Meta-analysis

Experience Capitalisation of SDC in the area of Basic Education and Vocational Training in Mongolia

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Abbreviations

Aimag	An administrative/decentralised subdivision (equivalent to a "province")
BVET	Basic Education and Vocational Education
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Germany) Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BPN	Business Professionals Network
CAPEX	Capitalisation of Experiences
CBT	Competency Based Training
CDC	Capacity Development Centres
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CHF	Swiss Franc
CP	Credit Proposal
CS	Country Strategy
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EEC	Education Evaluation Centre
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development project
EU	European Union
FRC	Financial Regulatory Commission
GAP	Government Action Plan
GASE	General Agency for Specialised Inspection
GFA	German Consulting Group
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (Germany)
GOLWS	General Office for Labour and Welfare Services
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ITCNE	Information and Training Centre for Nature and Environment
IZB	Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit in Bildungsfragen (Switzerland)
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LSE	Life Skills Education
MECSS	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MMCI	Mongolian Consulting Institute

MNCCI	Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
MOI	Ministry of Industry
MONEF	Mongolian Employers' Federation
MTR	Mid-term Review
NESRIC	National Employment Services Research Information Centre
NIER	National Institute for Education Research
NUM	National University of Mongolia
RMC	Regional Methodological Centre
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TACG	Technical Advisory Coordination Group
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UB	Ulaanbaatar
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETP	Vocational Education Training Partnership
VSD	Vocational Skills Development Project
WSA	Whole School Approach
YEPP	Youth Employment Promotion Project
YES	Youth Employment Service
YESD	Youth Employment Support Desk
YDP	Youth Development Project

1 Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned orange & teal to conduct an experience capitalisation (CAPEX) of SDC's efforts with regard to improving Basic Education and Vocational Training (BVET) in Mongolia between 2013 and 2022. The CAPEX consists of two parts: First, a meta-analysis, and second, thematic deep dives leading to audio and visual capitalisation products for dissemination. This report is the product of the first part.

The purpose of the meta-analysis is to describe SDC's BVET interventions in terms of approach, results, and sustainability in a very condensed fashion. To this end, the interventions are captured in short "thematic narratives". Taken together, they give a sectorial overview of SDC's achievements in the BVET domain. The narratives are oriented along SDC's Thematic Guidance[1] which comprises six mutually reinforcing strategic themes[2] and corresponding lines of intervention.

Projects with thematic, strategic or operational interlinkages are described together, whereas those with a stand-alone focus form their own narrative. There are altogether six thematic narratives. They capture the most significant contributions in the BVET domain; some elements of lower importance to the overall contribution story have thus been omitted.

The meta-analysis is based on the review of project documents related to the six projects, and 19 interviews with stakeholders in Mongolia and representatives of implementing agencies (see

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[1] SDC (2017/2022): SDC Thematic Guidance on Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Bern, 2017/2022

[2] The six so-called strategic orientations are 1. global and regional agenda, 2. education system governance, 3. Quality and relevance, 4. inclusion and equity, 5. sustainability, cohesion and resilience, and 6. transition to work.

Annex 1). The analysis was carried out between August 2022 and January 2023.

The report briefly introduces the BVET portfolio in chapter 2, while the thematic narratives are described in chapter 3. Chapter 4 provides a synthesis across the dimensions used for the narratives, including some common learnings. It also discusses the replicability of solutions and achieved results.
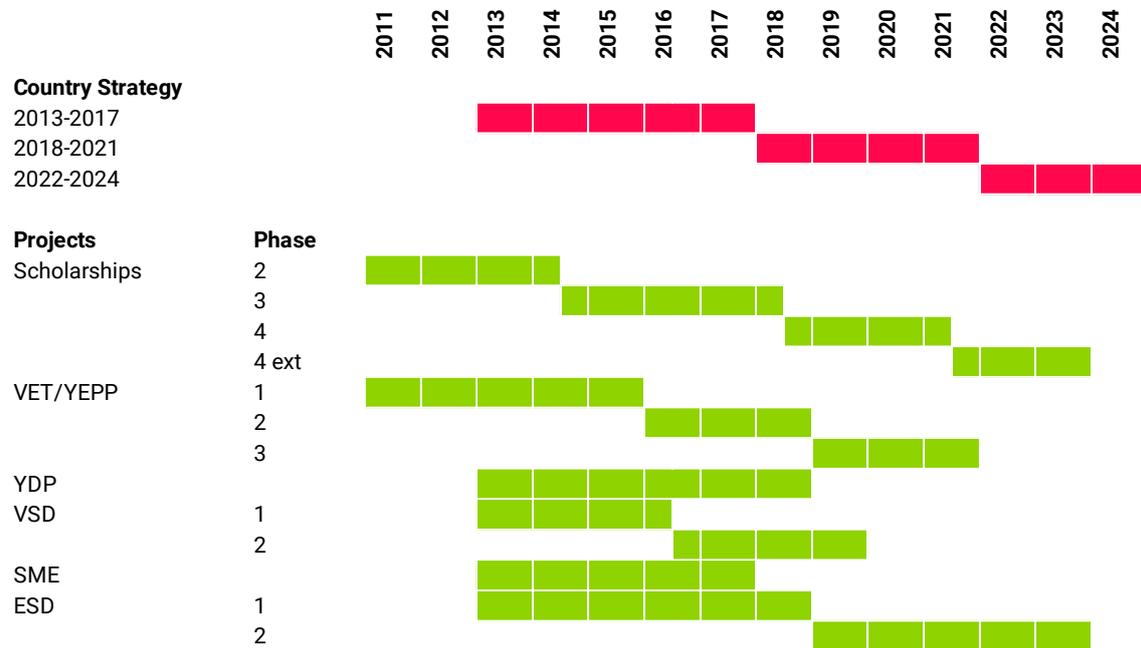
2 Overview BVET portfolio

2.1 BVET interventions

SDC's BVET portfolio in Mongolia consists of six projects[3] (see Annex 2 for details):

- Scholarship Program (Scholarships)
- Vocational Education and Training in Western Mongolia Project (VET), renamed Youth Employment Promotion Project after Phase 1 (VET/YEPP)
- Youth Development Project (YDP)
- Vocational Skills Development Project (VSD)
- Small and Medium Enterprise Development Project (SME)
- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The timelines of these projects and their phases are summarised in Table 1 below.

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[3] The term "project" is used, for consistency purposes, to refer to both programs (Scholarship and YDP) and projects (ESD, SME development, VET/YEPP and VSD).

Table 1: Country Strategies and contributing projects in the BE / VSD domain

		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Country Strategy															
2013-2017				▮	▮	▮	▮	▮							
2018-2021									▮	▮	▮	▮			
2022-2024													▮	▮	▮
Projects	**Phase**														
Scholarships	2	▮	▮	▮	▮										
	3				▮	▮	▮	▮	▮						
	4								▮	▮	▮	▮			
	4 ext												▮	▮	▮
VET/YEPP	1	▮	▮	▮	▮	▮									
	2						▮	▮	▮						
	3									▮	▮	▮			
YDP				▮	▮	▮	▮	▮	▮						
VSD	1			▮	▮	▮	▮								
	2							▮	▮	▮					
SME				▮	▮	▮	▮	▮	▮						
ESD	1			▮	▮	▮	▮	▮	▮						
	2								▮	▮	▮	▮	▮		

These projects contain 30 project outcomes in the Results Frameworks (see Table 2).

Table 2: Overview narratives and project outcomes

1. Life Skills Education	2. Relevance and quality of VSD	3. Access to higher education	4. Education for sustainable development	5. Career counselling and job matching	6. Entrepreneurship and business growth
Increased availability of Life Skills Education for youth in target areas / institutions (YDP 1)	The attitude towards VET has positively changed in the six western aimags (VET/YEPP 1)	Students receive demand-oriented education and thus improve their chances for qualified employment and improved livelihood of their families (Scholarship 2)	ESD is integrated and adjusted in the curriculum of all the 628 schools (1st -12th grade) (ESD 1)	National policies and programmes are conducive for youth employment (VET/YEPP 2 and 3)	Young people run innovative start-ups with growth potential (VET/YEPP 2)
GBV prevention model developed, instituted and capacity of educational staff built (YDP 1)	The Regional Methodological Centre (RMC) in Zavkhan aimag is capable of being a decentralised office of ATVET, implementing policies and providing services to six VET schools ... (VET/YEPP 1)	200 male and female talented students improved their employability by receiving scholarships for demand-oriented higher education (Scholarship 3)	Awareness among leaders and the people ... on ESD/SD/GD is increased and selected companies and organisations are certified according to ISO 14001 (ESD 1)	Effective employment support services are provided to young people (VET/YEPP 2)	National start-up support program is strengthened (VET/YEPP 3)
Improved and extended provision of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services in target areas (YDP 1)	VET schools in six western aimags provide demand-driven training in selected occupations. (VET/YEPP 1)		The necessary competences are embedded within the Mongolian education system, both at central ... and at local level, ... to ensure sustainable application of ESD (ESD 2)	Youth employment support services including YES Desks are integrated and scaled. (VET/YEPP 3)	Supported companies owned and managed by both women and men to increase their business turnover, employ more staff and generate more income (SME 1)
Youth policy, behaviour change communication, and an advocacy	The organisational, human resource and content related	Academic performance of project participants is improved (Scholarship 4)		Target groups make use of improved career guidance services	Supported companies are able to access niche markets and contribute

strategy are developed to address youth issues (YDP phase 1)	requirements for a needs-based vocational training within the mineral resource sector … are established in selected TVET institutions (VSD 1)			based on labour market needs and individual capabilities (VSD 1)	to a "brand" for Mongolia (SME 1)
Students are aware of existing social needs of the urban society and learn how to work in teams to bring relief to disadvantaged people (Scholarship 2)	Target groups make use of the supported Short Term Skills Training courses which enhance their marketable skills (VSD 1)			Participants apply enhanced understanding of job markets (Scholarship 4)	Supported companies organise themselves and will become an effective power to influence the SME sector (SME 1)
Through their participation in community-development projects, students contribute to social development in urban and rural areas. (Scholarship 3)	Target groups make use of improved career guidance services based on labour market needs and individual capabilities (VSD 1)				
Project participants improve and apply soft skills (Scholarship 4)	Mongolian youth and adults make better use of employment opportunities on the labour market in the mineral resource sector, … (VSD 2)				

Note: Numbers indicate phase. All project outcomes are included except YDP Outcome 2 and 3 which focus on preventing and reducing gender based violence and fostering positive gender relations as well as optimising youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

2.2 Stakeholders

In the context of the BVET portfolio, SDC partnered with a range of Mongolian stakeholders, comprising public sector organisations at all levels of government, private sector organisations ranging from federal employers' associations to single small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and start-ups, as well as civil society organisations and academic institutions in Mongolia. Partnering with relevant Mongolian institutions is a means with which SDC seeks to promote sustainable results in its partner countries.[4] As key target group of almost all of the projects in the BVET portfolio, young persons were centre stage (see also section 2.3 on beneficiaries).

