to engage in dialogue on migration issues with the eight countries in the Horn of Africa, taking into account Switzerland's foreign and domestic policy interests.

Switzerland helps the Horn of Africa countries to respond quickly to displacements caused by climate-related disasters and to create conditions that enable migrants to find work more easily. Migrants who migrate safely and in a controlled manner within the region and who work in their host countries can make an important contribution to the development of both their countries of origin and host countries through their remittances and spending.

Synergies between international cooperation instruments

The SDC and SECO operate in complementary ways in their development cooperation activities. In North Macedonia, for example, the two work together closely on disaster risk reduction. The SDC supports early warning systems and runs publicity campaigns informing people how they can protect themselves, while SECO helps municipal authorities to incorporate flood prevention measures into urban development plans. The SDC's focus on rural areas and SECO's on urban centres ensures that all flood-prone areas are covered. An independent evaluation of disaster risk reduction recommended that Switzerland further expands complementarities between the SDC and SECO (see SDC p. 14).¹⁹

Fragility has been on the rise in West Africa since 2018, with new crisis and conflict hotspots emerging. Carrying on its work in priority countries there and alleviating the causes of conflict are a challenge for the SDC. To this end, Switzerland is deploying a multi-instrument approach comprising development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad, the SDC had to adapt its programmes in the education sector, among others. Education is key to peace and social cohesion in these countries. The SDC also made adjustments in Niger to take account of the steadily deteriorating security situation in the Sahel.

The integrated use of humanitarian aid and development cooperation ('nexus') sees the two instruments of international cooperation deployed at the same time and in the same context. The aim of the nexus is to harness synergies in order to alleviate short-term distress while also improving people's circumstances in the medium and long term. The HSD's peacebuilding instrument is also used effectively to this end. The SDC is successfully implementing nexus programmes in the Horn of Africa, Mali and Myanmar, as confirmed by an independent evaluation.²⁰ However, there is room for further improvement in some areas: for example, the external expert team recommended that the SDC make structural adjustments to enhance the linkage between humanitarian aid and development cooperation (see SDC p. 14).

Effective cooperation with Swiss NGOs

The SDC made a significant contribution to the international programmes of around 40 Swiss NGOs (individual and umbrella organisations as well as cantonal federations). NGOs play a central role in Switzerland's international cooperation, **deploying 73 % of their SDC programme contributions in the SDC's priority countries and regions in 2017–20.** An independent evaluation confirmed their importance in achieving the Dispatch objectives.²¹ NGOs have built up expertise on Swiss international cooperation's priority issues and formed innovative partnerships with research institutions and the private sector, thereby complementing the SDC's work in its priority countries and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In Switzerland, NGOs raise public awareness about global challenges and the links between peace, security, sustainable development and prosperity.

In 2019, on the recommendation of the evaluation team, the SDC developed new guidance for engagement with Swiss NGOs,²² designed to ensure that funds are used even more effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the poorest and most vulnerable people in developing countries and crisis-hit areas. The guidance aims to strengthen civil society in partner countries and help NGOs boost the 'Swissness' of international cooperation by making greater use of Swiss expertise, innovations and services. The SDC has also adapted the system of allocation to ensure more balanced support.

19 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Disaster Risk Reduction 2010–17, 2020.

20 Independent Evaluation of the Linkage of Humanitarian Aid and Development Cooperation at SDC, 2019.

21 Independent Evaluation of SDC Partnerships with Swiss NGOs, 2017.

22 SDC guidance for engagement with Swiss NGOs, 2019.

Utilisation of framework credits

In the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–20, the Federal Council proposed that five framework credits be granted, assigning institutional responsibility for each: (1) Technical cooperation and financial aid for developing countries (technical cooperation: SDC; multilateral cooperation: SDC/SECO); (2) Humanitarian aid and the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) (SDC); (3) Economic and trade policy measures for development cooperation (SECO); (4) Transition cooperation with Eastern Europe (SDC/SECO); and (5) Measures for the promotion of peace and human security (HSD).

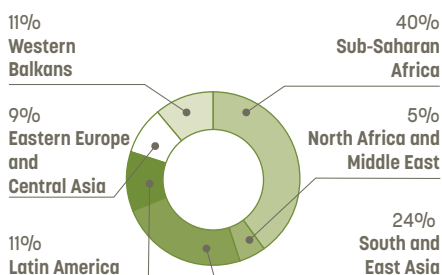
- ▶ The commitment of resources increased in the second half of the implementation period, linked to the conscientious and careful planning of programmes and projects.
- ▶ Due to the budget cuts decided by Parliament and the Federal Council the international cooperation commitments will be around CHF 500 million less overall for the 2017–20 strategy period, equivalent to 5 % of the originally planned budget.
- ▶ The funds committed for approved requests and the remaining budget for each framework credit, minus the cuts, will be used, as planned, by the end of the Dispatch period in 2020.
- ▶ Swiss Humanitarian Aid and the HSD react quickly and with flexibility to crises and conflicts as they occur. The majority of the funding granted under these two framework credits must be used with similar flexibility so that funds remain available in the last months of the Dispatch's implementation.

Bilateral commitments by region

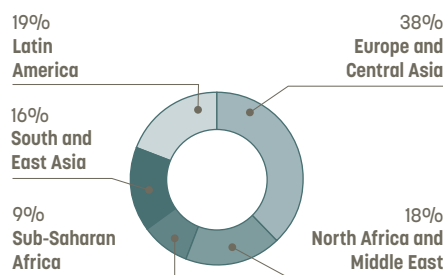
The SDC concentrates its activities primarily on the lowest-income countries. SECO is mainly active in middle-income countries, while the HSD operates in regions affected by or at risk of armed conflict.

As at 30 June 2019

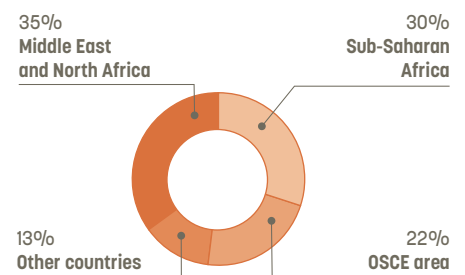
SDC



SECO



HSD*



* Including expert deployments by the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding

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Bern, 2020



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Final report on the implementation
of the Dispatch on Switzerland's
International Cooperation
2017–20

SDC Annex

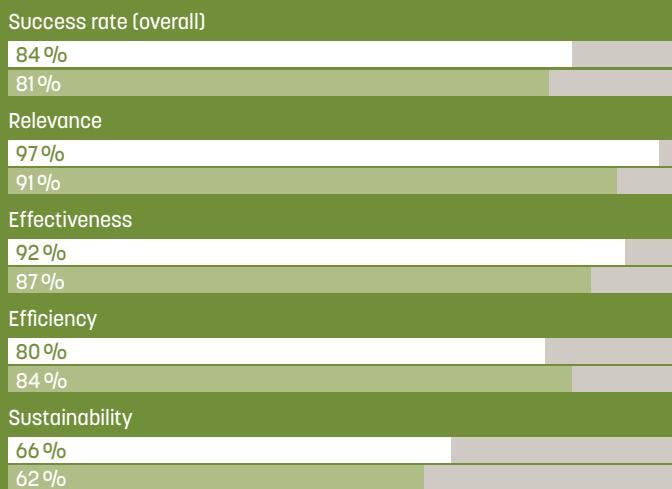


Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

As regards the impact of its work in 2017–20, the SDC's assessment is a positive one. However, alongside many successes, it also faced considerable challenges, especially in fragile contexts, with a number of projects having to be adapted or terminated. The following pages are based primarily on institutional and thematic evaluations carried out between 2017 and 2019.¹

Project success rates



■ Current Dispatch (2016–2018) ■ Previous Dispatch (2012–2015)

The SDC carries out around 100 evaluations each year, mostly at the end of a project phase to provide strategic guidance for the subsequent phase. The SDC calculates its success rates based on these evaluations (see graph). The success rates of SDC projects and programmes under the current Dispatch are slightly higher overall than in the past.

1 SDC evaluations, available at: www.sdc.admin.ch > Results and impact > 3 July 2019.

Measurable contribution to the 2030 Agenda

The SDC made a measurable contribution to implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda in its priority countries, making targeted and efficient use of its many years of experience as well as Swiss expertise and innovation, in partnership with local and Swiss actors. As an international reference framework, the 2030 Agenda requires concerted action by the entire international community. The SDC integrated the SDGs into its strategic objectives for 2017–20 and aligned all cooperation strategies with the 2030 Agenda and the national focal points of its priority countries, thereby contributing to their national goals (see outcomes 1–10, pp. 5–14).

Sustainable development in mountain regions

Mountains are home to one fifth of the world's population and the source of fresh water for half of all people. As a mountainous country, Switzerland contributed its own experience to the sustainable development of mountain regions, taking climate change into account. In Georgia, SDC support for farmers in mountainous areas enabled better market access for their produce, allowing them to increase their incomes (see p. 8). In the mountainous border region of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the SDC worked to improve the management of conflicts over access to natural resources (see p. 12). The disaster risk reduction programme in the Bolivian Andes was successfully completed after 13 years and achieved sustainable results at the system level (see p. 14).



The SDC stepped up its support for people in need in 2017–20. Since the beginning of 2016, it has delivered emergency relief to 8.4 million people living in precarious circumstances and assisted 1.2 million people with post-disaster reconstruction. Swiss Humanitarian Aid consistently geared its support to the needs of the affected population. Thanks to Swiss support for Rohingya refugees, 120,000 children in Bangladesh were tested for malnutrition and over 10,000 seriously malnourished children were treated. Since 2018, the SDC has provided assistance totalling CHF 20 million to people in need and made available eight experts from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) as operational support to UN organisations working on the ground.

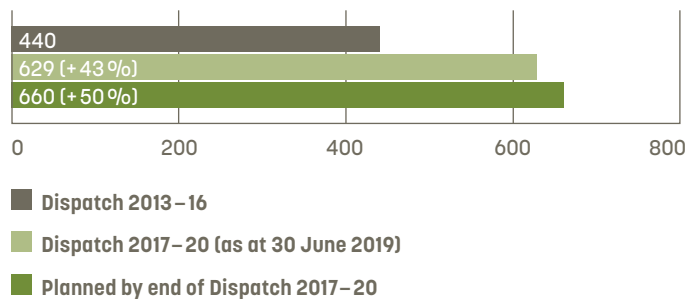
A well-functioning humanitarian system is essential to reach people in need. As a credible actor, Switzerland supported UN humanitarian organisations in their efforts to reform, not least through the provision of Swiss expertise, with SHA experts undertaking a total of 115 UN missions in 2018. Switzerland is committed to effective and principled humanitarian action, underscoring its humanitarian tradition. In cases of urgent need, it acted quickly and resolutely. Accordingly, the SDC also supported the emergency relief fund of the World Food Programme (WFP). The WFP responded to the hunger crisis in Kasai Province (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 2018, increasing relief tenfold and providing food aid to 400,000 people. The sizeable impact of Switzerland's humanitarian commitment is detailed on pages 13 and 14.

The main causes of social tension, economic instability, violent extremism and armed conflict are poverty, discrimination, human rights violations, the effects of climate change, and weak and corrupt state institutions. **The SDC has therefore stepped up its involvement in fragile contexts in recent years and contributed effectively to reducing the causes of conflict and fragility.** As at 30 June 2019, the SDC was active in 21 fragile priority countries, which accounted for 45% of all bilateral development cooperation commitments. Most of these funds went to the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. The SDC's increased commitment was particularly important as these states and regions are less well equipped to free themselves from poverty and instability. In Cambodia, the SDC supported over 800,000 people through its programmes to reduce discrimination and exclusion. During the crisis in Nicaragua triggered by the violent crackdown on anti-government protests, Switzerland provided assistance to more than 1,100 human rights defenders. The SDC also worked in its priority countries to promote the competent discharge of public functions in the interests of all citizens. More information about good governance can be found on pages 6, 9 and 10.

In planning and managing its programmes in fragile contexts, the SDC made greater use of conflict-sensitive programme management (CSPM). CSPM identifies political, social, economic, institutional, social and poverty-related obstacles to development and helps to pinpoint and prevent any potential negative effects of programmes. When implementing a programme for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the SDC identified a potential for conflict between the refugees and the host community. To counteract this, programme activities in areas such as water supply were extended to include the local population. Such risk assessments and measures are time-consuming and labour-intensive.

The SDC was heavily involved in reducing poverty and inequality. Basic education and vocational skills development are key instruments in the fight against poverty, which is why the SDC increased its commitment in this area by 50% compared to the last Dispatch period (see diagram). **As an experienced player in the field of education, Switzerland made an important contribution to sustainable development in 2017–20 by making its proven expertise available to priority countries.** Alongside strategic partnerships such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a major focus of SDC initiatives was strengthening education systems in the context of bilateral cooperation. The complementarity of basic education and vocational skills development is a core element of the SDC's education strategy. In addition, the promotion of mother tongue education resulted in better learning outcomes for children, as illustrated by the project example in Chad on page 7.

Bilateral commitment to basic education and vocational skills development in CHF million



Since the start of 2017, the SDC has greatly expanded its work on basic education in fragile countries and crisis areas, including in Jordan, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. These countries are feeling the full impact of regional instability and risk creating lost generations with precarious prospects as a result of inadequate educational opportunities. Improving the long-term quality of teaching is key to success in this regard, as shown by a project in Afghanistan (see p. 6). As part of the increased commitment to education in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, innovative approaches were adopted that also enabled refugee and migrant children to access schooling. Basic education projects drew greater inspiration from the Swiss school system and involved more dialogue with Swiss education representatives.

The SDC also extended its work on vocational skills development, implementing programmes in almost all SDC priority countries. Inspired by the Swiss dual system, the SDC worked with the private sector on vocational skills development and focused its programmes on meeting the requirements of the local labour market. The SDC's expertise is in demand, because in many countries vocational education and training (VET) provision is inadequate and insufficiently geared to the needs of the private sector, or is not developed enough to help the growing numbers of young people enter the labour market. Particularly in fragile contexts, some major challenges remain, such as youth unemployment and underemployment. This is partly attributable to the precarious supply and poor quality of basic education. These factors act as a major barrier to economic growth, while also curtailing the prospects of many young people in many countries. In a refugee camp in Kenya, 2,000 people completed education and training courses but most were unable to find a job (see p. 8). To improve the situation, the SDC plans to combine vocational skills development with basic education and other interventions, as well as bolstering the local private sector.