On the macro level, SDC collaborated with several public institutions, especially with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, as well as the National Employers' Association as far as the private sector is concerned. At the meso and subnational level the partners included institutions and organisations on aimag, district, and soum level. This included technical vocational education and training schools, employment offices, youth development centres, and employers' associations. Finally, at the micro level, the key stakeholders were young men and women – learners, employed and unemployed youth – as well as parents, and SME and start-ups in select projects.

The portfolio comprises projects which SDC funded on its own, and others in which SDC collaborated with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Australia and the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) in Germany. Complementing these partnerships in specific projects, SDC also collaborated with other funders, including as founding and board member of the VETP, a donor coordination platform and knowledge base for vocational education in Mongolia.

Five organisations were commissioned to implement the projects as lead agencies: the United Nations Populations Fund, the GFA Consulting Group and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) from Germany, as well as the BPN Foundation and the Zorig Foundation from Switzerland and Mongolia respectively.

Figures 1-3 below give an overview of more than 30 such stakeholder groups, differentiated by macro-, meso-, and micro-level.
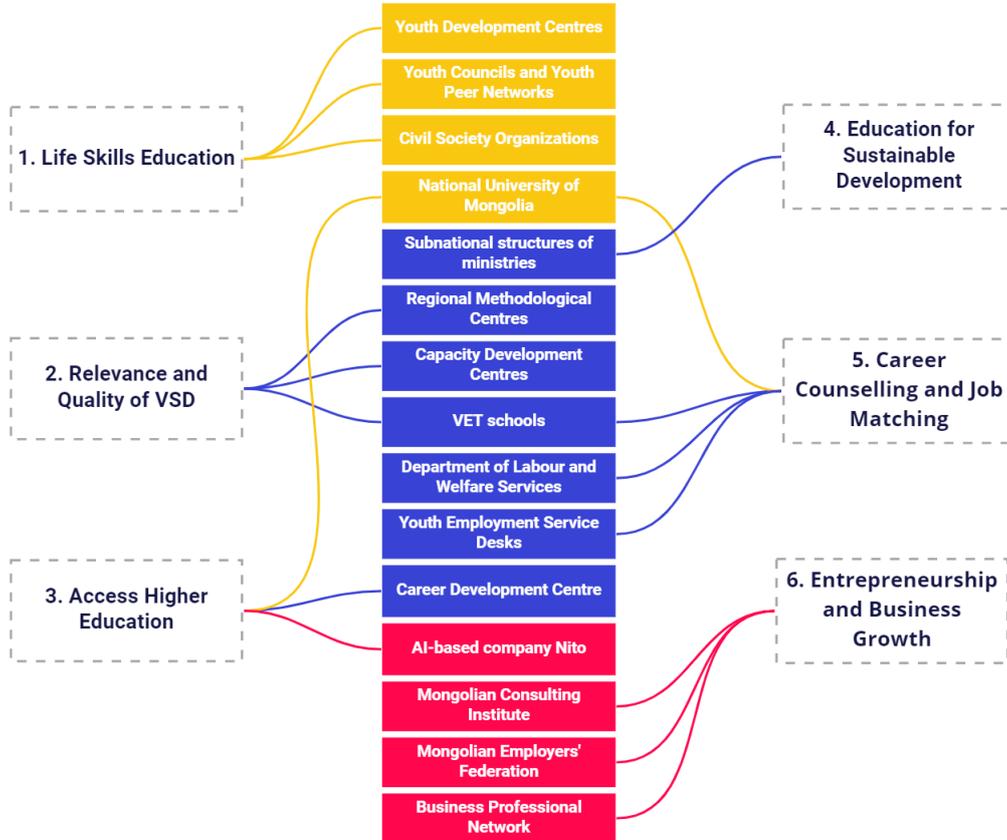
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[4] SDC (2017/2022)

Figure 1: BVET portfolio stakeholders (macro-level)

1. Life Skills Education	**Ministry of Environment and Tourism**	**4. Education for Sustainable Development**
	Ministry of Finance	
	Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports	
2. Relevance and Quality of VSD	**Ministry of Labor and Social Protection**	**5. Career Counselling and Job Matching**
	Ministry of Industry	
	Financial Regulatory Commission	
3. Access Higher Education	**Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry**	**6. Entrepreneurship and Business Growth**
	National Employers Association	

Note: Blue: Public institution / Red: Private sector

Figure 2: BVET portfolio stakeholders (meso-level)

	Youth Development Centres	
	Youth Councils and Youth Peer Networks	
1. Life Skills Education	**Civil Society Organizations**	**4. Education for Sustainable Development**
	National University of Mongolia	
	Subnational structures of ministries	
	Regional Methodological Centres	
2. Relevance and Quality of VSD	**Capacity Development Centres**	**5. Career Counselling and Job Matching**
	VET schools	
	Department of Labour and Welfare Services	
	Youth Employment Service Desks	
3. Access Higher Education	**Career Development Centre**	**6. Entrepreneurship and Business Growth**
	AI-based company Nito	
	Mongolian Consulting Institute	
	Mongolian Employers' Federation	
	Business Professional Network	

Note: Blue: Public institution / Red: Private sector / Yellow: Civil Society Associations and Academic Institutions

Figure 3: BVET portfolio stakeholders (micro-level)
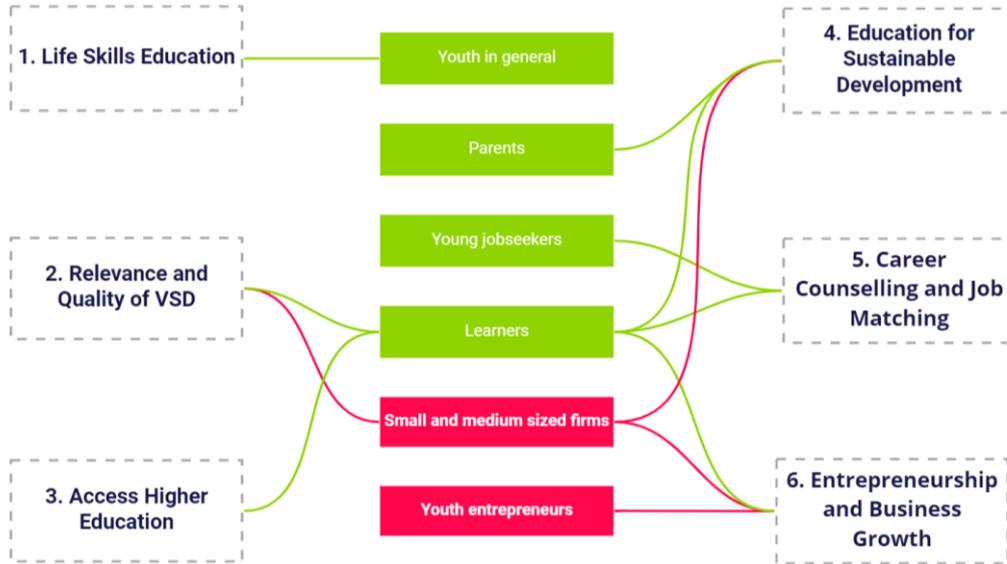
Note: Red: Private sector / Green: young people and their parents

2.3 Beneficiaries

As mentioned further above, young people were the main target group in the interventions in the BVET portfolio – be it as students or graduates of vocational education institutions, scholarship recipients for higher education institutions, visitors and clients in Youth Development Centres or career guidance YES Desks, or as implementers of community based projects or as young entrepreneurs.

While data on the number of young women and men were collected in each of the projects, it is hard to aggregate the data across the BVET portfolio due to different reporting formats and standards. There might also be some double counting if a person has participated in more than one service. However, using data from SDC's End of Phase Operational Reports (EPROR), it can be estimated that the BVET projects reached around 215'000 youth directly. About 113'000 or 52% of them in the Youth Development Programme alone. To put the number into context: Mongolia has a population of 3.3 million (2021), 15% of which are in the age group 15-24 years. Over the time span of 12 years (country programmes 2013 to 2024), there were about 500'000 Mongolians in the age group 15-24 years. With the caveats mentioned above in mind (e.g., double counting), the reach of SDC's BVET portfolio is actually quite substantial; almost half of the young population might have been directly affected by SDC's project in one way or another.

Table 3 below summarises key data from the EPROR. It should be noted that these figures merely provide a rough *estimate*. They also do not account for the many youth who benefited from systemic improvements of the relevance and quality of vocational education and training, new educational content on life skills and sustainability, or improved service delivery by teachers, career counsellors, or interactions with employers, to name just a few.

Table 3: Number of beneficiaries (all rounded)

Thematic narrative	Total	Comment
Life Skills Education	113'200	
Relevance and quality of VSD	6'500	• VET/YEPP about 1'000 • VSD about 5'500
Access to higher education	680	• Data from academic years 2011/2012 – 2021/2022 • Approximately 65% of recipients are women
Education for sustainable development	48'400	• Data of ESD phase 2 not available yet
Career counselling and job matching	41'100	• Data refer primarily to YES Desk clients
Entrepreneurship and business growth	8'600	• Data refer primarily to start-up programme • SME project had no focus on youth

Sources: ZF scholarship program alumni inventory data (Zorig); End of Project Report VET/YEPP (SDC); End of Phase Report VSD 1 and 2 (SDC); End of Project Report YDP (SDC); End of Phase Report ESD 1 (SDC); Mid-term review ESD 2 (SDC)

2.4 Investments

Table 4 below shows a rough *estimate* of the resources that were invested per thematic narrative. Because most of the projects do not report their resource expenditure per project outcomes, some of the investments had to be estimated or pro-rated (e.g., pro-rating overhead cost per outcome or relative to project administered funds). This is the case for those thematic narratives, to which several projects in the BVET portfolio contributed. For projects that had a stand-alone focus, the overall budget was used.