Another priority for the SDC was tackling climate change and other global challenges such as pandemics, food and water crises, and armed conflict, as well as managing migration. Through its five thematic global programmes and international policy dialogue, the SDC worked to provide effective and sustainable solutions to these global challenges. In doing so, it employed a cross-cutting approach to help integrate local and regional responses at a global level. **Switzerland's expertise in areas such as energy efficiency, food production, health and water management was in demand worldwide.** In the health sector, for example, Switzerland made research capacity, specialist expertise, products and technologies available internationally. A Geneva-based public-private partnership successfully developed a treatment for a recurring form of malaria, which was a major milestone as no such drug had been developed for 60 years. As a backer of the project since its inception in 1999, the SDC made a vital contribution to this outcome. However, the health sector continues to face challenges, linked among other things to ensuring the increase and efficient use of public health budgets in SDC priority countries and the development and implementation of effective prevention strategies for infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Together with SECO and the FOEN, the SDC took action to combat climate change and its effects. On page 5 you can learn more about Switzerland's commitment to cutting CO₂ emissions in cooperation with various state and private actors in India. With temperatures rising twice as fast in mountain regions worldwide compared to the global average, climate change is causing glaciers in many places to retreat, in some cases substantially.² The SDC supported a project in Central Asia in which Swiss researchers performed measurements on glaciers in collaboration with local experts from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Thanks to specialised training, the local partners can carry on with the measurements independently after the end of the project. The measurements allow predictions to be made concerning glacier retreat due to global warming and the expected impacts on the water balance. This is important in Central Asia as the region is characterised by significant water poverty and conflicts between states over water use (see p. 12). To encourage more private sector investment in projects related to climate and development in developing countries, the SDC championed innovative forms of cooperation with local and international companies.

Successful cooperation with Nigeria on migration

A significant proportion of the SDC's programmes in 2017 to 2020 related to issues with an indirect bearing on migration policy, such as conflict management, private sector development, vocational skills development and basic education. There were also programmes of direct relevance to migration, aimed at protecting migrants, displaced persons and refugees. The SDC's involvement in international policy dialogue helped to promote safer, more orderly and more regular migration. Switzerland also fostered interdepartmental cooperation on migration by getting the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) and Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research



(EAER) to work together. An example of this successful cooperation is the migration partnership with Nigeria, which has led to a steady improvement in bilateral relations since it was established in 2011.

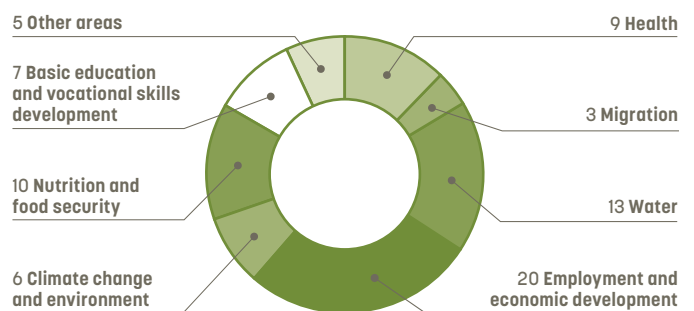
Equally, in recent years the SDC has taken greater advantage of opportunities from digitalisation and the use of new technologies. In Albania, for example, it supported the introduction of open data platforms bringing together publicly available information on contracts between local authorities and more than 6,500 companies. This enhanced the transparency of local authority procurement as well as uncovering cases of corruption. The SDC also acquired some initial experience with blockchain. Since 2017, the Global Programme Climate Change and Environment has been making an innovative contribution to a blockchain initiative that supports implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Public-private partnerships on financial services

The public-private partnership behind the Swiss Capacity Building Facility (SCBF), a non-profit association, has already reached more than one million people on low incomes in 33 countries. The SCBF assists financial institutions in developing and emerging countries by co-funding the provision of needs-based advice and continuing education and training programmes, and supports pilot projects in need of start-up funding. In this context, the SDC worked with companies and foundations including the Credit Suisse Foundation, Swiss Re and responsAbility. Thanks to this cooperation, 250,000 low-income customers were able to open savings accounts, 470,000 loans were granted and 400,000 insurance policies taken out.

As a driver of economic growth, the private sector has a key role to play in developing countries and countries in transition. **Since 2017, the SDC has expanded its involvement with private companies in a bid to further increase mobilisation of the private sector as a catalyst for sustainable development. This has yielded some good results.** The SDC worked on an equal footing with local companies in developing countries as well as with multinationals to increase the leverage of public investment for maximum development impact. The envisaged doubling of partnerships with the private sector is expected to be achieved by the end of 2020. While most such partnerships have proved successful or very successful, in difficult and fragile contexts the SDC found only a few private companies willing to risk involvement in joint projects. The majority of the SDC's 73 private sector partnerships were in the areas of employment and economic development, nutrition and food security, and water (see chart). Details of how the SDC worked in partnership with the private sector can be found on pages 8 and 12.

Partnerships with the private sector (as at 30 June 2019)



² University of Bern Centre for Development and Environment, *Mountains and Climate Change*, 2014.

Towards a globalisation conducive to development

No country can address current and future global challenges alone. Implementing national and international strategies that promote a globalisation conducive to development requires joint action by all states. Switzerland has a particular interest in helping to solve global problems as it benefits greatly from globalisation and relies on a stable international environment.

As part of efforts to address global challenges, the SDC engaged in international dialogue and played an active role in the implementation strategies of its partner countries, guided by the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals. The SDC and its partners worked together to draw up global rules and agreements in five areas: climate change and environment, food security, health, migration and development, and water.

A cross-cutting approach to global challenges

The SDC successfully adopted a cross-cutting approach combining specific local solutions with participation in global dialogues, to which it makes targeted contributions of Swiss expertise and experience. It also engaged with multilateral institutions. In 2017, SDC support enabled 203,000 rice farmers in India to be compensated for crop failure, the first time such compensation had been awarded. The extent and impact of environmental disasters can now be precisely determined thanks to satellite data supplied by a Swiss start-up. In an example of effective networking, the SDC brought together political, administrative, business, research and civil society stakeholders to achieve this outcome. The technology is being used in the Philippines and will soon be rolled out in Vietnam and Cambodia. These partnerships catalysed the SDC's work, resulting in sustainable solutions (see QR code).



Digital technology for smallholder farmers

Thanks to SDC support in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Indonesia, 1.4 million smallholder farmers now have access to financial services such as savings accounts, payments, loans and insurance via their mobile phones, with 280,000 also benefiting from information services. The financial services, as well as important information concerning current market prices, tools and resources, and cultivation recommendations, can be accessed at any time by mobile phone. Digital technology has given these farmers formal market access for the first time, thus securing their livelihoods while also contributing to the country's economic development. This innovative mobile phone-based service is being extended to other countries in East Africa.

Swiss standard adopted in Indian construction sector

Almost 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions are caused by the construction sector. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that the biggest growth in global energy demand will come from India's booming construction sector, driven mainly by the increased need for cooling.³ To date, there has been no standard regulating the construction of residential buildings there. Over the last few years, the SDC has been working successfully with India, and with Swiss research and industry partners, on a project to promote energy efficiency in buildings. The resulting standard was adopted by the Indian government in December 2018. Applying to all new residential buildings in the country, it will save approximately 100 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2030. The SDC is also sharing its project experience on energy efficiency with other emerging and developing countries, via a training programme. This shows that building up long-term relationships and winning trust can spur major reforms in partner countries, with significant ripple effects beyond their borders.

External view

The peer review of Switzerland's international cooperation by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee concludes that Switzerland is a key player in tackling global challenges, being well-positioned to influence global policymaking processes. The SDC's five global programmes promote innovative solutions to tackle global challenges. In addition, strategic partnerships with multilateral organisations increase Switzerland's global influence and help drive a more effective multilateral system. A commitment by Swiss international cooperation bodies to policy coherence on sustainable development is one of the priorities of the Dispatch 2017–20. The OECD recommends that Switzerland pursue its efforts towards coherent policies for sustainable development. It should also further analyse the impact of its domestic policies on developing countries and identify possible inconsistencies.⁴

Challenges

The SDC has made software for managing health insurance available globally. Developed in Tanzania, where it has been rolled out nationwide, the modular software records members electronically and enables the payment of invoices to service providers. The solution is now being used in five countries. Although the software is free to use, introducing it and adapting it to the local context costs money, and many interested countries lack the necessary funds. A new communication strategy now aims to generate additional funding for customising the software. An independent evaluation of the SDC's performance in social protection^{5/6} found that, thanks to the software, more people have health insurance and their lives are sustainably improved as a consequence.

3 IEA, *World Energy Outlook 2018*, 2018.

4 OECD Peer Review of Switzerland, 2019, available at: www.oecd.org > Countries > Switzerland > Switzerland country reviews > 5 April 2019.

5 The term 'social protection' covers all collective measures designed to protect people from social and economic risks, for example through social insurance (including private insurance schemes) and complementary measures to help beneficiaries improve and strengthen their livelihoods (labour market policies).

6 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Social Protection 2013–17, 2019.

Preventing and combating crises and fragility

Conflicts claim countless lives every year and can wipe out decades of development progress in a very short time. The SDC helped to tackle the causes of fragility and crises and mitigate their adverse consequences. In our globalised world, the impact of conflict is invariably felt in Switzerland too, whether in the form of a poorer investment climate, the destabilisation of an entire region or the resulting migration movements.

Switzerland encouraged a complementary mix of international cooperation instruments in 2017–20, especially in fragile contexts. Not only were there interlinkages between humanitarian activities and development programmes in many country strategies, as in Mali, Afghanistan and Myanmar, but the SDC, HSD, SECO and SEM also worked together on developing and implementing their respective strategies in keeping with the whole-of-government approach (WGA). Independent evaluations⁷ of WGA strategies in various contexts confirmed the success of these measures. Through its strong commitment, the SDC played a part in implementing SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) in its priority countries.

Conflict prevention

Conflict is caused by many factors. Political and social exclusion, a legacy of past atrocities, protracted crises and human rights violations can all lead to an outbreak of violence. Through its programmes, the SDC sought to build trust among the partners involved and restore confidence in the rule of law and the authorities. Activities of this kind, for example in Ukraine (see p. 12) and Syria, strengthened the society's resilience and helped prevent further conflicts and violence.

Reducing the causes of fragility

Alongside its work on human rights (see p. 10), the SDC advised state institutions on drafting legislation and helped to enhance their accountability. It also promoted peaceful and just societies by working to reduce discrimination and exclusion in fragile and conflict-affected regions (see QR code). Another key element in the fight against fragility is



empowering vulnerable population groups and enabling them to participate in decision-making processes. In Laos, 57,000 villagers were able to

participate in planning processes in their villages thanks to the SDC. Their contributions to discussions about the provision of public services such as water, schools and roads significantly improved the provision of these services in poorer rural areas. The SDC supported similar initiatives in Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger.

Basic education for better prospects, peace and gender equity

In Afghanistan, where half of the population is under the age of 15, a good education provides a foundation for the country's development. The SDC was involved in training more than 2,700 teachers, with 142,000 pupils, around 40% of them girls, benefiting from the improved quality of teaching. The SDC also responded to the conflict-induced instability by enabling some 3,000 displaced children to attend school. In fragile contexts, education makes an important contribution to

External view

The main causes of fragility in Afghanistan are weak state institutions, the difficult security situation and high rates of poverty.

Swiss interventions aim to strengthen national systems and institutional decentralisation while improving living conditions locally and addressing humanitarian needs. However, given the political situation, there is little prospect of the government prioritising the strengthening of decentralised state institutions in the near future. Based on recommendations from the external evaluation of the 2015–18 Afghanistan cooperation strategy, the SDC adapted its strategy for 2019–22, allowing the relevant decentralisation programmes to expire at the end of 2018. In the field of governance and human rights, the evaluation recommended, in particular, strengthening local and national ownership. For example, cooperation with local government bodies such as councils and with non-governmental organisations should be further developed. The SDC should also build on its commitment to education.

In Tunisia, the SDC supported more than

7,100 municipal councillors

and members of the Supreme Judicial Council, over half of them women, in the exercise of their duties.

conflict resolution, social cohesion and gender equity. The SDC assisted the education authorities in various provinces with teacher training, as well as helping them to develop teaching materials on human rights and gender equality and to embed these topics in the national curriculum.

Challenges

Owing to the protracted political crisis in Burundi since 2015, the SDC had to adapt, among other things, its decentralisation support programmes with government actors. Funds previously earmarked for central government ministries were redirected to local administrations, deemed less susceptible to instrumentalisation by the ruling party. Moreover, the suspension of cooperation with civil society partners meant that the SDC had to work with individuals in consultant consortia to ensure that its activities with local authorities remained socially responsible. In addition, the SDC substantially increased its own involvement in the administration of local public procurement and also strengthened oversight mechanisms to limit institutional and programmatic risks such as corruption, embezzlement and instrumentalisation. Despite significant implementation constraints, the programme achieved its target outcomes.

7 Regional Evaluation Cooperation Strategy Middle East 2015–18, 2018. Evaluation Cooperation Strategy Ukraine 2015–19, 2019. Country Strategy Evaluation Afghanistan 2015–18, 2018.

8 Country Strategy Evaluation Afghanistan 2015–18, 2018.

Improved access to basic services

The global significance of local access to basic services can most readily be seen in relation to healthcare and education. Giving young people the chance of a good education is key to enhancing their future prospects and promoting equal opportunities. In our connected society, communicable diseases like Ebola are quick to spread across continents. Therefore, properly functioning national health systems have the potential to minimise the risk of infectious diseases spreading globally.

The SDC strove to ensure that disadvantaged population groups in its partner countries had access to good-quality basic services (food, healthcare, education, water and sanitation) while also promoting the sustainable management of natural resources (see projects in Central Asia pp. 4 and 12). Its work contributed to the implementation of a number of SDGs in its priority countries, since meeting basic needs is the central prerequisite for poverty reduction and economic development. Contributions to Swiss NGOs enabled over 1.6 million people to access clean drinking water.