Table 4: Investments per thematic narrative (all rounded)

Thematic narrative	Investment	Comment
Life Skills Education	3'200'000 CHF	• YDP Outcomes 1 and 4
Relevance and quality of VSD	6'586'000 CHF	• VET/YEPP Phase 1: 3'885'000 • VSD Phase 1: 2'701'000
Access to higher education	571'000 CHF	• Scholarships Phases 2-4
Education for sustainable development	2'496'000 CHF	• ESD Phases 1-2
Career counselling and job matching	4'329'000 CHF	• VET/YEPP Phase 1-3: 2'047'000 • VSD Phase 1-2, Component 2: 2'282'000
Entrepreneurship and business growth	2'157'000 CHF	• SME: 1'161'000 • VET/YEPP Phase 2-3: 996'000

Sources: SAP data excerpt dated 15.12.2022 (SDC); YDP: Agreement Annex No Cost Extension (UNFPA); VET/YEPP: Financial Statement FY 2019-2021 (GFA); Financial Statement FY 2016-2018 (GFA); Contract VET Phase 1 (SDC); VSD Phase 1-2: SDC own calculations; Scholarships: Scholarship final budget; Scholarship budget 2014-2018; Scholarship Credit Proposal Phase 2: ESD: SDC own calculations; SME: Betriebskosten Mongolei 2011-2017 (BPN)

Note: Conversion rate CHF/MND 3715; CHF/EUR 1.0; CHF/USD 1.08.

3 Thematic narratives

3.1 Life Skills Education

Narrative #1: Improving young people's life through Life Skills Education	
Contributing projects	ESD · Scholarships · SME · VET/YEPP · VSD · YDP The Youth Development Programme (YDP), VET/YEPP phase 2 and 3 and the Scholarship Program had life skills components. The narrative below focuses on YDP's outcome 1 and 4 that have the strongest ties to the objective of improved life skills.[5] Linkages with VET/YEPP and scholarships are discussed under coherence.
Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia	Country Strategy 2013-2017 · Country Strategy 2018-2021 · Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024 YDP's results contributed to the Outcome 1 (improved employability of VET trained young men and women) and Outcome 2 (rapid skills development and improved employability of men and women with lack of marketable skills) of the Country Strategy 2013-2017. VET/YEPP and scholarship also contributed to the subsequent country strategies.
Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance	Global and regional agenda · Education system governance · Quality and relevance · Inclusion and equity · Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience · Transition to work Within the strategic orientation "sustainability, cohesion and resilience", the focus was put on the two intervention lines "encouraging literacy/numeracy and vocational skills in non-education programmes" and "improving young people's knowledge of disaster, the adverse effects of climate change, disease, poor nutrition, sanitation and hygiene".
Issue at stake and relevance	SDG 1 · SDG 2 · SDG 3 · SDG 4 · SDG 5 · SDG 6 · SDG 7 · SDG 8 · SDG 9 · SDG 10 · SDG 11 · SDG 12 · SDG 13 · SDG 14 · SDG 15 · SDG 16 · SDG 17 The rapid changes Mongolians experienced as result of a transforming society, culture, and economy led to new opportunities, choices and challenges as well as vulnerabilities. Youth and especially youth from disadvantaged backgrounds are vulnerable because they often lack the life skills needed to interpret the change and to protect themselves from various risks that emerge – including with regard to employment, sexual and reproductive health, or gender based violence. The education system was failing to provide youth with the knowledge, tools, and voice so that they could build up skills for a resilient life allowing them to reap their potential to become drivers and shapers of Mongolia's future. Note: YDP outcomes 2 and 3, which are not discussed in this thematic narrative (see footnote 5), further cover SDG 5 and 10.
Approach / modality	Macro-level intervention · Meso-level intervention · Micro-level intervention

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[5] YDP Outcome 1 addresses the availability of Life Skills Education, while Outcome 4 focuses on youth policy, behaviour change communication, and advocacy. YDP Outcome 2 and 3 concentrate on preventing and reducing gender based violence and fostering positive gender relations as well as optimising youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

	YDP was jointly funded by SDC, the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and the Mongolian government, with UNFPA also implementing the project. On the Mongolian government side, a variety of ministries and departments dealing with labour and social protection, education, and health were involved.
	The project operated on different levels simultaneously:
	• At the **macro-level,** the project supported national-level government agencies with policy advice, technical assistance, and capacity building – covering a range of themes such as health, education, labour, population development, and social protection
	• At the **meso-level**, YDP established a range of institutions and mechanisms to foster voice, participation, and services. This included Youth Development Centres (YDC), Youth Councils, and Youth Peer Networks, and collaborations with Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in youth development issues.
	• At the **micro-level**, the project provided life skills education and training for young men and women through organisations and specialists trained through the meso-level activities.
Coherence	YDP aligned with the policy priority of the Mongolian government to build the resilience of young men and women and reduce their vulnerabilities associated with rapid social, economic, and environmental changes. An example of a document expressing this policy priority is the Sustainable Development Vision 2030 (2016).
	These priorities were later reflected in a Law on Promotion of Youth Development (2018) that defined arts, culture, education, employment, environment, health, safe living, science, self-improvement, and sports as key target areas. Alignment can also be seen at state and local levels, where the activities of YDC are funded by budgets of government on these levels.
	Interventions under YDP were implemented in cooperation with national and regional government agencies, as well as civil society organisations, education institutions.
	As the evaluators noted in their report, YDP aimed at creating complementarity and synergies with projects of other development partners. An example in this regard relates to involving UNESCO and UNDP in the needs assessment for defining the number and locations of the Youth Development Centres.
	With regard to SDC's portfolio, supporting youth to develop skills, knowledge and experiences they need as they face challenges in life were also pursued in the:
	• Scholarships project: through provision of training and participation in community projects (see narrative three on lower barriers to access to higher education).
	• VET/YEPP project: through activities of the so-called YES (Youth Employment Service) Desk (see narrative five on expanding access to career counselling and matching services).
	There has been some collaboration between the YDP and the VET/YEPP projects insofar as the Youth Development Centres staff informed youth about or referred them to the YES Desks, whereas the YES Desks staff told youth about the YDC and its services. Advertisement of start-up events and other VET/YEPP entrepreneurship support activities was channelled through YDC too. Collaboration between the YDP and the VSD projects consisted in the latter offering 19 YDC social workers and psychologists basic level training in career guidance, to then provide initial counselling and referral services to TVET institutions or YES Desks for detailed career guidance.
Results	The project achieved results at different levels, specifically:
	• At the **macro-level,** the YDP contributed to the development of a Youth Development Policy and the Law on the Promotion of Youth Development,

	creating a system in which youth-related issues are discussed, where decisions are taken, and budgets are allocated. Furthermore, a regulation to integrate life-skills education in school curricula starting from the 2019 school year was approved. A ministerial working group established procedures on assessing life skills of TVET students and graduates; curricula for all TVET schools were updated.
	• At the **meso-level**, YDC were created in 16 regions/districts to address specific youth needs at the local level and increase employability of young people. YDC were set up in areas where the regional governments demonstrated a clear commitment. Life Skill Education Halls[6] were established at 12 TVET schools. YDP also supported 11 provinces and several districts of Ulaanbaatar, strengthening the capacity of medical staff, teachers, social workers and staff of non-formal education institutions to provide life skills training and related services. Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and local student councils were engaged in youth development issues.
	• At the **micro-level**, the total number of youth who benefited from YDP activities exceed the target of 240,000 youth (including those trained on issues regarding life skills, gender based violence or sexual and reproductive health). Close to 21,500 persons participated in advocacy related activities (events, media, workshops, consultations), through which more than 1.1 million youth were reached indirectly.
	The **impact** that the project had is difficult to gauge in quantitative terms, yet the following effects on the young people participating were observed by the interviewees:
	• Improved self-esteem, adaptive and positive behaviour, as well as participation in active social life, promoting meaningful participation of youth.
	• Enhanced decision making, communication, planning, and stress management of youth.
	• The annual state budget allocated for youth development activities at were zero in 2013; it meanwhile increased to about 30,000 USD in 2021 according to UNFPA.
	The YDP evaluators noted that during the implementation period of YDP, youth unemployment dropped from 18% in 2013 to 14% in 2017, well below the YDP target of 17%. While undoubtedly a very positive change, this is primarily due to factors outside the interventions, such as the economic recovery.
Sustainability	In November 2022, following information was shared by interviewees on the durability of YDP's results: The Law on Promotion of Youth Development (2018) continues to be in force, providing the basis for sustainability of the results that YDP achieved, among other with an article on continued funding YDC. The LSE was institutionalised by making it mandatory in various education settings (secondary, colleges, university and TVET). LSE was also integrated into structures including YDC and LSE Halls.
	In additional to government funding, UNFPA mobilised private sector resources for YDC and related programs at sub-provincial level. In 2015, the Oyu Tolgoi mining company provided funds to set up two YDC in Umnugovi (Khanbogd and Tsaogttsetsii soums). In 2020, through the Integrated Support Programme funded by the Gobi Oyu Development Support Fund, three additional YDC were established in Umnugovi. In 2022, UNFPA further expanded YDC coverage in five soums of five provinces with the support of APRO, a consultancy in the mining and minerals sector. There are currently 41

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[6] Life Skills Education Halls are multi-purpose halls established to enable a friendly learning environment to deliver life skills education to youth. In 2014, 32 such halls were established to pilot life skills education at schools, Lifelong Education Centres, Technical and Vocational Education and Training schools and pre-service teacher training centres.

	YDCs in 21 provinces and 9 districts of Ulaanbaatar. YDC are officially part of the public services and functions, and the administrative costs, including staff salaries, are covered by the state budget.
Lessons learned[7]	In the evaluation reports and other project documents, the following learnings were highlighted: • Efforts to sustain achievements of an intervention are linked to the continued commitment of national and regional governments – creating awareness and ownership is therefore very important. • One way to do so, and in general to strengthen informed decision making, is to gather and manage relevant data. In YDP, this was done through the national multi-sector database. • Combining several elements (making LSE a compulsory offering in schools/colleges, integrating LSE into existing curricula etc.) minimises sustainability risks if one of the elements fails. • Setting up and institutionalise quality assurance systems is important for continued effectiveness of the actions taken. • Leveraging private sector resources contributes to overcome funding constraints by the government.
Sources	YDP Final report 2013-2018, YDP End Evaluation report 2018, Project Document 2013; Interviews with B. Khurlee, U. Enkhtaivan, Uyanga Zalaa-Uul (all former YDP staff), and B. Narantuya, G. Damdingaa, N. Rentsenbyamba (all MLSP).