Better menstrual hygiene promotes equal opportunities

In the mountainous regions of Nepal, the SDC assisted in drawing up the Dang Declaration Paper on Menstrual Hygiene Management.⁹ Poor menstrual hygiene is caused by a lack of education, taboos and stigmatisation, limited access to hygiene products and poor sanitation infrastructure. It affects the educational opportunities, health and social status of women and girls around the world, preventing millions from reaching their full potential. This national declaration was developed by the SDC and Swiss NGOs, together with the Nepalese Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee. The resulting momentum raised awareness among government officials and led to the formation of an alliance of menstrual hygiene professionals, various publicity campaigns and the development of national policy and infrastructure projects such as toilets appropriately designed for the needs of women and men and water access in schools.

Access to food

With support from the SDC, over a million people in Myanmar, Honduras and Mozambique now have improved access to food thanks to the registration of any land they have acquired. Being able to sell their agricultural produce on the local market is a decisive step towards securing their livelihood.

⁹ Swiss Water and Sanitation Consortium, *Dang Declaration Paper on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Nepal*, 2017.

¹⁰ Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Water Sector 2010–17, 2019.

Myanmar also adopted a national land use policy courtesy of Switzerland, thus regulating access to land for poor and disadvantaged sections of the population.

Teaching in local languages leads to better learning outcomes

SDC measures have helped provide positive learning outcomes for over 200,000 children in 765 schools in Chad. The programme supported improvements to the quality of the basic education system, providing a foundation on which vocational education and training can subsequently build (see QR code). In Chad, almost all teaching takes place in the official languages of French and Arabic rather than the country's approximately 150 local languages. This adversely affects children's learning outcomes. Drawing on its expertise in dealing with linguistic diversity, Switzerland worked with the Chadian education authorities to develop teaching methods in local languages and to promote multilingualism. The programme confirmed the benefits of such an approach, including faster acquisition, better learning outcomes and fewer children dropping out of school early.



External view

In 2018, an external team of experts examined the SDC's work on water between 2010 and 2017.¹⁰ **The experts concluded that the SDC's water and sanitation measures had successfully targeted and reached those in need.** The SDC was praised for its relevant and effective projects, with continuity, a long-term approach and flexibility being important factors in the success of projects in the water sector. However, when it came to implementing these successes at national and regional level, the evaluation team identified some room for improvement in certain areas. It concluded that Switzerland's engagement in the water sector was an important tool for preventing and managing crises in fragile contexts, and found that cooperation between the SDC and SECO was coordinated and to some extent highly complementary.



9 million

people, over half of them women and girls, have been given access to basic education and vocational skills development thanks to Swiss efforts.

3 million

women and children in Africa have benefited from skilled birth attendance that improves survival rates, made possible by Swiss support.

Challenges

Since 2013, the SDC has been supporting the African Union's Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative aimed at promoting sustainable and resilient smallholder agriculture across Africa. The project has so far been implemented in eight countries in West and East Africa. **However, the initial experiences threw up some unforeseen difficulties caused by the initiative's centralised management.** At the outset, the initiative was not flexible enough to tailor activities to different countries and local needs. Also, the approach of allocating the same annual project budget to each participating country had to be revised, with implementation proposals now drawn up by participating countries and selected as part of a competitive funding process. The aim is to align the project more closely with the realities in each country, encourage greater involvement by local actors and reward outstanding results.

More jobs and higher incomes

The SDC worked closely with the Swiss and local private sectors to give many disadvantaged people around the world access to affordable services and the labour market. It also made a significant contribution in terms of access to financial services for disadvantaged sections of the population and vocational skills development through its involvement in preparing and implementing public policies and private initiatives for sustainable and fair economic development.

Since 2016, the SDC has been scaling up its engagement with the private sector to create the greater leverage needed to meet the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals. Every franc of Swiss taxpayers' money spent on international cooperation should generate additional private sector investment. The SDC contributed to the implementation of SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) and SDG 8 on decent work and sustainable economic growth in its priority countries, with SECO undertaking complementary work to boost the private sector and employment (see SECO Annex).

Access to financial services

The term 'financial services' refers to savings accounts, insurance, payments, loans and other forms of credit. Digital and innovative programmes enabled more people to access microinsurance. This strengthened the resilience of poor and vulnerable people to unforeseen events such as drought and disease, as confirmed by an independent evaluation of social protection.¹¹ At the same time, access to financial services and social protection promoted economic growth by facilitating participation in the economy.

Improving local markets

In mountainous and rural areas of Georgia, Switzerland supported small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the dairy and meat processing industries (see QR code). Thanks to this initiative, some 70 SMEs have created more than 730 jobs since 2017, 40% of them done by women. As a result of the enhanced value chain, a total of 91,600 farmers (27,600 women and 64,000 men) now have regular access to the market and generated additional income of CHF 6.5 million by selling their produce.



Strengthening national VET systems

In Serbia, the Ministry of Education, supported by the SDC, developed a governance system linked to the new law on dual vocational education and training. This system will allow Serbia to introduce and strengthen the mechanisms provided for by the law in a transparent and inclusive manner. Basic education and vocational skills development projects not only strengthen national education systems but also equip people to find better – and better-paid – work.

Cooperation with the private sector

In Cambodia, the SDC worked with Swiss firm responsAbility, which provides financial support to the Cambodian trading company AMRU Rice. The company buys certified rice from smallholder farmers and exports it around the world as a high-quality organic product. The rice producers were trained in organic farming methods with a view to acquiring organic certification, with the training

Efforts to promote the private sector in Bangladesh generated additional profit and income of

USD 724 million

for

4.75 million

economic actors, including SMEs and farmers.¹²

funded by the SDC. By the end of 2018, the company was buying rice from 5,800 producers at USD 350 a tonne, USD 150 more than the price paid for non-organic rice. The producers' incomes and living conditions have improved significantly as a result. As well as long-term capital, private actors often bring innovation and new types of business model.

External view

To alleviate poverty, Swiss development cooperation work has long made the creation and preservation of productive jobs one of its main priorities. In producing the report on effectiveness, an independent team of experts analysed more than 70 SDC and SECO projects in this area.¹³ Almost 85% of the projects received effectiveness ratings between 'satisfactory' and 'very good'. **Most projects achieved their employment objectives.** Vocational education and training programmes that work to establish agricultural value chains, as well as projects to improve working conditions were rated highest. These projects also boosted productivity and promoted gender equality. Some projects, such as those aimed at reshaping the business environment, had indirect effects on employment which could be measured only years later. The evaluation team found that in particular **microfinance projects promoting private enterprise, and support projects for SMEs, required more resources** to enable the employees concerned to escape poverty.

Challenges

Inspired by the Swiss dual system, the SDC's efforts to promote vocational skills development draw on partnerships with the private sector and focus on meeting the needs of the labour market. The model has to be adapted to each context. Over the past two years, more than 2,000 people at the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya successfully completed SDC short vocational training courses, resulting in qualifications. Other than self-employment, however, they had little prospect of getting a job. VET provision needs to be combined with other interventions and promotion of the private sector, which in fragile regions tends to be informal and poorly organised.

11 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Social Protection 2013–17, 2019.

12 Cumulative values for the duration of the project (2002–18), available at: <https://www.katalyst.com.bd/index.html> > 3 July 2019.

13 Report on Effectiveness Swiss International Cooperation in the Field of Employment 2005–14, 2017.

A shared path to good governance

If people are to have long-term prospects and decision-shaping rights, good governance and the equitable economic growth it entails are essential. The SDC worked at the global level and in its partner countries to strengthen democratic and just governance, thereby giving all citizens more of a say in political processes as well as bolstering economic development and poverty reduction.

Switzerland is synonymous with direct democracy. Its expertise in this area is admired around the world and was much in demand in 2017–20, enabling the SDC to contribute to the implementation of SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) in its priority countries (see QR code).



Cooperation with the authorities

Thanks to long-term Swiss support, governments in all 356 districts of Mongolia improved their practices in terms of participatory, transparent and accountable management of funds. The national government also passed a law requiring public satisfaction surveys to be taken into account in assessing the performance of local authorities. Such surveys were carried out nationwide for the first time in 2018. The government then incorporated the results when planning improvements to the provision of public services. In addition, specific measures for the benefit of disadvantaged groups were promoted in a number of priority countries. In the mountain regions of Bolivia and Nepal, around 100 local authorities implemented measures designed specifically to tackle violence against women. The SDC also achieved positive results in politically difficult contexts. In Burundi, for example, around 1,600 citizens participated in public planning processes in SDC-supported municipalities. Examples of initiatives include access to water supply systems, setting up medical facilities, building roads and constructing schools.

Financial transfers for municipalities

More than 2,160 local authorities in 11 priority countries boosted their tax revenues, and thus secured the funding required for municipal services, thanks to a transparent process supported by the SDC. Almost 2,130 of the municipalities in question succeeded in increasing their tax base by an average of 24 %.



Strengthening civil society

In Rwanda, SDC support helped to strengthen over 90 non-governmental organisations engaged in policymaking and accountability in the areas of agriculture, violence against women, social reconciliation and the interests of disabled people. The SDC contributed to numerous civil society initiatives advocating a greater public say in decision-making and

championing specific development projects. Despite a trend towards greater political restrictions in many priority countries in sub-Saharan Africa, it proved possible to preserve and promote some scope for citizen participation. In Tanzania, the SDC encouraged balanced and professional media coverage by supporting a youth radio station that now boasts some three million listeners a week.

External view

The SDC's senior management commissioned an evaluation of the organisation's performance in the field of social protection between 2013 and 2017.¹⁴ According to the experts, SDC measures helped to strengthen the services provided by social systems, such as health and crop insurance. This significantly improved the livelihoods of the people concerned and their resilience to external influences. The SDC worked at local and national level simultaneously, an approach based on its experiences in Switzerland and one that has proved both successful and efficient. One criticism was the lack, to date, of an SDC institutional strategy in the area evaluated, which compromised the coherence of its activities, their impact and sustainability.

Challenges

A number of priority countries have seen a growing trend towards authoritarianism in government. In some places, this has severely curtailed civil society participation. In these cases, the SDC reviews its involvement with the relevant state institutions with all due care and at regular intervals, making any adjustments necessary and exploring the avenues available for citizen participation. For example, it increased the frequency of its context analyses and its dialogue with government and civil society in Tanzania, while also promoting projects that bolster public dialogue and citizens' awareness of it. In Rwanda, the SDC's governance projects focused on issues that matter to the population whilst also being in the government's interests.

14 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Social Protection 2013–17, 2019.

Strong commitment to human rights

Strengthening human rights remained a key element of the SDC's work in 2017–20. Human rights violations continue to cause poverty and conflict and hinder the social, economic and political development of the countries concerned. Where human rights are violated, people have less chance of living in dignity and security and making a life for themselves in their own country. In many cases they are forced to flee.

Through its activities in 2017–20, the SDC made an important contribution to implementing the FDFA Human Rights Strategy 2016–19, which ensures the coherence of Swiss policies and actions on human rights. Furthermore, its initiatives on respect for and promotion of human rights helped to implement 2030 Agenda goals 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace). The lack of a legal and political human rights framework is a primary cause of fragility. If insufficient rule of law and access to justice are added to the mix, social and political tensions may arise. In practice, compliance with the international minimum standards for protecting human rights is very



rare in fragile contexts, which has a negative impact on the resilience and sustainable development of the disadvantaged population (see QR code).

Fostering just societies

In the mountainous regions of Nicaragua and Honduras, the SDC supported local initiatives aimed at encouraging wider debate on the protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law. Women's rights, sustainable access to natural resources and justice, freedom of expression and the transparency of local authorities were the focal points. The SDC's programmes supported initiatives, policies and political processes promoting the protection of and respect for human rights. They fostered national acceptance of international human rights norms and established mechanisms to protect specific groups and individuals in the SDC's priority countries.

Protecting and monitoring human rights

In South Asia, Switzerland actively supported the national human rights institutions of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. The SDC assisted these institutions with reporting to international mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as with national and international networking. In Afghanistan, this support enabled the submission of an independent report re-examining implementation of the Convention against Torture. At the same time,

Switzerland worked with the Afghan Ministry of Justice to help the country enact a new law against torture. The SDC also supported access to justice for women, children and prisoners.

Strengthening mechanisms for dialogue with the people

In Central America, strengthening human rights remained a centrepiece of the SDC's work, be it a project to support reform of a country's security sector, assistance to the country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and local human rights organisations, or projects to tackle corruption and impunity. Thanks to Switzerland's efforts, two international expert groups were convened in Nicaragua to investigate allegations of human rights violations.

External view

An external team of experts analysed the strategic orientation of Swiss international cooperation in the Middle East and confirmed its effective implementation by all Swiss actors in the region, which has been hit hard by the Syrian crisis.¹⁵ The evaluation recommended that the three existing priority areas – basic needs, protection of people affected by conflict, and water management – should be retained in the new strategy and given greater focus. The complementary activities of the SDC and HSD on democratic processes and human rights should make it possible to respond more quickly to regional and country-specific challenges in the future. The evaluation also recommended working more with local organisations to strengthen the resilience of the population and promote ownership by local authorities.

In Honduras, over

260 requests

for the protection of human rights defenders were submitted and processed. Ten individuals were placed under special protection.

Institutional partnerships with Swiss NGOs strengthen the human rights of

1.6 million

disadvantaged adults and children, lessening their social exclusion and discrimination.

Challenges

Owing to the violent crackdown on anti-government protests in Nicaragua in 2018, the SDC temporarily suspended all projects that it was implementing in partnership with the government. It also placed a greater emphasis on conflict-sensitive work in all projects. Even under these difficult conditions, the SDC continues to seek opportunities in Nicaragua to implement human rights activities that open up space for dialogue and strengthen capacity for a longer-term transformation of the conflict and future democratisation. The SDC also provided assistance to the OHCHR, which sent a mission to Nicaragua to report on human rights violations in the context of the crisis. Angered by the criticisms contained in its report, the government expelled the OHCHR mission from the country in August 2018. Since then, the OHCHR has reported on the situation in Nicaragua from Panama.

¹⁵ Regional Evaluation Cooperation Strategy Middle East 2015–18, 2018.

No sustainable development without gender equality

The SDC engaged effectively in promoting equal opportunities for women and men. Gender equality is essential to achieving just and sustainable development. As well as the political and economic empowerment of women, the SDC also focused on respect for the rights of women and girls in difficult contexts and conflict situations.

A milestone was reached in 2017 when the FDFA adopted its first strategy on gender equality and women's rights. In 2019, the SDC published its second status report¹⁶ on gender equality. Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda forms the cornerstone of the SDC's engagement in its three priority areas of sexual and gender-based violence, economic empowerment and political participation by women. The SDC encourages gender-specific measures both in humanitarian projects and long-term development programmes.

Gender-based violence

In Burkina Faso, over 1.65 million men and women benefited from prevention and awareness-raising measures on sexual and gender-based violence. Gender-based violence violates the human rights of the individuals concerned, be they women or men. Although mainly affecting women, men too can experience this form of violence. It is particularly prevalent in fragile contexts and conflict situations. Working with local organisations and authorities in these places enabled the SDC to respond to victims' needs through prompt and targeted action.

Women's economic empowerment

Women are often more affected by poverty than men and have fewer opportunities in the labour market. For women to become more economically integrated, it is essential that they have access to an income which they are able to control themselves. In the mountain regions of Georgia, the SDC helped local authorities to set up 'women's rooms' in community centres, where women received



Each year, an average of
84,000 people
affected by physical, sexual or
psychological violence received
psychological, medical and legal
support from the SDC and its
partner organisations.

Thanks to the SDC's efforts,
**16,000 jobs for
women**
were created in the mountainous
regions of Honduras, Georgia and
Armenia in 2018.

financial and business training. Working with local councils also bolstered the commitment of public authorities to gender equality and to creating the framework conditions for women to participate in economic life.

Women's political participation

In Niger, an SDC project assisting the government with water supply and sanitation in rural areas helped to boost women's participation in decision-making on these public

services. The inclusion of women is crucial to ensure comprehensive access to drinking water and sanitation. The results of projects show that women's political participation and representation are above the national average in regions where the SDC and its partners undertake specific programmes.

Challenges

A noticeably more authoritarian and conservative climate has emerged in a number of SDC priority countries in recent years.

Basic women's rights have been called into question and women pushed back into traditional roles within the family and society. This makes it all the more important for the SDC to specifically incorporate gender aspects into as many projects as possible in the future. The OECD¹⁹ recommended that Switzerland increase the number of gender-specific projects within its international cooperation work in order to bring about greater structural change.

The inclusion of men and boys in gender equality projects is important and remains a priority. In 2018, the SDC organised Men Move! Engaging Men and Boys in Gender and Development,²⁰ the first international conference on this subject. Held in Switzerland, it provided an opportunity to discuss scientific evidence, best practice and critical issues with experts.

External view

An external report¹⁷ found that 83% of the surveyed SDC gender equality projects achieved the objectives set (see QR code). While the results had improved continuously since 2006, not enough project staff had the specific knowledge required to realise the challenging gender goals. SDC staff and partner organisations are being given training to raise their awareness of gender equality issues.

In the water sector, an independent evaluation¹⁸ of the SDC's engagement found that **enabling women to participate in water-related policymaking worldwide is a major challenge.** Switzerland will step up its efforts to address this situation by placing greater emphasis on gender equality in its water programmes and by supporting innovative initiatives.



16 SDC, *Status Report on Gender Equality 2018*.

17 Report on Effectiveness Swiss international cooperation in the field of gender equality 2007–16, 2018.

18 Evaluation of SDC's Engagement in the Water Sector 2010–17, 2019.

19 OECD Peer Review of Switzerland, 2019, available at: www.oecd.org > Countries > Switzerland > Switzerland country reviews > 5 April 2019.

20 Conference Report, 2018, available at: www.menmove-conference2018.ch > Welcome > 3 July 2019.

Political participation and a market economy in Eastern Europe

Switzerland worked to promote security and stability in the countries of Eastern Europe as well as prosperity in its European neighbourhood and economic relations with Switzerland. It supported the transition to greater rule of law and democracy and a stronger social market economy in order to guarantee all members of society equal access to political decision-making processes and services, regardless of their gender.

The SDC and SECO implement complementary programmes in support of their partner countries, from the Western Balkans to Central Asia (see SECO Annex).

Cooperation with parliaments

In North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania, Switzerland helped national and local parliaments to strengthen oversight of governments and national budgets, to improve legislation and to involve civil society in political dialogue. In addition, North Macedonia, assisted by the expertise of Swiss Parliamentary Services, established a Parliamentary Institute that now provides services to parliamentarians, parliament employees and the public. These are important steps towards creating professional, transparent and representative parliaments.

E-governance to combat corruption

The SDC helped Ukraine to digitalise its administrative services as an effective means of tackling corruption, which undermines democratic institutions and hinders economic development. In Ukraine, the government department responsible for company registrations is often very busy. The long waiting times at counters and the backlog in processing applications are prime causes of corruption. The new electronic form means that anyone, including people with reduced mobility and internally displaced persons, can register online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. On average, 16 to 50 electronic applications are submitted each day, and the number is rising.

Economic growth and employment

Bosnia and Herzegovina's youth unemployment rate of around 39%²¹ weighs heavily on young people's prospects. More than 3,500 students have benefited from SDC vocational education and training programmes since 2017. Of those who completed such programmes, just under 2,700 – half of them women – found a job within six months. The SDC's approach is based on complementary initiatives: developing market-oriented VET provision, supporting job placement and helping young people to start up their own businesses.

Social integration

In Kosovo, young Roma between the ages of 18 and 24 are half as likely as other young people to be in employment, education or training. The SDC helped to establish support centres in Kosovan schools. According to a study,²² children who received this support were three times more likely to complete their

primary education. Moreover, being excluded from education is a significant factor in keeping future generations in poverty. As a result of this project, support centres and scholarships for disadvantaged young people have been enshrined in national legislation and given public funding.

Thanks to support from Switzerland, an additional
500,000 people
 in mountainous regions of Central Asia and
295,000 people
 in Kosovo received access to drinking water.

External view

Ukraine is the largest, but also one of the poorest, countries in Europe. Since the outbreak of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the country has faced some major challenges. Switzerland works to promote internal cohesion, democratic governance and sustainable social and economic development in Ukraine (see QR code). Both the OECD²³ and an independent evaluation team²⁴ have concluded that the cooperation serves the interests of both countries. It allows Switzerland to support reform processes effectively and is flexible enough to respond to changing contexts and priorities in a timely manner. With its neutrality and its access to people in need on both sides of the contact line, the unique nature of Switzerland's involvement is acknowledged by all partners. The evaluation team recommended that humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding measures should be even more mutually reinforcing and should, where appropriate, focus more on the same geographical area.



Challenges

In the mountainous border region of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, there is fierce competition for access to natural resources. The SDC supported a project designed to prevent violent conflicts between communities in the two countries by establishing a network of community peacemakers. Peacemakers on one side of the border contact their counterparts on the other side as soon they notice an increase in tension. However, no systemic change has been achieved. The governments continue to distrust each other and defend their own national interests, and there is no clear will to tackle the causes of these conflicts. The SDC has therefore decided to focus the project solely on water resources, one of the main causes of violent conflict.

21 Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Labour Force Survey 2018, available at: http://www.bhas.ba/ankete/LAB_00_2018_Y1_0_BS.pdf > 26 June 2019.

22 Evaluation of the project *Social inclusion and improvement of living conditions for Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians and other vulnerable groups in Kosovo*, 2018.

23 OECD Peer Review of Switzerland, 2019, available at: www.oecd.org > Countries > Switzerland > Switzerland country reviews > 5 April 2019.

24 Evaluation Cooperation Strategy Ukraine 2015–19, 2019.

Global responses to humanitarian challenges

Swiss Humanitarian Aid made a major contribution to strengthening and reforming the humanitarian system. In cooperation with the relevant UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organisations, the SDC helped to improve working methods and develop the legal framework established under international humanitarian law. Its efforts were aimed at building a better response to the growing number of humanitarian challenges around the world.

The rules of international humanitarian law were violated frequently during the Dispatch period. Deliberate attacks on infrastructure such as medical facilities had fatal humanitarian consequences for the populations concerned. In many cases, it was extremely difficult to gain access to those in need. At the same time, armed conflict, political instability and the increasing risk of natural disasters due to climate change caused a dramatic surge in the need for humanitarian aid. As the gap between urgent needs and available resources continues to grow, the existence of effective multilateral organisations that can tackle the major challenges is more important than ever.

Swiss expertise – sought after globally

In 2018, experts from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) were seconded on 115 occasions to multilateral organisations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). These organisations benefited from long-standing Swiss expertise in fields including water treatment, protecting displaced persons and refugees, and the use of cash payments, thus further improving the effectiveness of the humanitarian system. An evaluation in the area of social protection²⁵ confirmed the effectiveness of the SDC's many years of experience in the use of cash payments. Such payments help to improve the nutrition of beneficiaries, thereby reducing the number of underdeveloped children and boosting the school enrolment ratio.

Switzerland as a humanitarian advocate

Switzerland, together with Sweden and the UN, organised the second and third High-Level Pledging Events for Yemen in Geneva in April 2018 and February 2019. Switzerland's



humanitarian tradition and association with International Geneva make it a highly credible humanitarian advocate. Of the USD 2.96 billion needed to meet the humanitarian needs of 12 million Yemenis in 2018, 70% was pledged at that year's event. Funding was thus secured early for a significant share of the country's humanitarian requirements. Switzerland called on the international community to help end the conflict, for no matter how great the humanitarian effort in Yemen, there can be no humanitarian solutions to political problems.

External view

The results of the DRR evaluation pointed to clear successes in all the thematic and geographical areas addressed and highlighted the SDC's pioneering work.²⁷ While it has lost some influence globally in recent years, the SDC is still regarded as a credible actor and a convincing mediator. To ensure that it remains a key player, the evaluation team recommended that the humanitarian-development nexus be enhanced (see p. 14), as DRR is now a development cooperation issue and no longer solely linked to humanitarian aid. In the context of climate change in particular, DRR has an increasingly important role to play. The team of experts also recommended that the SDC's work on DRR be geared towards Swiss specialist expertise.

Early warning systems to reduce disaster risk

The damage caused by extreme weather and climate events is steadily increasing (see QR code).²⁶ The global partnership Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) is therefore working to expand successful disaster risk reduction (DRR) practices, exploiting the benefits of modern communication channels for use in early warning systems. Switzerland has been a member of the CREWS Steering Committee since 2018. The committee contributes to important multilateral climate and disaster prevention agreements such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement.



Challenges

Seventy years after the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, international humanitarian law is, for a variety of reasons, being flouted too often, to the detriment of civilian populations. Armed groups are more numerous and more radical, but also less structured. The ICRC estimates that only a third of conflicts today are fought between two groups while a fifth involve ten or more parties.²⁸ This requires greater engagement in negotiations on compliance with international humanitarian law and on access to those in need.

25 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Social Protection 2013–17, 2019.

26 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2018, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018. Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*, 2018.

27 Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Disaster Risk Reduction 2010–17, 2020.

28 <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/global-trends-war-and-their-humanitarian-impacts-0>

Saving lives and alleviating suffering in crisis situations

Swiss Humanitarian Aid's work made a major contribution to alleviating human suffering arising from crises, conflicts and disasters, and to protecting the civilian victims of armed conflict.

A look at the current situation shows that conflicts and humanitarian crises are becoming more and more protracted. Nowadays, humanitarian crises last over nine years on average and affect increasing numbers of people. More than 131 million people will need humanitarian aid in 2019, compared to 63 million in 2012. In 2018, just over half of the USD 25 billion required worldwide was provided by contributions from the international community.²⁹

Focused

In the Dispatch period, emergency relief was concentrated in the Middle East and in sub-Saharan Africa between Mali and Somalia. Swiss Humanitarian Aid intervened wherever help was needed most and where it could bring added value. The humanitarian operations in Sri Lanka, the South Caucasus, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Ecuador were completed.

Emergency relief – but not emergency solutions

In Somalia, cash projects helped people living in crisis situations to cover their most urgent needs. At the same time, Switzerland worked to protect the population from future crises: it supported local social security systems, savings and loan associations, drought early warning systems and the better management of natural resources. An external study on this project confirms the effectiveness of this approach.

Fast and flexible

Following deployments in Ecuador and Haiti in 2016 (for an earthquake and Hurricane Matthew respectively), SHA experts also assisted in the aftermath of the 2017 Mexico earthquake, arriving on the scene within a very short time. In 2018, a magnitude 7.5 earthquake caused a wave several metres high to sweep over part

of the west coast of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Swiss support reached over 6,000 people in need, providing drinking water, sanitation and emergency shelters. In 2019, the SDC undertook further emergency relief operations following cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Mozambique and floods in Iran.

More milk for less money

In 2018, following a decision by the Swiss Parliament, the entire milk credit line of CHF 20 million was, for the first time, made available to the WFP as a cash contribution to combat hunger and malnutrition in countries such as Algeria and North Korea (see QR code). The WFP bought the milk powder in Switzerland at the export price. This change of practice meant that 12 % more milk powder was purchased than in the previous year, benefiting more malnourished people, yet the amount spent was 14 % less.



Disaster risk reduction pays off

The SDC's disaster risk reduction programme in the Bolivian Andes came to a successful conclusion after 13 years. The programme used preventive measures and agricultural

External view

The protracted nature of conflicts and humanitarian crises poses new challenges for both development cooperation and humanitarian aid. An evaluation³¹ examined the SDC's combined approaches, which are based on the interplay ('nexus') between emergency relief and a simultaneous focus on sustainable development goals. Positive examples of the nexus were found in the Horn of Africa, Mali and Myanmar, and showed that efforts to achieve a nexus emanated from individual actors in the network of Swiss representations abroad. To promote the interaction between humanitarian aid and development cooperation across the SDC as a whole, structural adjustments need to be made. Ahead of the next Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation covering the period 2021–24, the SDC's senior management plans to adapt the organisation's institutional structure to make it more conducive to nexus operation.