3.2 Relevance and quality of VSD

Narrative #2: Increasing labour-market relevance and quality of VSD	
Contributing projects	ESD · Scholarships · SME · **VET/YEPP** · **VSD** · YDP The Vocational Education and Training in Western Mongolia Project / Youth Employment Promotion Project (VET/YEPP) Phase 1 and both phases of the Vocational Skills Development Project (VSD) aimed to improve the vocational skills offer in Mongolia.
Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia	Country Strategy 2013-2017 · Country Strategy 2018-2021 · Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024 The results contributed to Outcome 1 (improved employability of VET trained young men and women) and Outcome 2 (rapid skills development and improved employability of men and women with lack of marketable skills) of the Country Strategy 2013-2017 as well as all three outcomes in the Country Strategy 2018-2021. This included Outcome 1 (a functioning institutional framework that promotes quality education and better employment), Outcome 2 (youth and adults obtain and apply skills for better employment), and Outcome 3 (the private sector is contributing to a market-oriented VET system).
Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance	Global and regional agenda · Education system governance · **Quality and relevance** · Inclusion and equity · Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience · Transition to work

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[7] The Learnings presented in this, and subsequent narratives are based on the evaluation reports and other project documents, as well as the interviews. Some of the learnings have been altered for the purpose of this document, primarily by either summarising learnings, or conversely by adding further explanation.

	Within the strategic orientation "Quality and relevance", the focus was put on the two intervention lines **"enhancing the capacity of teachers, trainers and education personnel"** and **"increasing labour market relevance and the quality of VSD"**.
Issue at stake and relevance	SDG 1 / SDG 2 / SDG 3 / SDG 4 / SDG 5 / SDG 6 / SDG 7 / SDG 8 / SDG 9 / SDG 10 / SDG 11 / SDG 12 / SDG 13 / SDG 14 / SDG 15 / SDG 16 / SDG 17 Dynamic economic growth led to a growing demand for qualified skilled workers, especially but not only in the mineral sector. This demand was only partly met by the TVET system, which lacked both in quality and labour market relevance. Issues included outdated curricula and standards, inadequate teacher and trainer qualifications, as well as little involvement of the private sector in TVET reform. Youth in rural areas and vulnerable youth, for whom TVET has been a feasible educational option, were especially affected. These challenges called for improved quality and relevance of VSD to increase employability of rural and vulnerable youth.
Approach / modality	Macro-level intervention Meso-level intervention Micro-level intervention Both projects set out to improve the skills development offer in Mongolia, with complementary funding arrangements and pathways in terms of the sectors/occupations they focused on. • Financing: SDC chose two different funding modalities: The VET/YEPP project was directly financed by SDC, whereas SDC provided a contribution to the VSD project (delegated cooperation) jointly with BMZ (Germany) and DFAT (Australia). In the first phase of VSD, the contribution was earmarked to implement short-term skills trainings and career guidance activities. The contribution of the second phase was provided without earmarking. • Topics: The VSD project focussed on the mineral resource sector, including up- and downstream industries. In its VSD component (phase 1), the VET/YEPP project focused more broadly on occupations in the agriculture sector, in construction, and mechanics. • Reach: With SDC's contribution, the VSD project delivered its activities also in the Western aimags of Mongolia (Bayankhongor, Bayan-Ulgii, Gobi-Altai, Khovd, Uvs, and Zavkhan) in which SDC already operated with the VET/YEPP project. The activities of the BMZ focused on Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan and Choir, and those of DFAT on Umnugovi. The projects were implemented by GFA Consulting Group (VET/YEPP) and GIZ Mongolia (VSD) respectively. The main national partners were the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP[8]). During their implementation, the projects operated on different levels: • At the **macro-level,** the projects provided technical and regulatory advice to government agencies as well as the national employers' association on policies and legal frameworks. • At the **meso-level,** the projects collaborated with and supported TVET schools, Regional Methodological Centres (RMC) and Capacity Development Centres (CDC). The private sector was engaged in advisory boards in VET schools, in working groups to develop occupational standards and training curricula, in skills assessment/certification and by providing capacity building for in-company trainers. • At the **micro-level,** the projects reached out to youth and unemployed individuals by providing them with access to competency-based training, module-based short-term skills trainings etc. VET/YEPP piloted internship

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[8] The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection merged into the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) after the elections in 2016.

	programs to assist young job seekers in developing competences and building networks in the early stage of their careers.
Coherence	The projects are aligned with policy priorities of the Mongolian government to improve vocational skills development and by extension reduce skills mismatch in the labour market, which was emphasised as early as in the New Government's Action Plan (2012-2016) and policy documents of subsequent governments.
	External evaluations that were conducted at different moments of project delivery equally concluded that the projects are well-aligned with government and employers' priorities and policies. The fact that several of the activities of the project later found their way into national policies and regulations underpins this assessment.
	Switzerland and Germany have similar dual systems of vocational education and training, which was a key reason to pool resources together in the VSD project and a means to enhance coherence of the interventions.
Results	The projects achieved results at different levels, specifically:
	• At the **macro-level,** key results included the amendment of the TVET Law (2016), including provisions on improving the partnership with the private sector and quality of on-the-job learning through in-company instructor training. The Labour Law was revised in 2021 and now contains regulations regarding internship placements. The national skills competition ("Mongolia Skills") and official membership of Mongolia to "World Skills" are additional macro-level results, providing awareness and showcasing the value of vocational skills development. The project supported TVET reform towards a competency based training (CBT) based system.
	• At the **meso-level,** new short-term skills trainings, aligned with labour market demands were created, with updated curricula and quality teaching and learning materials and equipment. The Regional Methodological Centres (RMCs) improved their capacity to enhance teacher/trainer skills. Six TVET institutions were supported to become Capacity Development Centres (CDC), institutions that specialise in providing advanced training and skills assessment. Other result was the establishment of a TVET Assessment Centre, responsible for among other for examining, assessing, and certifying professionals and TVET graduates.
	• Both projects established advisory boards with private sector representatives in VET schools; 28 cooperation agreements were signed between companies and TVET institutions for apprenticeships.
	• At the **micro-level**, the projects contributed to skills development and higher employability of trainees through training courses.
	Based on the project documents as well as interviews with selected stakeholders, the contributing projects produced the following **effects**:
	• Cooperation with the private sector was fostered (such as in the advisory boards in VET schools, in developing occupational standards, or by providing training to in-company trainers), mirroring elements of the dual model as practiced in Switzerland and other countries. The enhanced involvement of the private sector increased quality and relevance of TVET delivery in Mongolia by modernising equipment and aligning occupational standards, curricula, teaching and skills of graduates to the industry current and future needs. This also included private public partnerships in which firms such as Rio Tinto, Oyu Tolgoi, and Festo Didactic from Germany, provided support in building up a training program for industrial mechatronics.
	• In all 12 VET schools that were supported by the project the interviewees observed stronger dialogue with and contribution by the private sector, e.g., via so-called professional boards, co-development of curricula,

	provision of internship programs etc. Investment in infrastructure (machinery, consumables etc.) improved the opportunities to combine and apply theoretical learning and practice. In at least 7 of the 12 schools, management processes were much improved, including those related to quality assurance. • Hundreds of teachers and trainers have improved their technical and didactic skills. Some interviewees suggested that the fact that several of the World Skills participants previously learned at TVET schools that were supported by the projects can be seen as a proxy indicator for the quality enhancements.
Sustainability	In November 2022, following information was shared by interviewees on the durability of VET/YEPP and VSD results: • Laws and policies that were reformed with support of the VET/YEPP and VSD projects remain in force, providing the basis for sustainability and continued effects of other project results on the skills development system. • Many teachers and trainers, government staff, and private sector representatives who were involved in or trained by the projects continue to be working in their roles. • Results at the school level hinge on the availability of adequate resources. Resource allocation might radically change considering planned reform efforts to substitute the current per capita financing with a scheme that reflects teaching costs per occupation (which differ because of, e.g., more expensive equipment needs) as well as performance metrics of TVET schools and students. • Capacity Development Centres continue to be in function and more centred are planned to be established, including with support by the Asian Development Bank, as well as earnings from its services. • Regarding the Regional Methodological Centres (RMC), the draft Law on Vocational and Technical Education foresees structural changes as the RMC will be transferred from the MLSP to the Ministry of Education. Details of its future role and competences are yet to be defined. • The National Employers' Federation (MONEF) continues to provide capacity building for in-company trainers in a dedicated training centre.
Lessons learned	Based on the evaluation reports and other project documents, several learnings emerged: • Engaging with the private sector and ensuring its participation in vocational skills reform and delivery at every level – from defining occupational standards, to developing curricula as well as assessing students – is essential to ensure quality and relevance of TVET. • Improving VET school management is a change process requiring long-time engagement and resources; it also requires addressing policy issues such as VET school financing to overcome prevailing negative incentives. • In the context of the VSD project, Mongolia started to take part in the World Skills competition. Participation in the latter turned out to be an important motivational factor for many students and teachers as well as an opportunity to learn and enhance competencies.
Sources	VSD ProDoc Phase 1/2; VET/YEPP ProDoc Phase 1/2/3; VSD 1 and 2 EPROR; YEPP Operational Reports Phase 2/3, VSD Evaluation report Phase 1, VET/YEPP Final Evaluation, VET/YEPP Mid-term review Phase 1, VET/YEPP Final Evaluation Phase 2 and 3. Interviews with B. Dippmar (GIZ), A. Navchaa (GOLWS), B. Darisukhbaatar, O. Tsagaan, T. Tumenjargal (all MLSP).

3.3 Access to higher education

Narrative #3: Lower barriers to access to higher education	
Contributing projects	ESD · **Scholarships** · SME · VET/YEPP · VSD · YDP
	This thematic area was covered by one project, the **Scholarship Program**, which was implemented in four phases.
Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia	**Country Strategy 2013-2017** · **Country Strategy 2018-2021** · **Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024**
	The results of the project contributed to all three country strategies. In the Country Strategy 2022-2024, the project falls into the remit of Outcome 3 (young women and men have improved access to labour markets/jobs).
Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance	Global and regional agenda · Education system governance · Quality and relevance · **Inclusion and equity** · Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience · Transition to work
	The intervention is aligned with SDC's strategic orientation "inclusion and equity", focussing on the intervention line "developing comprehensive measures, including cross-sectoral collaboration to lower barriers to BE and VSD due to gender, health, socio-economic deprivation, migration and other factors in order to enhance access and retention" – although it must be noted that the scholarship recipients all pursued tertiary education at universities.
Issue at stake and relevance	**SDG 1** · SDG 2 · SDG 3 · **SDG 4** · **SDG 5** · SDG 6 · SDG 7 · SDG 8 · SDG 9 · **SDG 10** · SDG 11 · SDG 12 · SDG 13 · SDG 14 · SDG 15 · SDG 16 · SDG 17
	Access to higher education among youth from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds is limited, depriving them of an important pathway to develop relevant skills for employment. Lack of understanding and knowledge about job requirements and opportunities also hinders vulnerable youth in reaping opportunities in the labour market. Secondary and higher education systems do not equip the students with essential soft skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, leadership and communication etc.
Approach / modality	Macro-level intervention · **Meso-level intervention** · **Micro-level intervention**
	The project was funded by SDC with a grant to the **Zorig Foundation**, a Mongolian non-governmental organisation attending to issues of good governance, youth and education, and community development. The foundation specialises in administering scholarships, including on behalf of other development partners, foundations, and the private sector.
	The project operated almost exclusively at the micro-level, with selected activities at meso-level:
	• At the **meso-level**, the project organised annual career fairs in collaboration with the Career Development Centre, the National University of Mongolia and the private sector, such NITO, a recruitment and job-search company.