The SDC reached

8.4 million

people in emergency situations and a further

6.3 million

through programme contributions to Swiss NGOs.

Switzerland also assisted

1.2 million

people with reconstruction.

insurance to help poor rural families reduce their losses from hail, frost, drought and floods. At a systemic level, Switzerland's USD 20 million investment resulted in legislative and regulatory changes, the development of risk analysis tools and capacity building in four ministries, eight out of nine provincial governments and over half of Bolivia's 339 municipalities.

Challenges

The east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the scene of crises and conflicts for years, with large sections of the population repeatedly forced to flee from violence. The SDC was supporting an emergency relief project for displaced families in **this region when its partner organisation was informed, via the established grievance mechanism, about irregularities in the project implementation.** The resulting investigation uncovered a systematic fraud whereby some of the support was going to people who did not meet the eligibility criteria. The partner organisation immediately reported the allegations and UN-coordinated efforts are currently under way to ascertain the extent of the fraud. The SDC promptly suspended its pending payments. This incident confirms the importance of grievance mechanisms.

29 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019*, 2019.

30 SomReP, *Positive Deviance in Somalia: Why are some households more resilient than others?*, 2018.

31 Independent Evaluation of the Linkage of Humanitarian Aid and Development Cooperation at SDC, 2019.

Focus on outcomes

Proof of effectiveness is not an end in itself but a means of guiding, continuously improving and ensuring accountability for the work of the SDC and its contractors. Impact measurement starts with the planning of SDC and contractor projects and extends beyond a project's lifetime.

Essentially, there are two types of instruments for measuring impact: **monitoring and evaluation**. Monitoring involves regularly collecting data on specific indicators. The SDC checks whether the project is on track to meet its objective and can make adjustments in good time if the expected impact is not developing as planned. An evaluation involves examining one or more projects or strategies from an external perspective. The evaluation assesses the results and identifies how effective the project or strategy is. It also analyses relevance, efficiency and sustainability based on international criteria laid down by the OECD.³²

Institutional and thematic evaluations

Each year, the SDC's senior management also commissions four or five independent evaluations that pertain to the institution as a whole and contribute to its governance. Based on the findings of each evaluation, the relevant SDC units draw up a response setting out how they will implement the recommendations. The senior management approves this document and monitors its implementation by means of an internal review system.

Scientific impact analyses

When analysing its impact in certain areas, such as education in Benin, the SDC also makes use of impact evaluations (see QR code). Impact evaluations identify the causal relationships between an intervention and the impact observed, thereby excluding external factors that may also influence a project or programme. The findings can be used in a targeted way to make strategic decisions, to develop new programmes or to adapt existing ones. In a bid to encourage similar impact evaluations in Swiss NGOs, the SDC, together with ETH Zurich's Center for Development and Cooperation (NADEL), presented its Impact Award for the second time in 2017.



Lessons learnt and outlook

In the Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–20, the Federal Council set the SDC measurable objectives. The majority of projects achieved these objectives. The SDC's work to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development is set to continue: the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2021–24 (International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24) builds on what has already been achieved while setting a number of new priorities to make the SDC fit for the future.

- ▶ **The SDC's bilateral development cooperation will become more geographically focused.** At the same time, it will be given sufficient flexibility to seize opportunities outside of its priority countries, for example to support a reform-minded government as it transitions to democracy and the rule of law or to foster innovative partnerships with the private sector.
- ▶ The effects of climate change have become all too apparent around the globe. Climate change not only exacerbates natural disasters and hunger crises but also contributes to social instability and conflict. This is particularly evident in the Sahel, where temperatures are rising faster than elsewhere in the world.³³ **The SDC therefore intends to plan and implement more projects that address the challenges of climate change in a cross-sectoral way (e.g. in connection with food security, education or the rule of law).**
- ▶ On the SDC's transversal theme of gender equality, an external report³⁴ found that simply viewing this key topic as a cross-cutting responsibility is not enough. **To promote gender equality in its priority countries, the SDC will therefore a) provide the necessary human resources and b) plan more project components geared specifically to this goal.**
- ▶ Under the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24, **the potential of digitalisation** will be harnessed in a more targeted way for both humanitarian aid and development cooperation.
- ▶ The SDC has supported numerous migration-related projects through its global programme for migration and development and its humanitarian aid and development cooperation activities. It has laid solid foundations for making progress on migration policy issues with partner governments in its priority countries. In some cases, in response to concerns raised by the Interdepartmental Structure for International Cooperation on Migration, the SDC has launched projects outside its priority countries (in Gambia, for example) that combine migration policy interests with development policy objectives. **The International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24 aims to create more flexibility, allowing the SDC to respond faster and more effectively to migration policy opportunities.**
- ▶ Scientific evidence and impact analyses will be given a greater role in 2021–24.

32 www.oecd.org > DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance > 5 April 2019.

33 World Bank Group climate data, available at: www.climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org > Region > Africa > Climate Data > Projections > 3 July 2019.

34 Report on Effectiveness Swiss international cooperation in the field of gender equality 2007–16, 2018.

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Bern, 2020



State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Final report on the implementation
of the Dispatch on Switzerland's
International Cooperation
2017–20

SECO Annex

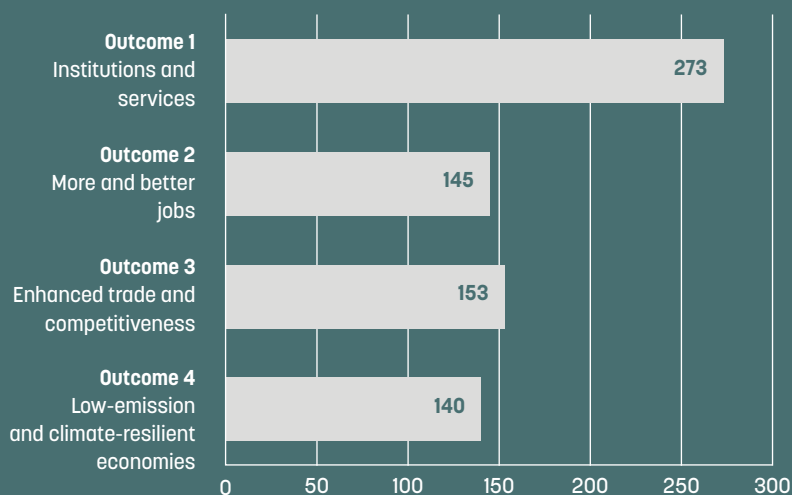


Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

SECO priority countries 2017–20



Use of SECO funds in CHF million 1 January 2017 – 30 June 2019



For further information on issues and projects, please see the SECO background dossier on the 2017–20



final report at the following link:
<https://www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch/final-report2017-20>

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

SECO is the centre of expertise of the Swiss Confederation for all core issues relating to economic and trade policy, with overall responsibility for economic development cooperation. It supports efforts of its partner countries to shape economic structural change and integrate into the global economy.

SECO supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in its partner countries, complementing and working in coordination with other actors. It actively harnesses the leverage of multilateral development banks and acts as the Swiss lead agency overseeing their projects. It adopts a long-term approach to international cooperation, taking account of climate policy factors and creating prospects for people locally, which helps reduce the long-term causes of forced and irregular migration. In its projects, SECO systematically considers the opportunities offered by technological progress and digitalisation.

SECO has measured its contribution to alleviating poverty and global risks in its partner countries based on four target outcomes (outcomes): 1. Strengthen public institutions and services; 2. More and better jobs; 3. Enhanced trade and competitiveness; 4. Low-emission and climate-resilient economies. The targets set are expected to be met by the end of 2020. Achieving the desired broad impact in the area of trade proved challenging in part, and there were frequent delays in infrastructure improvement projects. SECO also worked on two transversal themes: economic governance and gender equality.

In 2019, SECO's Economic Cooperation and Development Division was again awarded ISO 9001:2015 certification. The ISO audit confirmed that the division's management system consistently provided high-quality services and implemented innovative approaches. The success rate of SECO projects has improved further since the mid-term report published in 2018.

Project success rates

Success rate (overall)



Relevance: Are the projects chosen suitable for the context?



Effectiveness: Were the objectives achieved?



Efficiency: Were the results achieved as cost-efficiently as possible?



Sustainability: Will the results last beyond the end of the project?



■ Current Dispatch (2016 – 18) Number of projects evaluated: 72

■ Previous Dispatch (2012 – 15) Number of projects evaluated: 81

Global challenges and role of SECO

Major global challenges in recent years have included climate change and its impact, the overuse of natural resources, forced and irregular migration, and unemployment. Other developments such as government debt, volatile commodity prices and rapid urbanisation have also left their mark. Protectionist tendencies have increased, as have the questioning of multilateralism and the number of armed conflicts, making international cooperation an increasingly difficult task.

- ▶ SECO has supported projects that helped, directly or indirectly, address these challenges in its partner countries, focusing its efforts on where it could best respond to needs and deliver the greatest added value.
- ▶ Through its multilateral engagement, SECO has increased the leverage of its bilateral activities and helped shape the international environment, thereby contributing to the 2030 Agenda in accordance with its expertise.
- ▶ By promoting sustainable inclusive growth as a means of reducing poverty and global risks, SECO has fulfilled the duty to alleviate need and poverty in the world, as laid down in the Swiss Federal Constitution. At the same time, it has supported the global orientation of Swiss foreign economic policy, for example by expanding its cooperation with the private sector and increasing climate financing.

SECO partnerships

- ▶ **Working in partnership** is key to achieving effectiveness and dealing successfully with global challenges. The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, provides an important reference framework for this.
- ▶ SECO has deepened its **partnerships with multilateral development banks**. It engaged in intensive dialogue on institutional and development issues and helped design multilateral projects in the energy, water and transport sectors, as well as projects supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SECO assisted development banks in enhancing their social and environmental standards and in formulating their strategies for implementing climate measures under the Paris Agreement (see p.9).
- ▶ For SECO, **partnerships with the private sector** are key to mobilising additional funding, expertise and innovative business models needed to achieve the SDGs. Such partnerships exist both with the private sector in Switzerland, e.g. with the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (see p.7) and the SECO Start-up Fund (see p.6), and the private sector in target countries, e.g. with the SECO Entrepreneurship Programme (see p.6).
- ▶ **Partnerships with non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** ensure that SECO projects are innovative, sustainable and coordinated with civil society. Cooperation with NGOs proved particularly valuable in promoting SMEs, value chains and tourism.
- ▶ Through its **partnerships with Swiss higher education institutions** such as the Graduate Institute Geneva (IHEID) and ETH Zurich, SECO tapped into Swiss expertise and strengthened the ties between academia and international cooperation.

- ▶ SECO's activities are **strategically coordinated with and operationally complementary to the activities of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Human Security Division (HSD)**. SECO exploits synergies with other units of the Federal Administration such as the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI) and the State Secretariat for International Finance (SIF). This ensures that funds are used efficiently and that measures achieve maximum effect.

Innovation and risk management

SECO takes calculated risks in its cooperation, since development issues often require innovative approaches. In such cases, SECO launches targeted pilot projects and scales them up if successful. In 2019, 5% of projects were considered 'high risk' due to their innovative potential or a difficult context. SECO monitors such projects very carefully, adapting its support promptly or halting the project entirely if necessary.

Measuring impact¹

To enhance its impact, SECO uses project implementation indicators to identify problems at an early stage and take appropriate improvement measures. SECO has an evaluation policy and evaluation guidelines that take into account international standards and set out clear principles governing evaluations. An independent evaluation committee, comprising five members from politics, academia, business, the international sector and civil society, responds to the results of evaluations and oversees implementation of their recommendations. Between 2016 and 2018, three independent thematic portfolio evaluations were conducted according to OECD DAC criteria,² together with 145 project evaluations, including 75 external evaluations and 70 internal reviews.

1 This final report refers to the current Dispatch period 2017–20. Unless stated otherwise, the results reported relate to the period 2016–19.

2 DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance

In addition, a sustainability review was carried out in 2019, examining how the relatively low past scores for the sustainability of project outcomes could be boosted. Its recommendations are already being implemented.

Migration

SECO supports projects in its partner countries that create opportunities for people in search of work. For example, in North Africa, where unemployment is extremely high by global standards, even skilled job-seekers have difficulty finding work, or work of a decent quality. This contributes to migratory pressure. SECO therefore promotes SMEs and sustainable tourism in the region. In addition, SECO, together with the SEM, SDC and HSD, is involved in implementing the strategic linkage between international cooperation and migration policy, as agreed in the Dispatch 2017–20. To this end, these bodies cooperate in the Inter-departmental Structure for International Cooperation on Migration.

Results at a glance

- ▶ **USD 2.1 billion in third-party funds mobilised for basic infrastructure**
- ▶ **65,000 jobs created**
- ▶ **845,000 producers trained**
- ▶ **21.3 billion kilowatt hours of energy generated from renewable sources**

In the Tataouine, Médenine and Gabès regions of south-eastern Tunisia, where over 40% of young people are unemployed, tourism is one of the most promising sectors for quickly creating high-quality jobs.

SECO therefore supports the Destination Management Organisation (DMO), in partnership with Swisscontact. Its aim is to help tourism workers become better coordinated and enhance the quality of their services, drawing on the Berber culture and heritage. An external project evaluation in 2019 confirmed that the DMO had succeeded in reaching a large number of tourism professionals, helping them to develop a common vision for tourism, as well as mobilising the private sector and improving marketing and waste disposal. The accommodation and catering offer had also been expanded. Despite the crisis in the tourism industry, all service providers involved in the project had managed to keep going, with 83% reporting that the project had led to an increase in the number and length of overnight stays in the region since 2016.



Sustainable growth thanks to positive framework conditions and good government services

Government institutions, services and framework conditions are the basis for sustainable growth and social prosperity. An efficient public administration provides reliable basic services for all, encourages self-reliance and fosters resilience to challenges such as climate change.

Public finances strengthened

SECO's partner countries do not sufficiently exploit their potential to raise funds independently and put them to effective use. SECO helped them modernise their financial administration and mobilise their own resources. In Peru, Indonesia, Serbia and Ghana, public financial management was enhanced and opportunities for corruption reduced. Six local governments in Serbia increased their tax revenues substantially, while in South Africa, local governments became more efficient at managing public procurement processes and infrastructure projects. These experiences showed that involving the authorities closely in project design was critical to success.