	- At the **micro-level**, the project provided scholarships to students and engaged them in community development projects and extracurricular activities. The Scholarship Program consisted of two parts: Scholarships were provided to about 60 students per year, selected from a pool of 600-800 applicants. The selection process considered primarily the socio-economic background of the applicants and their school performance. The scholarship amounted to about 550 CHF, in total which is 30-50% of an average annual tuition fee.[9] About two-thirds of the scholarship recipients were women, and the subjects most often pursued were law, business and finance, economics, as well as medicine. The second part were small-scale community development projects in which the students should enhance soft-skills; the students received between 70-330 CHF to implement these projects.
Coherence	The project had two major objectives: to support youth from disadvantaged backgrounds (socio-economic status) to pursue bachelor-degree studies at university and to incentivise students to implement community development projects. Both objectives aligned well with government and development objectives in Mongolia in terms of improving educational attainments, fostering community building, and enhancing employability of youth. Designed as a single intervention with no reform ambitions at the meso- and macro-level, the project had little interplay with other projects of SDC's portfolio although theoretically there would have been several touchpoints such as involving business owners in VET reform related activities or facilitating networking between SME and start-ups. Efforts to support youth through skills development and facilitating better access to the labour market were also pursued in the (see narrative five): - VET/YEPP project through activities of the so-called Youth Employment Service Desks - VSD project through career counselling activities in vocational education schools
Results	The project achieved several results at the micro-level, mainly: - Roughly 570 students were granted financial aid (e.g., tuition fee and study allowance) in the period 2012-2022[10] to access or continue with higher education and received training of 8-10 days to improve soft skills (e.g., team working, public speaking, innovation and creativity, project management, social marketing). - Implementing more than 200 small-scale community development projects with SDG relevant goals, students improved leadership skills, gained awareness of and agency to address challenges and needs in Mongolian communities. Prominent examples are book/library service in busses; virtual museum tours; or translating legal text into simple language. - Taking part in community development projects as well as seminars on job search, CV writing, formal emailing writing and job interview preparation, and in job fairs, students enhanced employability.[11]

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[9] The scholarship recipients also received a book stipend and accommodation allowance financed via Merali and La Mensa, two foundations.

[10] The Zorig Foundation reports that overall, 1218 persons received scholarships since the academic year 2006.

[11] Tracer study data indicate that 95% of the scholarship recipients found a job within six months of graduation; about one third of the students do so in in the field of their studies. Some students pursued Master's studies abroad. While the employment rate seems high, the data cannot be interpreted conclusively in the absence of a control group / benchmark.

	Data to quantify the aforementioned results are not available, yet self-reported evidence suggests that students from lower-income families developed relevant skills and were thus better prepared for the job market; students expanded knowledge on issues in their communities and were given opportunity to contribute to solving them; women especially benefited from the program.
	Anecdotal evidence of the Zorig Foundation suggests that most scholarship holders from rural areas have stayed in Ulaanbaatar since.[12] The scale of such rural outmigration and the associated effects are unknown, however.
Sustainability	Sustainability of the project can be seen from different perspectives: • The Zorig Foundation has become a respectable organisation commissioned to implement scholarship schemes on behalf of funding agencies, governmental and non-governmental alike. • Sustainability of the Zorig Foundation scholarship scheme per se is secured through (continued) financial support by other funders, albeit at lower scale without SDC's support. • Outreach efforts to diversify funding sources to substitute SDC's contribution have not been successful yet. • Anecdotal evidence exists regarding sustainability of results that were achieved by the community development projects, however, neither have systematic assessments of the latter been done nor are they planned.
Lessons learned	Based on the evaluation reports and other project documents, the following learnings were identified by stakeholders: • Student's participation in community development projects proved effective in raising awareness about community challenges and motivating students to contribute to their own society. • Continued monitoring, including through participatory processes or periodic surveys, would be essential to identify and analyse change; monitoring could also be used to identify adverse or unintended effects of the scholarship scheme as well as community development projects. For monitoring to happen, respective resources need to be budgeted. • Continued and long-term engagement with SDC helped Zorig Foundation to position itself as a trustful partner to its funders.
Sources	Scholarship Program Final Phase Report (2021), CP Phase 4 (2018-2022), CP Scholarship Phase 4_extention, SDC Final report, Scholarship program CP (Phase 3); Interviews with T. Bayaraa, B. Baja, and B. Natsagdorj of Zorig Foundation.

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[12] About half of the scholarship recipients were from rural regions in Mongolia.

3.4 Education for sustainable development

Narrative #4: Promoting education for sustainable development	
Contributing projects	**ESD** · Scholarships · SME · VET/YEPP · VSD · YDP This thematic area is covered by one project, **Education for Sustainable Development**, which is implemented in two phases.
Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia	Country Strategy 2013-2017 · Country Strategy 2018-2021 · **Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024** The results of the first phase of the ESD project contributed particularly to Outcome 1 (a functioning institutional framework that promotes quality education and better employment is in place) of the Country Strategy 2018-2021. The second phase attends to Outcome 2 (citizens have improved their awareness and attitude toward climate change and environment, particularly those living in urban and peri-urban areas) of the Country Strategy 2022-2024.
Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance	Global and regional agenda · Education system governance · Quality and relevance · Inclusion and equity · **Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience** · Transition to work Within the strategic orientation "Sustainability, cohesion and resilience" the focus is on one intervention line: **"Promoting education for sustainable development; citizenship and human rights education, value-based education"**.
Issue at stake and relevance	**SDG 1** · SDG 2 · **SDG 3** · **SDG 4** · **SDG 5** · SDG 6 · SDG 7 · SDG 8 · SDG 9 · **SDG 10** · SDG 11 · SDG 12 · **SDG 13** · SDG 14 · SDG 15 · SDG 16 · **SDG 17** Due to rapid economic growth in the last two decades, Mongolia has become urbanised, with 66% of the population living in the cities. There were increasing concerns about harm to the environment from pollution, exploitation of natural resources, increased desertification, and endangered wildlife. In addition, loss of culturally important values and some cultural changes, such as unhealthy eating and consumption habits, were perceived as harmful. The ESD project intends to empower and enable individual to address these concerns and the underlying causes through increased awareness on sustainable development, by introducing ESD at various levels and streamlining it into the education system.
Approach / modality	**Macro-level intervention** · **Meso-level intervention** · **Micro-level intervention** The ESD project is jointly funded by SDC and the government of Mongolia, represented by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). Reflecting these funding sources, the project steering committee included representatives from MES, MET, the Ministry of Finance, and SDC. For the phase 1, SDC commissioned GIZ International Services and its partners Swiss Institut für Internationale Zusammenarbeit in Bildungsfragen (IZB) and the University of Uppsala (Sweden) to lead the implementation of the project. Perceiving little value addition, SDC changed the implementation modality in the second phase. The second phase is implemented solely by national government and non-government partners. The project management and steering set-up was also changed; the project is now guided by a Technical

	Advisory and Coordination Group composed of representatives of 11 national agencies and institutions.
	The ESD project strives for a comprehensive reform process and therefore implements actions in different sectors, involving a variety of actors at different levels. It aims to enhance national capacities to ensure sustainable application of ESD in Mongolia's education system. Specifically, the project implemented the following activities:
	• At the **macro level**, the project provides technical advice on the integration of environmental awareness education in Mongolia's education system as well as technical and regulatory advice for climate related certifications, and climate-related funding vehicles.
	• At the **meso-level,** the project supports the provincial structures similar to and engages *primarily* with schools as the core institutions to disseminate the ESD idea and principles. It supported adjustments in teacher training to reflect the policy changes, and staff of the Education Evaluation Centre (EEC) were trained to include the new elements in their assessments.
	• At the **micro-level**, the project organised training for students and parents as well as the private sector.
Coherence	ESD relates to policy priorities of the Mongolian government, including those formulated in the Sustainable Development Vision 2030 (2016). Coherence was ensured through the involvement of the MECSS and the MET and other public agencies such as the General Agency for State Inspection and the Education Evaluation Centre responsible for school assessment). The ESD was also aligned with interventions that ran in parallel, including recycling and waste management interventions from GIZ and SDC.
Results	The project produced results at various levels:
	• At the **macro-level,** key results of Phase 1 included the development of the legal and policy framework on ESD. The approval of the National Program on ESD in 2018 focused on the integration of ESD principles in the education system – horizontally (all institutions playing a role in school grades 1 to 12) as well as vertically (reaching down to the local schools in all provinces/aimags and UB districts). Core curricula of secondary and upper secondary education level were amended in 2016 and operational in over 700 schools. Looking beyond the education system, the project provided advice for the national strategy to introducing EMS and ISO 14000 standards and the "Regulation for Green Certificate and Eco-Labelling" to encourage the private sector to use more green technologies, as well as setting up the "Green Credit Fund" to provide financing for environmentally sound products and services.
	During Phase 2, important results included the development of the Checklist of School Inspection by the General Agency for Specialised Inspection (GASI) to monitor and evaluate the performance of secondary schools based on the Whole School Approach (WSA), and the upholding of ESD principles in the preparation for the next national curriculum cycle in 2024/26 by the NIER. Another result is the creation of the intersectoral national Technical Advisory Coordination Group (TACG) of nine different departments and the representatives of the two ministries.
	• At the **meso-level,** national and regional stakeholders, including officials of MECSS, MET, the Department of Education and Culture, as well as staff of the Education Evaluation Centre (EEC) were capacitated in various aspects relating to ESD. School and teachers (approx. 35,000) were trained how to integrate ESD successfully in educational practice. Several trainings were organised for social workers as well as journalists on identifying and reporting on ESD issues.
	One of key results from Phase 2 is applying a Whole School Approach (WSA) with increased community participation in the 30 pilot schools and

	the allocation of additional funding by the local governments to the schools for implementing projects which improve the campuses and reduce their ecological footprint. The establishment of the ѕub-TACG in six target aimags and two districts promotes close linkages between the national and local level ESD institutionalisation process. • At the **micro-level**, the most important result is that students on all school levels are offered ESD as part of their regular curricula. To reach students still better, ESD was also integrated in eight summer camps (which since have not been done again). 90 teachers were trained on application of ESD, which then applied the new skills in 16 different summer camps in the Uvurkhangai, Bayankhongor, Uvs and Sukhbaatar aimags, reaching 1,200 school children (2017-2018). The project also provided training to the private sector on EMS and ISO 14000 standards and encouraged their adoption. In Phase 2, 30 schools received grants for implementing ESD activities at the local level involving some 29,400 students and their families. Awareness on green development was promoted through events and media channels with more than 22 programmes related to ESD. The mid-term evaluation of phase 2 noted the following **effects** by the ESD project: • Awareness, attitudes and capacity of national and local agencies, school management, teachers and parents on ESD have improved, acknowledging however that more time is needed to "create a firm foundation" that the requisite ESD competences are embedded within the Mongolian education system. • Parents observed effects on their children's learning and to their family's awareness of environmental and health issues.
Sustainability	Acknowledging that systemic changes have taken place and that there are factors to support sustainability (incl. policies, structures, networks, ownership), the mid-term review of phase 2 (April 2022) noted several risks undermining sustainability of the ESD results. This included: • Maintaining the results at the model schools if upscaled to all schools • Defunct advisor and coordination teams due to work overload • Inadequate support to schools to apply the WSA • Inadequate funding for innovative and creative working
Lessons learned	Based on project documents and interviews, the following learnings have appeared from the ESD project: • Setting-up a project management unit led by relevant national stakeholders (MET and MES) fostered ownership of the project, contributed to their capacity development, and helped overcome institutional silos. • Creating the TACG contributed to fostering collaboration and synergies among departments and ministries. Sustaining and scaling collaboration and synergies can be enhanced by assigning a high-level institution (e.g., a Parliamentary Standing Committee or Government Cabinet or Presidential Office) to lead on issues of ESD. • Whereas the inclusion of the Ministry of Finance in the delivery of the project is expected to be beneficial for the project's financial sustainability, its financial procedures slowed down project delivery. • Supplying capacity building and involving a wide range of stakeholders (local government, authorities, parents, communities, private sector and other stakeholders) are crucial to embed ESD. • Risks posed by an unstable political situation as well as frequent changes of management in the respective ministries need to be mitigated through regular and transparent communication, engagement with a wide range of

	stakeholders, and alignment of stakeholder interests to ensure continuity of the project outcomes and distribution of the results nationwide. • Continuation of Sub-TACGs as local change agents is key to local level ESD institutionalisation process and to upscaling the WSA.
Sources	ESD 1 Final Phase Report, CP (ESD1), CP (ESD2), ESD 2 ProDoc, ESD 2 ProDoc Extension, ESD2 MTR Report; Interviews with N. Tumur-Ochir (MECS), I. Miyejav, L. Purev (both NIER), T. Tumenjargal (MOET), and S. Erdenebayar (ITCNE).

3.5   Career counselling and job matching

Narrative #5: Expanding access to career counselling and matching services	
Contributing projects	ESD · Scholarships · SME · **VET/YEPP** · **VSD** · YDP This thematic area was covered primarily by the Vocational Education and Training in Western Mongolia Project / Youth Employment Promotion Project (VET/YEPP) project. Contributions were also made by the Vocational Skills Development Project (VSD) and some activities of the Scholarship Program. The narrative below focuses on the first two projects that have the strongest ties to the objective of improved career counselling and matching services.
Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia	Country Strategy 2013-2017 · Country Strategy 2018-2021 · Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024 The results of these projects contributed to Country Strategy 2013-2017 and Country Strategy 2018-2021, particularly Outcome 1, a functioning institutional framework that promotes quality education and better employment is in place.
Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance	Global and regional agenda · Education system governance · Quality and relevance · Inclusion and equity · Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience · **Transition to work** Within the strategic orientation "Transition to work", this narrative focuses on the intervention lines **"expanding access to career counselling and matching services"** and **"strengthening vocational orientation and guidance in formal or alternative lower-secondary education to enable informed choices of career path"**.
Issue at stake and relevance	**SDG 1** · SDG 2 · SDG 3 · **SDG 4** · SDG 5 · SDG 6 · SDG 7 · **SDG 8** · SDG 9 · **SDG 10** · SDG 11 · SDG 12 · SDG 13 · SDG 14 · SDG 15 · SDG 16 · SDG 17 Dynamic expansion of the key industries in Mongolia led to a strong demand for qualified skilled workers, and yet at the same time unemployment remained high among certain groups, especially young people. Several factors contributed to this, one being the lack of understanding and knowledge about job requirements and opportunities by young people, as well as their access to prospective employers. Typically, career guidance and employment services can help with such a lack of understanding, but the respective institutions had little technical capacity and resources to provide these services and support the transition of young people into the labour market. The projects therefore contributed to an enhanced access to and quality of career counselling and matching services with particular focus on vulnerable youth.

Approach / modality	Macro-level intervention Meso-level intervention Micro-level intervention
	Both projects set out to improve counselling and matching services in Mongolia, with complementary funding arrangements and pathways in terms of the institutions they focused on. • Financing: SDC chose two different funding modalities: The VET/YEPP project was directly financed by SDC, whereas SDC provided a contribution to the VSD project (delegated cooperation) jointly with the BMZ (Germany) and DFAT (Australia). In the first phase of the VSD project, the contribution was earmarked to implement short-term skills trainings and career guidance activities. The contribution of the second phase was provided without earmarking. • Reach: With SDC's contribution, the VSD project delivered its activities also in the Western aimags of Mongolia in which SDC already operated with the VET/YEPP project. The activities of the BMZ focused on Ulaanbaatar, Darkhan and Choir, and those of DFAT on Umnugovi. The projects were implemented by GFA Consulting Group (VET/YEPP) and GIZ Mongolia (VSD) respectively. The main national partners were the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), the General Office for Labour and Welfare Services (GOLWS) and its subsidiaries at aimag/district level (DLWS), as well as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MECSS) and VET schools. During their implementation, the projects operated on different levels: • At the **macro-level,** the projects provided technical advice to government agencies on policies and legal frameworks to facilitate career counselling and employment services. This included advice to the National Employment Services Research Information Center (NESRIC) to improve the quality of career guidance services as a part of its labour market policies. • At the **meso-level,** both projects provided capacity building to GOLWS to pilot career counselling services; the VET/YEPP project piloted and later scaled nationwide a new type of employment service, the YES Desks. The YES Desks are a one-stop facility at aimag and district public employment offices that offers unemployed youth specific employment services. One of their core services is that young job seekers are supported to identify their needs, ambitions, resources, and competences as well as their goals, based on which they develop an Individual Action Plan for Employment and finding means to achieve them. The VSD project supported the National University of Mongolia with developing an academic program on career counselling.
Coherence	The projects are aligned with policy priorities of the Mongolian government to improve vocational skills development and by extension reduce skills mismatch in the labour market, which was emphasised as early as in the New Government's Action Plan (2012-2016) and policy documents of subsequent governments. External evaluations that were conducted at different moments of project delivery equally concluded that the projects are well-aligned with government and employers' priorities and policies. The fact that several of the activities of the project later found their way into national policies and regulations underpins this assessment. Switzerland and Germany have similar dual systems of vocational education and training, which was a key reason to pool resources together in the VSD project and a means to enhance coherence of the interventions. Notwithstanding, in this context the mid-term review of VET/YEPP Phase 1 (2014) noted that the fact that two projects funded by SDC attended to career counselling caused some confusion (e.g., regarding approaches,

	responsibilities, reporting) among some of the stakeholders who were interviewed at the time.
	Based on information in project related documents, the projects sought to make use of lessons that emerged during implementation. An example being that the VSD project built on achievements of the VET/YEPP project by continuing its interventions related to career counsellors and labour market information system (LMIS) and in initiating new activities in the field of employment support.
Results	The contributing projects produced results at macro-, meso- and micro-levels as described below.
	• At the **macro-level,** key results were the adoption of the "Youth Employment and Start-up Promotion Program" (2018) as well as amendments to the TVET Law. In 2018, the National University of Mongolia established a two-year interdisciplinary Master of Science degree programme and its distance learning programme for career counselling professionals.
	• At **meso-level,** VET/YEPP established YES Desks in all aimags, providing career guidance and job placement services to unemployed young people. Counsellors and specialists working for the YES Desks were trained and able to strengthen their theoretical and practical knowledge, leading to improved employment services for youth. Under the VSD project, 22 career guidance desks were established at TVET schools and labour departments. It trained about 170 career guidance counsellors to give career guidance services to young people and job seekers. About 80 persons enrolled in the MSc Career Counselling course, of which 51 completed the programme as of November 2022.
	Relevant documents reveal that the following (micro) **effects** have been made by the contributing projects:
	• The career guidance services promoted by the VSD project empowered young people to take informed decisions regarding their career paths. According to data available from the project, the new TVET and career guidance offers were readily sought after. A survey in 2020 among youth showed that about 95% were very satisfied.
	• Under the VET/YEPP project, more than 26,000 youth were using the YES Desks services (of which about 65% were women), and close to 3,100 youth were placed into jobs as of end 2021.
	• As part of the final outcome evaluation of VET/YEPP project, the evaluation team from orange & teal assessed data from the Mongolian Statistical Information Services to assess whether there is an observable effect of the introduction of the YES Desks on youth unemployment. The statistical analysis provided some promising results, namely that youth unemployment has decreased relative to total unemployment with the introduction of YES Desks.[13]
	• Access to career guidance and job search services is enhanced by online platforms and mobile applications that make these services more broadly available throughout the country.
	• Young people have improved job search and application skills (e.g., CV writing, email writing, interview skills) and knowledge about job opportunities.
	• Networks and linkages of project participants and alumni for employment were strengthened.
Sustainability	A sustainability strategy applied by both projects was to facilitate a legal basis for career counselling and matching services, tying the services to an

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[13] The analysis also produced some puzzling results, regarding the youth unemployment rate itself, and raised questions in regard to who benefits most, and why.

	established funding mechanism, as well as strengthening ownership, commitment and capacity of relevant stakeholders.
	In November 2022, the interviewees reported that the work of the YES Desks continues to be financed by the employment promotion fund of the Mongolian government. Funding of the running costs of the YES Desks is secured (at least in the mid-term) through a budget support by the European Union. Furthermore, they reported that the career counselling activities that were instituted in the TVET schools which were supported by the VSD project continued to be offered – reportedly also because the career counselling is used by the TVET schools to market themselves. The activities include a 'Girls Day' with a view to improving inclusion and by extension image of TVET.
	The MSc Career Counselling (now in the fifth iteration) continues to be offered, yet enrolment dropped considerably from 2018 to 2022 – from 30 students in the first two iterations to 3 students presently. The drop is explained by the fact that no more scholarships are provided to interested students and that the degree itself does not alter job prospects, since there are no formal requirements needed to become a career counsellor in public employment offices.
Lessons learned	Based on project documents, the following learnings have emerged from the projects:
	• Technology plays an important role in facilitating broad and sustainable access of beneficiaries to career counselling and employment services, especially in remote areas of Mongolia. Under the VET/YEPP project, for instance, technological solutions included the JOB mobile application and using video conferencing, streaming and group chats. Under the VSD project, the website www.mergejil.mn and mobile applications were used to provide matching services to young jobseekers looking for information on career choice, training opportunities and general labour market demand.
	• Ensuring inclusive services needs special focus and dedicated resources to improving accessibility and relevance of employment services for people with disabilities.
Sources	VSD ProDoc Phase 1/2; VET/YEPP ProDoc Phase 1/2/3; VSD 1 and 2 EPROR; YEPP Operational Reports Phase 2/3, VSD Evaluation report Phase 1, VET/YEPP Final Evaluation, VET/YEPP Mid-term review Phase 1, VET/YEPP Final Evaluation Phase 2 and 3. Interviews with B. Dippmar (GIZ), . Navchaa (GOLWS), B. Darisukhbaatar, O. Tsagaan, T. Tumenjargal (all MLSP), B. Dagva-Ochir (NUM).