Financial sector efficiency improved

A well-developed and well-regulated financial sector is key to a functioning and resilient economy. SECO therefore strengthened central banks, regulators and financial market supervisors. It supported the development of capital markets in Peru, Colombia, Indonesia and South Africa and ensured protection against earthquake risks in Colombia by introducing innovative financial instruments. SECO helped partner countries implement the 40 recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force effectively, and was involved in launching a new global initiative to strengthen reporting offices for money laundering. A key priority in the future will be to ensure that new financial technologies are properly regulated to mitigate associated risks.

Basic services improved

Public infrastructure and services in SECO partner countries are often unreliable. SECO therefore supported the professional management of basic public infrastructure in the areas of water, wastewater, waste, energy and transport. It mobilised private capital to renovate existing infrastructure and finance new infrastructure projects, and developed an approach combining investment with competitive incentive systems to boost the performance of water supply companies. This approach was adopted as part of the water sector reform in Albania. In the Western Balkans, a network

of local water and waste-water specialists was set up to provide vocational education and training. In the mountainous region of Pamir in Tajikistan, around 18,000 households were given access to reliable, sustainable and affordable electricity by 2017. In total, USD 2.1 billion of capital (mostly loans from the private sector and development banks) was mobilised

to improve infrastructure. Implementing infrastructure projects often proved difficult, with delays due to lengthy decision-making processes, changes in political leadership, lack of expertise and funding issues. In the future, SECO will increase its focus on improving the governance of public utilities and designing projects that cover multiple cities.



External view

Results of the 2015 independent evaluation on tax and development

The evaluation made ten recommendations that were implemented over the course of three years, resulting in many improvements. Among the measures taken, SECO stepped up cooperation with Swiss country offices. The guidance note developed in response to the evaluation helps better coordinate project diagnostics and monitoring. Projects are now better adapted to the limited resources of local tax authorities. SECO also actively shapes the global tax reform agenda and contributes to the development of new tools. As part of these efforts, medium-term reform strategies are already being prepared in some partner countries in coordination with the International Monetary Fund, the OECD, the World Bank and the UN.

Challenges

► **Failed attempt at modernisation:** The project to modernise Vietnam's supreme audit institution ran into delays owing to the difficult institutional environment. It was abandoned completely in 2018 as the political conditions needed to complete the project successfully were no longer in place. In the future, SECO will examine even more carefully the extent to which partners are willing and able to implement far-reaching reforms.

► **Political influence:** In Azerbaijan, political influence has increasingly curtailed the independence of the newly-established banking supervision and regulatory authority FIMSA. Consequently, any further support is now conditional on the completion of specific milestones (such as the passing of legislation on financial market supervision). A similar approach also applies in other high-risk projects.

3 All aggregated figures relate to the period 2016–18.

Good jobs create better prospects for the future

The private sector creates 90 % of all jobs worldwide and therefore plays a vital role in poverty reduction. In SECO's partner countries, new businesses often fail after a short time because they cannot access expertise, capital, skilled workers or key services. SECO therefore supports innovative private-sector initiatives and the mobilisation of private resources.

Entrepreneurship promoted

SMEs in SECO's partner countries usually do not receive the support they need. SECO helped SMEs transform their business ideas into marketable products. The SECO Entrepreneurship Programme strengthened networks connecting start-ups with mentors and investors and created over 2,600 new jobs by the end of 2018. 77 per cent of young entrepreneurs surveyed in an evaluation⁴ rated the support received as an important factor in their success. Thanks to the SCORE⁵ programme, working conditions for 336,000 employees in more than 1,600 companies were improved by the end of 2018. In Indonesia, over 1,700 local businesses benefited from programmes in the tourism sector. In 2018, SECO launched a project to promote sustainable winter tourism in the mountainous regions of Kyrgyzstan, around Karakol and Chunkurchak. Looking ahead, SECO plans to provide increased support to start-ups in Africa as a means to create jobs.

Access to capital facilitated

Despite high growth potential, SMEs in SECO partner countries are often held back by a lack of financing. SECO facilitated access to capital for SMEs by providing technical expertise and training local banks in lending. In Ghana, over a million SMEs were able to access secured loans thanks to the Global Financial Infrastructure programme. SECO also supported the development, deployment and application of innovative financial technologies such as mobile payment services, as well as offering financing options to companies with growth potential through the SECO Start-up Fund and the Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets (SIFEM). In a bid to close the biggest financing gap for SMEs anywhere in the world, SECO supported a project in North Africa that

creates local economic prospects. According to an external evaluation,⁶ by the end of June 2018, over 4.8 million microcredits had been awarded, 58 % of them to women, and over 59,000 loans had been granted to SMEs. In total, SECO projects mobilised more than USD 13.2 billion of capital (loans from development banks and private investments).

Barriers to women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs face a particular set of obstacles. In Ukraine, SECO incorporated gender aspects into various projects in the banking and SME sectors, while in North Africa it supported financial services for women entrepreneurs. By the end of 2017, over 106,000 women entrepreneurs in Egypt had benefited from loans.

SIFEM

SIFEM, the federal development finance institution set up by SECO in 2011, together with other public and private investors, provided established SMEs and fast-growing companies with long-term investments, loans and expertise. SIFEM helped these companies grow and created over 28,000 jobs in 2016–18.

External view

An independent evaluation of the SDC's and SECO's job-creation activities between 2005 and 2014 was conducted in 2017.⁷ Overall, 72 projects worth a total of CHF 2.2 billion were evaluated, including 38 SECO projects and one joint project with the SDC.

The report found that SECO and the SDC had made effective contributions to promoting employment in partner countries. Nearly 85 % of projects in the portfolio were rated between 6 (very good) and 4 (satisfactory). Projects with direct employment objectives and those aimed at improving labour conditions received the best effectiveness scores. In the future, the promotion of value chains will be supported by better and more realistic analyses of production and marketing risks. In complex country contexts in Africa and the Middle East, projects will be prepared with even greater care.



Over 65,000

productive jobs were created and more than 11,000 retained.

827,000 companies

received new access to capital.

Challenges

- ▶ **Time and incentives needed:** In Kyrgyzstan, SECO promoted access to financial services for population groups previously unable to access banking services. It found that the introduction and acceptance, by both customers and banks, of new financial products took longer than planned and needed to be supported by incentives.
- ▶ **Additional risk buffers:** In light of the rapid technological progress of financial services (Fin-Tech, blockchain), SECO promotes new products and technologies to ensure that financing instruments and infrastructure remain relevant. However, additional risk buffers are needed for investments in difficult markets.
- ▶ **Overly ambitious project objectives:** Implemented between 2012 and 2017, the Education for Employment (E4E) project aimed at better integrating young people in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan into the labour market. However, the project objectives proved too ambitious and the effects of the Arab Spring were underestimated. The goals were therefore adjusted and greater care exercised in the choice of partners.

4 External Mid-Term Evaluation – The Swiss Entrepreneurship Programme, 2018.

5 Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) programme

6 External End-Term Evaluation of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise Technical Assistance Facility for the Middle East and North Africa, 2018.

7 Report on Effectiveness Swiss International Cooperation in the Field of Employment 2005–14, 2017.

Enhanced trade and competitiveness through sustainable products

Global value chains are growing in complexity. With the ongoing advance of digitalisation and automation, innovations that generate productivity gains are becoming key competitive advantages. SECO supports innovative trade actors in developing countries, strengthens the integration of its partners in global value chains, promotes their competitiveness on international markets, and thereby contributes to the implementation of Switzerland's foreign economic strategy.



Business environment improved

Businesses in SECO partner countries often fail to thrive, or even get off the ground, as a result of regulatory barriers. SECO takes a holistic approach to tackling this problem, encouraging targeted reforms that reduce costs and bureaucracy for companies and create incentives for investment. Even small advances in removing regulatory obstacles and increasing legal certainty bring substantial benefits to many businesses. However, success is conditional upon long-term cooperation with government partners. A programme run with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) scaled up innovative approaches strategically in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Experience with the programme has shown that policy windows for reforms must be exploited to achieve success. More effective business regulations unleashed over USD 9 million of additional investment in 2018.

Competitiveness enhanced

Greater competitiveness and easier market access are key to ensuring that as many countries as possible benefit from globalisation. The Colombia+Competitiva programme

in Colombia and SeCompetitivo in Peru bolstered the international competitiveness of the respective countries. Meanwhile, the SECO-supported Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO) enabled local export promotion organisations and industry associations to provide better services. This contributed to a total of over USD 750 million in additional exports between 2016 and 2018, most of them sustainable. Simultaneously, the Vietrade project doubled the exports of 22 Vietnamese SMEs between 2014 and 2017. In 2017, the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa was founded with support from SECO. Bringing together private sector and civil society actors, it sets sustainability targets for the import of cocoa products and strives to implement these targets in partner countries.

Favourable framework conditions for trade created

International trade is increasingly reliant on global value chains. To participate in these value chains and benefit from globalisation, the relevant authorities must be able to comply with the rules of international trade, and companies and producers able to take advantage of opportunities. Since 2018, the Global Trade Facilitation Programme has helped customs authorities in partner countries to facilitate the import and export of goods. In addition, the Global Quality and Standards Programme helps national institutions comply with global quality standards and assists SMEs to meet standards and thus boost their exports.

External view

In 2018, an independent evaluation team analysed 25 SECO programmes worth CHF 144 million, focusing on market access and competitiveness in value chains.⁸ The evaluation concluded that SECO's projects addressed the challenges and priorities of beneficiary countries. It found that SECO had helped integrate producers and SMEs in global value chains such as cocoa, cotton and gold and had delivered clear added value in this area. The sustainability of the project results was considered promising. However, the producers integrated in global value chains accounted for a relatively small percentage of overall commodity trade. SECO is now including more Swiss expertise in projects designed to strengthen value chains, and is taking a more focused approach in its choice of value chains.

Challenges

- ▶ **Misjudged capacity of a partner:** Until 2018, SECO helped universities in partner countries develop the expertise needed to independently support trade negotiations and reforms. In South Africa, however, it transpired that the partner university did not have the required capacity or access to government. On the recommendation of an external evaluation, SECO will set up advisory committees for its new programme that bring relevant government partners on board from the outset.
- ▶ **Political changes:** In the past, projects to strengthen value chains have often delivered good results. However, in many cases the replication and dissemination of these results were undermined by political changes and inadequate support from local authorities. Consequently, SECO is now making a greater effort to include the political level in technical projects.

8 Evaluation Report on Market Access and Competitiveness, 2019.

Climate-friendly growth through sustainable urban development

Population growth is primarily concentrated in cities, which are important centres of economic growth and innovation. Only well-developed, well-organised cities that take proactive and fact-based development and investment decisions can grow sustainably. For many cities, therefore, integrated urban planning as well as curbing emissions have become key priorities.

Sustainably developed cities

Most urban development in SECO partner countries is uncoordinated. Urban sprawl makes it harder to access public services, and the risks from natural disasters are high. SECO helped more than 50 cities plan and manage their urban development in an integrated and professional way. Flood management was improved in three Vietnamese cities. In Khujand, Tajikistan, a reliable bus service with lower emissions was developed.

Sustainably supplied energy

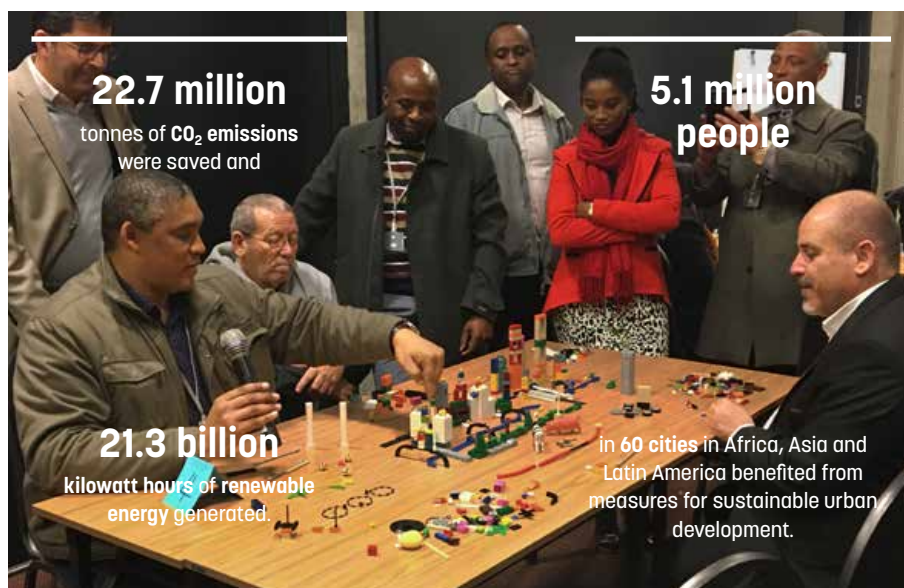
Supplying cities with energy sustainably is a major challenge. SECO improved energy planning and management in its partner countries, as for example in the Ukrainian cities of Vinnytsia and Zhytomyr, both of which received the European Energy Award label. Inspired by the positive experiences, other Ukrainian cities have expressed an interest in adopting this approach. To this end, a national structure is to be set up with support from SECO.

Resource efficiency in the private sector promoted

Private companies in SECO partner countries often lack the know-how and capital to make efficient use of resources. SECO therefore supported the financing of sustainable investments and promoted resource-saving production methods. Thanks to a multilateral project, four national development banks were able to issue green bonds that resulted in USD 200 million of private financing. In 2018, SECO embarked on a partnership with the IFC to create new markets for climate financing in emerging economies.

Climate financing secured

Together with the SDC and the FOEN, SECO is helping achieve the global target of providing at least USD 100 billion of climate financing to developing countries by 2020. SECO stepped up its climate-related activities between 2017 and 2019, spending over 30 % more than in the previous Dispatch period. With the SDC and the FOEN, SECO worked to promote climate governance and multilateral funds (the Green Climate Fund and Climate



Investment Fund). It mobilised additional private capital through partnerships such as the Private Infrastructure Development Group. Going forward, SECO will continue its efforts to mobilise private-sector climate investment, in particular among Swiss private investors.

External view

An independent evaluation⁹ of SECO activities in the field of energy-efficient cities was conducted in 2018. Fourteen ongoing projects worth approximately CHF 120 million were examined according to OECD DAC criteria. The evaluation finds that SECO is delivering good results with its approach and portfolio, and that the project objectives are well aligned with the Dispatch and with strategies of partner countries. SECO is an important international actor in the field of energy-efficient cities and is valued by both partners and beneficiaries. It has established itself as a reliable enabler of innovations and has helped promote the visibility of Switzerland abroad through its injection of Swiss expertise and know-how. The European Energy Award approach has proved effective. SECO will take account of the evaluation's recommendations in future projects.

Challenges

- **Knowledge transfer difficult:** Tunisian municipalities have little experience with sustainable planning. SECO therefore helped authorities in Sousse, Tunisia's third-largest city, better plan and manage the use of space, energy needs and transport systems. The biggest challenges were technical complexity and knowledge transfer.
- **Lack of green funding:** Businesses in Latin America were keen to use resources more efficiently and reduce emissions but were held back by the insufficient availability of green loans. SECO therefore joined forces with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to develop sustainable bonds and credible standards and practices for the market.
- **Ownership takes time:** In Indonesia, SECO helped the cities of Semarang, Denpasar and Balikpapan introduce an integrated urban planning system. This was a difficult and time-consuming process. However, the approach taken has paid off, enabling the cities to plan independently for the long term. The Indonesian government wants to extend the planning system to many other cities, at its own expense.

⁹ Evaluation Report on Energy-Efficient Cities, 2019.

Close cooperation with multilateral development banks

Measures addressing global challenges such as financial crises and climate change require international coordination. Multilateral development banks (MDBs) are key players in this regard, having the credibility and influence, financial resources, tools and expertise to facilitate effective and sustainable action. Switzerland has long considered development banks to be valued partners.

Development banks are key partners for achieving the SDGs, for example in the infrastructure sector (energy, water, transport). They bring together a wide range of partners, help scaling up projects, test innovative approaches and replicate the most successful experiences. Through strategic dialogue and in projects with development banks, SECO and the SDC strive to maximise the effectiveness of the resources deployed (see SDC Annex).

Partnerships strengthened

Each year at the World Economic Forum in Davos, SECO organises an institutional and geopolitical discussion with all presidents of the development banks. In 2019, partnership meetings with the IFC and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development took place in Switzerland. These meetings were an opportunity to exchange knowledge with the Swiss private sector concerning impact investing, financial technology and climate protection. They resulted in various collaborations.

Reforms supported

In 2018, World Bank Group member countries agreed on a capital increase package totalling over USD 13 billion. Switzerland successfully advocated this solution, which should lead to a healthy long-term financial budget. Within the framework of the G20, Switzerland

championed better coordination between development banks, without restricting their institutional independence.

In the future, Switzerland will support greater specialisation in priority working areas for each bank, based on its strengths and the SDGs. Coordination between development partners needs to be systematised, in particular through the establishment of country-specific platforms, and further efforts are needed to harmonise environmental, social and financial standards.

Support for refugees in the South

In countries such as Bangladesh, Lebanon, Jordan and Colombia, which take in refugees from neighbouring countries, development banks make a vital contribution to ensuring basic local services, education and employment for refugees and the local population. In 2018, when sections of the Rohingya Muslim minority were forced to flee from the conflict in Myanmar, the development banks provided the Bangladeshi government with USD 200 million of extraordinary funding at short notice. In Latin America, the IDB has set up a special fund for unexpected migration, such as the current movements from Venezuela.

Progress on climate financing

Development banks are among the largest providers of financing for action on climate

change and make a vital contribution to meeting the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement. In 2018, they committed USD 43 billion of their own funds to mitigation and adaptation measures in developing countries and emerging economies, 72% more than in 2015. Almost USD 68 billion in further funding was mobilised from private partners. Development banks have also been instrumental in making renewable energy, such as wind and solar energy, competitive in developing countries.

Challenges

- ▶ **Debt:** The public debt risk in developing countries has intensified. Both bilaterally and in cooperation with development banks, Switzerland works to secure greater transparency, better debt management and increased mobilisation of countries' own resources.
- ▶ **Private sector:** The framework conditions for the private sector need to be further improved and many good new jobs created to keep pace with demographic trends. Switzerland helps development banks build new markets and better employment opportunities, including through the use of digital technologies.



"As an environmental engineer, I also work for the benefit of society and the environment in my region."
Dwi Rahayu, Muara Laboh Geothermal Power Plant, Indonesia, project supported by the Asian Development Bank

37,000 new jobs
were created as a result of support for SMEs from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

15.6 million
people benefited from poverty alleviation programmes thanks to the Inter-American Development Bank.

95%
of power generation projects backed by the African Development Bank are linked to renewable energy.

Lessons learnt and outlook

SECO has learnt some key lessons from the Dispatch 2017–20 and identified the global challenges for the years ahead. Its economic development cooperation will help its partner countries overcome these challenges and mitigate potential risks.

The past few years have shown that **SECO's focus** on sustainable, inclusive economic growth as a means of reducing poverty and global risks has been successful. The four outcomes provided a pertinent framework for this, as did the transversal themes of economic governance and gender equality.

The **instruments used by SECO** to achieve its outcomes also proved effective. SECO pursued and expanded approaches such as corporate development and the promotion of sustainable value chains, while new issues such as digitalisation (FinTech, e-commerce and GovTech) were incorporated, new strategies formulated and new projects implemented.

However, despite relevant outcomes and effective instruments, project implementation faced some **challenges**. Overly ambitious goals and overly optimistic assessments of contexts and partners made achieving the objectives more difficult. Inadequate institutional capacity or insufficient willingness by partner countries to engage in reforms, as well as governance and security issues, resulted in delays in project implementation and, in some cases, the abandonment of activities.

SECO has drawn lessons from these **experiences** and taken specific improvement measures, including improvements to its risk management and impact measurement.

In terms of its **strategic and thematic orientation**, SECO has learnt that it must focus even more on areas where its partner countries wish to improve and where its own strengths lie.

To respond appropriately to existing and future global challenges, it must also maintain a degree of flexibility in its projects and identify the most practical and innovative solutions possible.

SECO has identified the following challenges for 2021–24:

- ▶ Possible slowdown in global economic growth
- ▶ Weak governance and fragility
- ▶ Global taxation and insufficient transparency
- ▶ Increasing protectionism and slowdown in global trade
- ▶ Rapid urbanisation
- ▶ Sustainable labour markets and decent employment opportunities
- ▶ Digitalisation
- ▶ Migration and displacement
- ▶ Climate change and overuse of natural resources
- ▶ Poverty and inequality

With these challenges in mind, SECO will place even greater emphasis on fostering reliable framework conditions and innovative private-sector initiatives in its future activities.

Gender equality and climate and resource efficiency are key prerequisites for delivering sustainable economic growth and ensuring social prosperity. They will therefore be included in all economic development cooperation activities.

SECO will continue to build on tried-and-tested approaches such as macroeconomic support and the promotion of entrepreneurship, professional skills and sustainable value chains. These are areas where there is demand from partner countries and where SECO and its partners can deliver significant added value. In providing this assistance, SECO will respect the principle of complementarity with other actors and avoid duplication.

Working in partnership will remain key to achieving effectiveness and dealing successfully with global challenges. SECO will therefore deepen its partnerships with multilateral development banks, the private sector and other national and international development actors, and mobilise more external funding for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In its choice of priority countries, SECO will continue to focus on the needs, interests and willingness to reform of partner countries. It will also build on its own core competencies and Switzerland's international trade and foreign-policy interests. SECO will intensify its efforts to make digital technologies accessible and usable for its development partners. This applies to the improvement of public services and the facilitation of trade as well as digital solutions for accessing financial services.



In Ukraine, SECO supported sustainable and participatory urban development. Here, representatives from municipal authorities and civil society exchange ideas on improving urban mobility.



SECO facilitated access to capital in Ghana. Mobile financial services proved an effective means of promoting financial inclusion among the population since they are affordable even for the relatively poor.



In Peru, SECO promoted a modern, sustainable and competitive private sector. Seven value chains were strengthened, including tourism and quinoa and asparagus production. Producer organisations are now stronger, and access to capital is easier. In addition, 6,000 jobs were created or retained.

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Bern, 2020



Human Security Division HSD

Final report on the implementation
of the Dispatch on Switzerland's
International Cooperation
2017–20

HSD Annex



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



Human Security Division

The HSD is an active advocate for peace, respect for human rights and the protection of the individual. This combination, based on the Federal Act on Civil Peace Promotion Measures and the Strengthening of Human Rights, is effective and serves as an example to other countries.



2016 – 19 results at a glance:

- ▶ **17 peace processes prepared and supported** (including Syria, Colombia and Mozambique).
- ▶ **Ceasefire negotiations supported in 6 countries** (including Myanmar and Colombia).
- ▶ **Annual human rights dialogues conducted with 8 countries** (including China).
- ▶ **18 successful diplomatic initiatives launched** (e.g. the Appeal of 13 June initiating closer cooperation between the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council in conflict prevention).

Deployment of civilian experts in 2016 – 19:

Around **170 experts** were deployed each year in over **35 countries**, **42 percent** of them women.

For example: Nina Burri

The International Criminal Court in The Hague investigates, and tries individuals charged with, international crimes. Nina Burri works for the court as an assistant prosecutor tasked with investigating these crimes.

For example: Olivier Rod

The UN peacekeeping operation in Mali supports the government in implementing the peace agreement. Swiss police officer Olivier Rod takes part in patrols in Mopti Region and discusses the situation with local people. The UN presence on the ground and the training of police officers helps to keep the population safe from rebel attacks.

For example: André Loersch

André Loersch is deployed on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the conflict, the OSCE mission has been tasked with reporting on the security situation, defusing tensions within the country and promoting respect for human rights.

Strengthening human rights, preventing violent conflict



The HSD promotes respect for human rights as a means of conflict prevention. Non-state actors, whether non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or transnational companies, play an increasingly important role in this endeavour. Championing human rights is not only an obligation under international law but is also in Switzerland's interests, for where human rights are violated, there can be no long-term peace, security or prosperity.

Business and human rights: guidance on commodity trading

«With more and more consumers demanding responsible supply chains, businesses and NGOs joined forces with the federal government and the cantons to develop guidance on reducing human rights abuses», says Stéphane Graber, Secretary General of the Swiss Trading & Shipping Association (STSA). This guidance helps companies to identify where there is a risk of human rights violations in the purchase, sale, transport, storage and processing of commodities, and to take appropriate action. In this way, large commodity traders such as Mercuria and SMEs like Ecom Agroindustrial can prevent human rights violations as well as damage to their own reputations.

Every dialogue is a human rights dialogue

Switzerland conducts dialogues on human rights issues with a number of countries. The bilateral human rights dialogue with China, begun in 1991, provides a platform for discussing even contentious subjects such as minority rights and the death penalty. An exchange of experts helped to bring about a number of improvements in detention conditions in Chinese prisons. In addition to its bilateral contacts, Switzerland reports regularly to the UN Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in China, expressing its concerns regarding restrictions on the freedom of religion, expression and movement of ethnic and religious minorities. For Swiss human rights policy to have an impact on China, this combination of multilateral and bilateral engagement is crucial. Human rights issues need to be addressed consistently and coherently at all political levels.

Teaming up for human rights in sport

While major sporting events such as football World Cups and the Olympics bring nations together in a positive way, the working conditions of the (mostly foreign) workers employed on major construction projects in the host countries often come in for criticism. An HSD initiative led to the establishment of a Centre for Sport and Human Rights in Geneva in 2019. In Qatar, the collective efforts of governments, the private sector, FIFA, international organisations and civil society brought about improvements in working conditions.



As a result, the more than 36,000 migrant workers building infrastructure for the 2022 FIFA World Cup now enjoy greater protection and higher minimum wages.

External view

HSD strengthened children's rights in Senegal

Upholding human rights in the penal system can help to counteract radicalisation, particularly among children and young people.

► **Main finding of the evaluation (see QR code):** Targeted training of judges, social workers, prison staff and police officers on children's rights has had a positive impact on youth justice.

► **Unique approach:** Promotion of interdisciplinary cooperation within the youth justice system.

► **Significant outcomes at three levels:** Enhanced expertise on youth justice in Senegal.

Children's rights better safeguarded through closer cooperation.

Switzerland recognised as an important partner in the promotion of children's and human rights.



Challenges

Opportunities and risks of digitalisation

Digitalisation allows information to be disseminated quickly and widely, while the use of artificial intelligence opens up new opportunities. However, the rise of digital technology has also facilitated censorship, bullying and the propagation of hate speech. The risks in terms of equality, non-discrimination, privacy and freedom of expression are considerable. The HSD is therefore working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop ways of promoting the responsible use of new technologies.

Facilitating and sustaining peace



The HSD brings the parties to a conflict to the table, supports them and provides specialist expertise. Switzerland's history, expertise and political system make it ideally qualified to promote peace.

Syria

The Syrian conflict has cost the lives of more than 500,000 civilians since 2011 and displaced some twelve million people. The HSD has been working at three levels to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. It supported the UN peace process in Geneva in direct cooperation with the UN special envoy, fostered peaceful coexistence on the ground, and promoted efforts to document war crimes and serious human rights violations and to address the past.

An HSD expert helped the UN to ascertain the fate of some 100,000 to 200,000 missing persons. In late 2018 and early 2019, some initial prisoner exchanges took place.

«During my mandate, Switzerland and the Human Security Division have been a reliable key partner for my mission. Through our close-knit cooperation on civil society inclusion – to name just one example – we have enabled all segments of the Syrian society to have a voice when it comes to the future of Syria. This key work could not have been done by one of the regional or big powers involved in Syria. It requires the trust of Syrians and a sensibility for inclusion and public participation that Switzerland perfectly embodies.»