3.6 Entrepreneurship and business growth

Narrative #6: Fostering entrepreneurship and small business growth	
Contributing projects	ESD Scholarships **SME** **VET/YEPP** VSD YDP
	Fostering entrepreneurship and contributing to job creation through small business growth has been the focus of the SME Development Project (SME) and one of several components of the Vocational Education and Training in Western Mongolia Project / Youth Employment Promotion Project (VET/YEPP), especially of Phases 2 and 3.
Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia	

	Country Strategy 2013-2017 Country Strategy 2018-2021 Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024 The results of the two projects contributed to the Country Strategy 2013-2017 and Country Strategy 2018-2021. While no specific outcomes or indicators were defined for either project in the 2013-2017 strategy, the VET/YEPP project entrepreneurship activities align with Outcome 3 (youth and adults obtain and apply skills for better employment) in the Country Strategy 2018-2021.
Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance on Education	Global and regional agenda · Education system governance · Quality and relevance · Inclusion and equity · Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience · **Transition to work** Both projects are aligned with the strategic orientation "Transition to work", with VET/YEPP focusing on the intervention line **"fostering entrepreneurship and support trainees to take advantage of (self-)employment opportunities"**. The SME Development project is no basic education or vocational education and training project per se, but it does align with the objective to improve transition to work, not least by focussing on industries / occupations with high demand and employment prospects for graduates. It thereby serves the intervention line "Aligning VSD with economic development or private-sector development initiatives and engagement with the Swiss and/or locally active private sector while focusing on sectors with job growth prospects and partnerships with private-sector actors for eased labour-market integration."
Issue at stake and relevance	SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, **SDG 5**, SDG 6, SDG 7, **SDG 8**, **SDG 9**, SDG 10, SDG 11, **SDG 12**, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, SDG 16, SDG 17 Small and medium-sized businesses (SME) provide almost 60% of all jobs in Mongolia's labour market. Supporting SME to become more productive, to enhance local production, and to make innovation more likely and effective, were seen as ways to diversify Mongolia's economy, decreasing its dependence on the natural resource sector, and to create attractive employment and income opportunities for women and men. While the VET/YEPP project focused on start-ups in the ideation and early growth stages, the SME Development project focused on SME in the maturity, transition, or succession stages in sectors such as textiles and garments (cashmere), health care (medical practices), education sector (private schools), tourism and hospitality industry.
Approach / modality	Macro-level intervention Meso-level intervention Micro-level intervention GFA Consulting Group, Germany, was mandated to implement the VET/YEPP project, closely collaborating with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and the General Office for Labour and Welfare Services (GOLWS). The SME Development Project was an earmarked contribution to a private sector initiative from Switzerland, implemented by the Business Professionals Network BPN, a foundation. Both projects aimed to foster entrepreneurship and to enhance the capacity to start and grow a business. The pathways of the two projects complemented each other in terms of delivery, target group, and geographical reach: • Delivery: The majority of the services of the SME Development project were provided by Swiss experts from BPN. The VET/YEPP project collaborated and capacitated Mongolian public, private, and non-governmental actors who provided the services. • Target group: BPN focused on small and medium-sized firms with established business entities, employing an average of 10 staff. VET/YEPP

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	focused on supporting start-ups and emerging young entrepreneurs. Its target group was young women and men (aged 15-34 years) who were unemployed.
	• Reach: The work of BPN concentrated on SME and business owners in Ulaanbaatar, while the VET/YEPP project and the youth start-up programme operated across Mongolia.
	Corresponding to these different pathways, the projects collaborated with a range of Mongolian actors: In the case of the SME Development project this included the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI), Ministry of Industry (MoI), Financial Regulatory Commission (FRC) and Mongolian Consulting Institute (MMCI). The VET/YEPP project partnered with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), the General Office for Labour and Welfare Services (GOLWS) and its subsidiaries at local level. Attending to current and prospective employers, both projects worked with the Mongolian Employers' Federation (MONEF).
	The VET/YEPP project intervened primarily at the macro- and meso-level, whereas the SME Development project focused on the meso- and micro-level, with business owners being the main beneficiaries:
	• At the **macro-level**, the VET/YEPP project provided advice regarding the "Youth Employment and Start-up Support Programme" (YESSP), the first legal framework to implement youth specific employment and start-up interventions in Mongolia.
	• At the **meso-level**, the VET/YEPP project supported the GOLWS, aimag and district public employment offices to provide start-up support (e.g., pitch events, entrepreneurship training, accelerator training, mentoring services) in cooperation with local Business Development Service Providers. The SME Development project on the other hand worked towards establishing a business owners' association in order to promote cooperation among entrepreneurs and to support self-reliant activities.
	• At the **micro-level**, the SME Development project provided tailored coaching and training to selected participants in all aspects related to entrepreneurship and the development of small businesses. These activities were co-funded by SDC. It also provided loans to a small number of companies (9 SME); the loans were solely under responsibility and funding of BPN.
Coherence	The overall objective of the contributing projects – fostering entrepreneurship and promoting SME as a means to diversify Mongolia's economy and to create jobs and (self-)employment opportunities – was in line with priorities of the Mongolian government. The Government Action Plan 2016-2016, for instance, set out the commitment to support young entrepreneurs (GAP item 3.4.10.).
	Whereas the Country Strategy 2013-2017 saw *"evident potential for synergies between the VET and SME projects",* there was no collaboration between the projects with which the potential of synergies could have been harnessed.
Results	Results of the contributing projects have been reported at macro-, meso- and micro-levels.
	• At the **macro-level,** following the approval of the YESSP in 2019, the MLSP started to implement the start-up support programme nationwide and issued guidelines to select start-up program service providers. In 2021, the National Employment Council passed a resolution to provide grants to selected start-ups, changing its previous practice of providing soft loans to enhance financial viability of the start-up. The YESSP is funded by the government's Employment Promotion Fund.
	• At the **meso-level,** under the VET/YEPP project so-called local Start-up Support Working Groups were established to steer and monitor the regional start-up / entrepreneurship activities. Public employment offices

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piloted start-up support for different stages of the business life cycle, by raising awareness, organising pitch events, offering mentoring and business acceleration services, and providing financial support. The two main NGO that were commissioned to manage the start-up services became more skilled in working with youth and local authorities in target regions. More than 150 start-up mentors from local Business Development Service Providers were trained in order to facilitate provision of start-up support to youth. In addition, VET/YEPP created an online platform (www.startupbase.mn) to connect stakeholders in the start-up field, and to energise the entrepreneurship ecosystem. BPN supported a network of entrepreneurs who participated in the SME Development project; the long-term ambition of the so-called 'Business Owners' Association is to give the network partners a voice in policy dialogue.

- At the **micro-level,** under the VET/YEPP project, close to 1,500 young entrepreneurs benefited from start-up boot camps in the targeted *aimags*, acquiring theoretical knowledge and practical skills to develop their start-ups. Under the SME Development project, 102 entrepreneurs received coaching (e.g., on-site visits, meetings) and training (e.g., seminars and workshops on business management, marketing, finances and leadership). It offered loans averaging CHF 8'800 to nine SME, of which 89% were fully repaid.

The two projects produced the following **effects**:

- The SME Development project reported that firms that it supported created close to 1'200 jobs.
- Young people acquired skills and decided to run their own start-up businesses. The businesses are active in a range of services and industries, including agriculture, IT, dairy and food, and cosmetics. To what extent these start-ups have "growth potential" cannot be established.
- The VET/YEPP project reported that business capacities and employability of young entrepreneurs have improved. Since 2016 more than 600 youth received start-up support as part of the government's programmes and financed via the Employment Promotion Fund. According to project data as of December 2019, 95% of the 26 start-ups that received financial support from the project were running their business without loss and gain some profit and more than half were formally registered as a business entity. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions, however, several of the businesses closed meanwhile.
- The VET/YEPP project reported that start-up ecosystems emerged at local level as a result of increased engagement of public, private, and non-governmental actors to respond to youth unemployment.
- With regard to effectiveness from the perspective of the business owners and youth entrepreneurs, satisfaction surveys suggest that both target groups were highly satisfied, suggesting that their needs were met.

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<td>Sustainability</td>
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The following efforts have contributed to ensuring sustainability of the results of the contributing projects:

- The YESSP is integrated in Mongolia's legal framework, and resourced via the bi-annual Employment Promotion Fund. By 2022 the YESSP continues to be in operation. Interviewee observations suggest that the NGO that are commissioned to run YESSP activities were able to overall maintain the quality of the start-up support services compared to the time when the VET/YEPP project was active. Decreased government funding, however, had effects on the scale of the support services, though no data is reportedly available to quantify the difference.
- The Business Professionals Network BPN continues to be active in Mongolia independent of SDC financing, providing regular training, coaching, and advisory services to client SME. It provides loans only to

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	clients SME through the Khan Bank, one of the biggest commercial banks in Mongolia. It uses its own resources of the BPN foundation to carry out the work and has the intention to remain active as long as there is sufficient demand for its services.
	• In terms of sustainability, it is worth to note that SDC argued in the end of phase report that "the Swiss-centred approach of SME coaching did not result in building in-country capacities for the coaching of SMEs". Following this critique BPN changed its delivery model and now employs nine Mongolian coaches and trainers, most of them former business owners.
Lessons learned	Based on the evaluation reports and other project documents as well as the interviews, the following learnings emerge: • Engaging with the Swiss private sector (in the context of the SME Development project represented by BPN) has the potential to create networks and structures that can provide support services beyond official development assistance. • Applying stringent criteria when selecting direct beneficiaries enhanced the outcomes of the SME Development project activities by minimising dropouts and ensuring efficient learning. The project applied nine 'knock-out' criteria and additional eight criteria for trade-related firms. Conversely, focusing on 'higher performing firms' carries the risk that assistance has little additionality. • Providing loans to SME is regulated by specific legal provisions and requires a financial / regulatory permission; receiving the latter requires sound administration and ex-ante planning. • Building a start-up / entrepreneurship eco-system requires a coordinated approach, involving a wide range of system players, and conducive legal and funding frameworks. • Entrepreneurial skills development ideally starts from early stages of education and vocational training.
Sources	Evaluation Report YEPP II and III, GFA Final Operations Report YEPP II. Interviews with M. Epper and O. Erdenesuren (both BPN).