Staffan de Mistura, UN Special Envoy for Syria 2014–2018

Ukraine

The past five years have seen the return of armed conflict to Europe, with little prospect of a resolution in the near future. The HSD-endorsed OSCE Coordinator of the Humanitarian Working Group in the Trilateral Contact Group in Minsk has been grappling with the parties in a bid to make progress on the most pressing humanitarian challenges in the conflict-affected areas. Among other things, he has insisted on better and safer arrangements for civilians wanting to cross the line of contact between the government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine. Around a million such crossings take place each month. In late 2017, he contributed significantly to the release and exchange of more than 300 prisoners. Between 2017 and 2019, the HSD seconded an adviser to the Ukrainian Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons. This Swiss expert became one of the minister's closest advisers, working directly on government strategies and programmes and supporting conflict prevention and peacebuilding projects run by the ministry.

External view

Evaluation: 12 years of helping Colombia deal with its past (see QR code)

General findings

- ▶ **Value for money:** Comprehensive work done to a high standard with limited resources.
- ▶ **Unique approach:** A combination of professional expertise and diplomacy.
- ▶ **Sustainability:** The HSD's work, with the army for example, has helped to embed the process of dealing with the past in Colombia.
- ▶ **Recommendation:** The HSD's withdrawal would constitute a risk. Transitional justice requires international supervision by countries such as Switzerland.

Significant outcomes at four levels

- ▶ Efforts to deal with the past are backed by the Colombian population.
- ▶ A National Centre for Historical Memory has been established.
- ▶ The army has assimilated the issue.
- ▶ Dealing with the past is included in the peace agreement.



Mozambique

Mozambique has been embroiled in an on-and-off civil war since it gained its independence in 1975. In August 2019, the government and the armed opposition, RENAMO, signed a comprehensive peace agreement. Switzerland closely supervised the negotiations leading up to the agreement, as part of which the HSD sent mediation experts to Mozambique and advised on solutions concerning decentralisation and demilitarisation. However, the signing of the peace agreement is just the first step on the road to a lasting peace. Switzerland will continue to assist Mozambique, especially in the area of demilitarisation and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Preventing election violence: Zimbabwe and Nigeria

Elections may mark the start of a peaceful transition process but they can also trigger violence. In Zimbabwe in 2018, the HSD was asked by national actors to support negotiations between the political parties, which led to the adoption of an electoral code of conduct. The 2018 election campaign was heralded as the freest and most peaceful in the country's history. In 2019, the HSD worked with a collective of statesmen, traditional leaders and citizens in Nigeria. The resulting Abuja Peace Agreement helped to reduce violence during the presidential election in February 2019.

Challenges

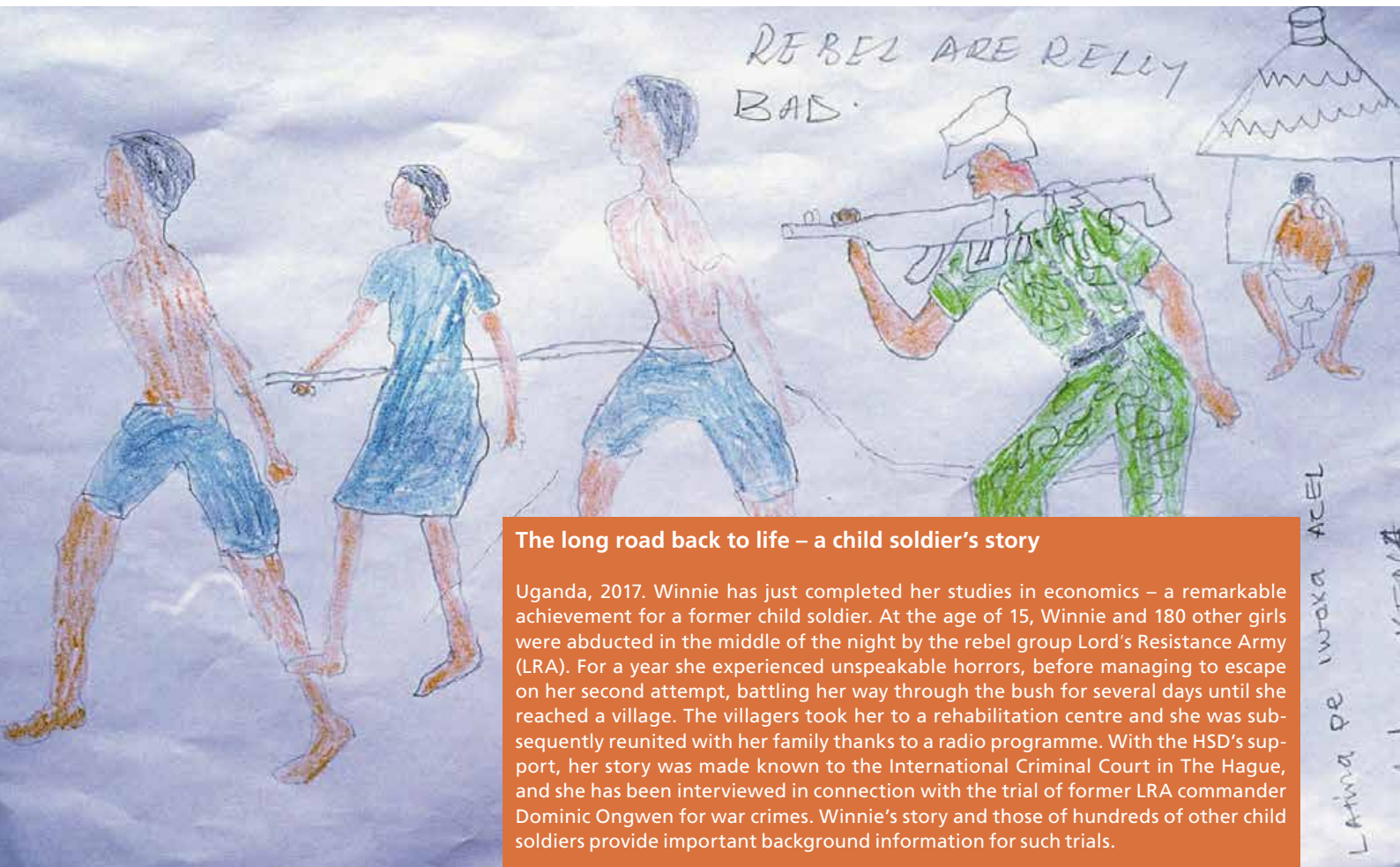
Increasing complexity

Armed conflicts are lasting longer and involving new, and growing numbers of, parties. This makes resolving them a more complex task. Thanks to specialists on the ground, and its willingness to enter into dialogue with all warring parties, the HSD is able to respond swiftly to change. However, lasting peace means much more than a halt to hostilities. The HSD therefore has to be increasingly willing to support peace processes in the long term.

Protecting people from armed violence



Civilians – women, men and children – now account for up to 80 percent of the victims of armed conflict. The HSD seeks to safeguard the civilian population by diplomatic means. Concrete action to enforce international humanitarian law, protect people from armed violence and promote humanitarian interests in disarmament processes has a preventive effect.



The long road back to life – a child soldier's story

Uganda, 2017. Winnie has just completed her studies in economics – a remarkable achievement for a former child soldier. At the age of 15, Winnie and 180 other girls were abducted in the middle of the night by the rebel group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). For a year she experienced unspeakable horrors, before managing to escape on her second attempt, battling her way through the bush for several days until she reached a village. The villagers took her to a rehabilitation centre and she was subsequently reunited with her family thanks to a radio programme. With the HSD's support, her story was made known to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and she has been interviewed in connection with the trial of former LRA commander Dominic Ongwen for war crimes. Winnie's story and those of hundreds of other child soldiers provide important background information for such trials.

Protection for medical personnel

The provision of medical care to the sick and injured, including fighters on the opposing side, is a cornerstone of international humanitarian law. As important as they are, some counterterrorism measures criminalise medical assistance on the grounds that it supports terrorism. For example, following the retaking of Mosul in northern Iraq, Anna, a doctor in the city, was charged with providing medical assistance during the IS occupation. The HSD advocated a fact-based discussion of this moral quandary and the development of solutions not only with governments but also between humanitarian organisations and counterterrorism actors.

Ammunition safety: the UN follows Switzerland's lead

Stockpiled government ammunition that falls into the hands of armed groups can destabilise entire regions. In 2015, the HSD launched an initiative to prevent explosions in ammunition depots and to stop ammunition from ending up in the wrong hands. The UN adopted a resolution on this issue in 2017. The HSD also supported the creation of a Geneva-based international coordination platform which deploys experts and helps to develop national strategies for safe and secure ammunition management. Through its work on ammunition safety, Switzerland plays a leading role in supporting the UN Secretary-General's agenda in this area.

Challenges

Mines in cities and densely populated areas

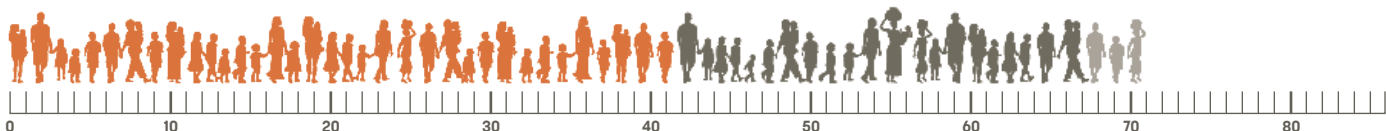
Despite the great headway made in recent decades, humanitarian mine clearance now faces some complex challenges. Since 2014, casualty numbers have been climbing again (from 3,993 victims in 2014 to 9,437 in 2016), with most of those affected being civilians. This is a matter of grave concern. The rise is driven by the use of anti-personnel mines by armed groups, increasingly in urban areas. This makes it all the more important that such groups know about and comply with the ban on anti-personnel mines.

Better management of migration and displacement



Irregular migration and refugee movements endanger the stability of countries and entire regions as well as the safety of migrants themselves. In the absence of any regulation, migrants may become victims of human trafficking, die at border fences, in internment camps or while trying to cross the Mediterranean. Organised crime profits and state structures are destabilised.

70.7 million people forcibly displaced worldwide



41.3 million
displaced in their own countries

25.9 million
refugees

3.5 million
asylum seekers

Sustainable solutions for displaced persons

Worldwide, by far the largest group of people forced to flee their homes are those displaced within their own country. Depending on the circumstances, such internally displaced persons (IDPs) may later end up as refugees or migrants. Though often among the most vulnerable groups in society, they receive little attention, with concerns for national sovereignty being a primary reason. At the UN, the HSD helped to put IDPs in the political and operational spotlight and was involved in establishing a high-level panel on the issue. Sustainable development in these countries is only possible if the living conditions of millions of IDPs are improved.

Finding missing persons

Registered cases of missing persons doubled between 2016 and 2018. As migration increases, so too do the challenges involved in finding missing people and informing their loved ones. Many have disappeared without

trace, become victims of human trafficking, enslavement and other crimes, or drowned in the Mediterranean. The uncertainty is extremely traumatic for relatives and can have consequences that threaten their livelihoods. The HSD assists countries in the Mediterranean region to fulfil their obligations under international law, in keeping with the comprehensive and partnership-based approach of Switzerland's foreign policy on migration. At the same time, the HSD is working with the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish universal standards for all missing persons (in relation to tracing and forensics, for example).

Preventing human trafficking

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), around 40.3 million people worldwide were victims of modern slavery in 2019. The vast profits generated fuel armed conflict in places such as Libya as well as funding violent extremism. The HSD is actively engaged in the prevention of human trafficking.

In Nigeria, this takes place in collaboration with traditional and religious authority figures, who educate their communities about the dangers of human trafficking; in Mali, the HSD builds the capacity of the UN mission to identify cases of human trafficking, and in multi-lateral organisations it helps consolidate the political and legal basis underpinning effective action to combat human trafficking.

Challenges

Mixed migration movements

Millions of people migrate within and between countries and regions, whether fleeing conflict, human rights abuses or natural disasters, or in search of better economic prospects. These movements are increasingly complex, with people using the same migration routes for a variety of reasons and being exposed to the same dangers. The traditional distinction between refugees, irregular and regular migrants is therefore becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Effective migration policies must address this challenge by focusing on the push factors driving migration and on protecting the rights of the people concerned, regardless of their status.



Lessons learnt and outlook

Efforts to promote peace and security have gained in importance in recent years and will continue to do so. The challenges are many and varied and there is growing pressure to find quick-fix solutions in conflict situations. Meanwhile, sustainable conflict resolution, through the transformation of societies and the fostering of peaceful co-existence, is neglected. Internationalised proxy wars are once again a frequent occurrence. Conflicts are lasting longer and becoming more complex. Violent internal conflicts are on the rise and are increasingly being played out in towns and cities, bringing misery to civilian populations. The number of people displaced as a result of human rights violations, poverty, natural disasters and climate change shows no signs of falling. International law, human rights and international humanitarian law are being flouted with growing regularity, or even actively undermined.

For the sake of its own security and prosperity, Switzerland continues to rely on a functioning international order and peaceful coexistence. The HSD can help shape responses to global challenges and contribute to peace, stability and prosperity. It is an international leader in the promotion of peace and security. Indeed, other countries are increasingly investing in similar activities, which confirms the validity of the HSD's work.

The HSD's experiences over the past four years show that:

- ▶ Successful peace policy requires acceptance by all parties to a conflict. The access that the HSD enjoys is often the result of years spent fostering trust.
- ▶ Conflicts and crises remain difficult to predict. The HSD must maintain the agility it needs to respond quickly to challenges and opportunities. At the same time, it has to be prepared to support peace processes on a long-term basis where necessary, in order to secure lasting peace.
- ▶ Effective peacebuilding starts at the local level. The HSD is ideally suited to this bottom-up work.
- ▶ The HSD's tried-and-tested expertise in areas such as cease-fire negotiations, prevention of violent extremism and dealing with the past must be preserved and also adapted to changing needs.
- ▶ Respect for human rights helps to prevent conflict and provides an early warning indicator of the potential for conflict within a society.
- ▶ The HSD can achieve greater impact on human rights issues by working with the private sector.
- ▶ The HSD's expertise in drawing up a pre-election code of conduct has proved effective and can be deployed at short notice; this instrument should be expanded.
- ▶ The number of civilian casualties in armed conflicts is rising again. The HSD will continue its efforts to protect the civilian population, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new technologies and seeking ways to persuade all parties to a conflict to comply with international humanitarian law.

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