4 Reflection

This chapter contains a synthesis of each of the elements in the thematic narratives, providing an overview across SDC's BVET portfolio, as well as a discussion on the replicability of the projects that were implemented and the results that were achieved in Mongolia in other contexts.

4.1 Synthesis

Link to SDC's Country Strategies for Mongolia

Country Strategy 2013-2017	Country Strategy 2018-2021	Country Phase-out Programme 2022-2024

Together, the six narratives contributed to all three country strategies / programmes. Looking at the thematic narratives separately, there are four which contributed to all three periods, with differing degrees: Life Skills Education (#1), Relevance and quality of VSD (#2), Access to higher education (#3), and Education for Sustainable Development (#4). Conversely, interventions strengthening career counselling and job matching (#5) as well as entrepreneurship and business growth (#6) concluded in 2021.

Link to SDC's Thematic Guidance

Global and regional agenda	Education system governance	Quality and relevance	Inclusion and equity	Sustainability, cohesion, and resilience	Transition to work

SDC's Thematic Guidance for Basic Education and Vocational Skills Development contains six possible intervention areas. It should be emphasised that it is not the intention of the guideline to suggest that all intervention areas need to be addressed in a partner country; instead, the guidance indicates the areas where interventions can take place. All elements of SDC's BVET portfolio can be mapped to the six intervention areas – while some are very typical BVET projects, others could also be understood as Private Sector Development projects (foremost, the SME project). Together, the six thematic narratives strongly address four of the areas. In addition, there were some inputs into "education system governance".[14]

Issue at stake and relevance

SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
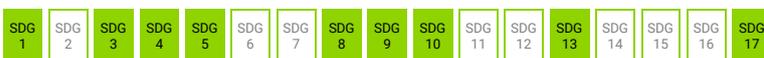
Given the thematic focus of the BVET portfolio, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) feature strong among the thematic narratives. There are just as many thematic narratives which link to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), however. In addition, there are linkages to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) in each of the narratives, given that this is a transversal theme in SDC's development assistance. SDC qualified two of the projects with the gender policy marker 'significant', meaning

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[14] In SDC's Thematic Guidance, Education System Governance covers four lines of intervention, 1. Contributing to the definition of inclusive policies and quality measures, 2. Supporting institutional capacities, 3. Enhancing private-sector involvement, 4. Enhancing civic participation. Elements of these can be found in each of the six narratives.

that gender equality is an important and deliberate objective of the project.[15] SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals) feature in the narratives too.

Approach / modality

Macro-level intervention	Meso-level intervention	Micro-level intervention

Typically, the projects featured in the thematic narratives were working on all three levels – macro, meso, micro. The exceptions to this are Access to Higher Education (#3) that focused directly on the micro-level, with some activities on the meso-level, as well as Career counselling and job matching (#5) with a focus on macro and meso-level only. It should be noted that the discussion here focuses on the approach and modality, not the results – all interventions aspire to ultimately improve people's lives (i.e., on the micro-level).

Coherence

Three dimensions of coherence are discussed in the thematic narratives which can be summarised as follows:

- Alignment with the priorities and strategies of national stakeholders, be they public sector, private sector or civil society: Based on the evaluation reports and the feedback from the interviewees, alignment was high in all projects, and by extension the thematic narratives. An important factor guaranteeing this alignment were the various partnerships with Mongolian stakeholders as outlined in section 2.1.

- Coherence with interventions of other donors: In the VSD project, which contributed to thematic narratives Increasing labour-market relevance and quality of VSD (#2) and Expanding access to career counselling and matching services (#5), SDC collaborated directly with the DFAT (Australia) and the BMZ (Germany). SDC had also an active role in the VETP which was expressly established to coordinate among donors with a view to ensure coherence and reap synergies. Notwithstanding, except for some examples from the VET/YEPP and YDP projects, there is otherwise little systematic information how synergies were leveraged.

- Coherence with other SDC interventions, specifically those in the BVET domain: Similar to the collaboration with other donors, there are selected examples how information was shared, or linkages were forged, between YDP and VET/YEPP, and between VSD and VET/YEPP projects. Without further research beyond the remit of this meta-analysis, it is not possible to tell whether synergies were explored and leveraged to a sufficient degree or not.

Results

In accordance with the approaches / modalities discussed above, the projects reported results on the macro-, meso-, and micro-level:

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[15] These are the projects VET/YEPP Phase 3 and the ESD Phase 3.

- At macro-level: the interventions contributed significantly to the development and/or amendment of several legal and policy frameworks to improve relevance and quality of VSD, promote youth development and start-up support, enhance career counselling and matching services, and integrate life-skills education and ESD. They led to the amendment of school curricula in terms of life-skills education and ESD, and the implementation of the start-up support programme nationwide. Inter-governmental synergies and collaboration were also strengthened as the result.

- At meso-level: A wide range of institutions and mechanisms were supported in all thematic areas. This includes the setting up of Youth Development Centres, of private sectors advisory boards in VET schools, or of YES Desks. The interventions also enhanced capacity of national, regional, and local institutions and stakeholders, ranging from TVET institutions (RMC, CDC, schools) and their staff and teachers, to employment services with their career counsellors, as well as social workers and start-up support professionals.

- At micro-level: A significant number of youths nationwide benefited directly, ranging from some 680 students who received scholarships to more than 113,000 youth who benefitted from YDP activities. The range of the numbers of the beneficiaries must thereby be seen in light of the services provided and the focus of the intervention. Other key highlights include (also see section 2.3) that more than 40'000 youth received career counselling and job matching support; more than 8'000 young entrepreneurs benefited from start-up support, and close to 50'000 students and their families benefited from ESD projects. In most narratives, young people were observed to improve their awareness, self-esteem, skills associated with innovation and creativity, as well as other soft skills and knowledge which in turns enhance their employability and resilience.

Sustainability

There are three dimensions of sustainability discussed in the thematic narratives:

- Conducive regulatory environment: Laws and policies were developed or amended in five of the six thematic narratives. They provide the basis for sustainability of the project results and the continuation of the results in the thematic narratives.

- Ownership and capacity of established institutions/mechanisms: In all narratives, the (newly established) institutions and individuals who engaged in the projects were capacitated to continue the work and develop their ownership over the models, processes, and mechanisms that resulted from the projects. However, the extent to which the institutions are capable to sustain the capacity through continuous training as well as to adapt and innovate the models, processes, and mechanisms hinges on the availability of resources.

- Financial capacity: While Life Skills Education (#1) and YES Desks (#5) successfully secured government support and private sector resources (such as the sponsorship of YDC by the Oyu Tolgoi mining company), in other cases this is where the challenge for sustainability arises. It seems that within these narratives, national stakeholders still managed to secure other financial support, either from the government or other donors to cover part of the interventions.

Lessons learned

Building on the specific learnings discussed in each of the thematic narratives, there are some common topics in terms of lessons learned: On the one hand, that sustainability and ownership is linked to continued commitment of national and regional governments, which can be fostered through setting-up a project management unit led by relevant national stakeholders and by strengthening informed decision making by providing evidence and data. On the other hand, that engagement with right stakeholders is essential for the success of the implementation and sustainability. In this context, four generalised learnings can be formulated, acknowledging that these are common ones that emerged from other development projects too.

- Cooperation with the private sector in vocational skills reform and delivery at every level is essential to ensure quality and relevance of TVET (examples in this regard are the VET/YEPP and VSD projects which engaged with the national employer's association in terms of policy reform and setting up advisory boards in VET schools)
- Engaging with the Swiss private sectors has the potential to create networks and structures that can provide support services beyond official development assistance (example is the SME project and the BPN Foundation that continues delivering coaching and advisory support in Mongolia)
- Leveraging private sector resources contributes to overcome funding constraints by the government (examples are the YDP project that received funding from Oyu Tolgoi or the VSD project with funding from companies such as Festo and MTS Germany)
- Student's participation in community development projects proved effective in raising awareness about community challenges (Scholarship project)

4.2 Replicability

Replicability is commonly understood as the quality of being able to be exactly copied or reproduced. Elements which could be replicated relate, on the one hand, to the *content* of the interventions; essential and indispensable components of a project such as the direct services provided to a target group such as the YES Desks from the Entrepreneurship and business growth narrative (#6). On the other hand, elements related to *processes*, such as existing demand for the intervention and/or regulatory framework to implement the project as well as adequate administrative and management structures, could also be replicated.

Replication of development assistance projects is challenging, since it usually takes more than just inserting project ideas, practices, and solutions into a different context. Instead, it often involves being aware of the particular conditions or characteristics of the context and adapting the intervention correspondingly. Against this background it seems better suited to think of replicability as the possibility of reproducing key aspects of an intervention – adapted to a given context – than an exercise of copy-paste.

Some key steps that can be taken to enhance the chances of successful replication include conducting thorough research and assessments to understand the local context, including the needs and priorities of the community or target population; building strong partnerships with (local) stakeholders, as they can provide valuable insights and support for the implementation of the intervention; being flexible and adaptable in the design and implementation; as well as

capacity building of (local) stakeholders who are responsible to implement and/or sustain the intervention.

The interventions that SDC implemented in the BVET portfolio derived from and aligned with SDC's strategic and organisational priorities: youth and their transition from education to work are central tenets of SDC's development work. There are indeed many examples in which SDC has proven replicability of the themes and approaches covered in the BVET portfolio – the RISI project in Albania that tends to career guidance intermediation or the MarketMakers project in Bosnia and Herzegovina that seeks to support youth employment through entrepreneurship are just two of many such examples. In principle, it should thus conversely also be possible to replicate the results that were achieved in Mongolia in other SDC partner countries and contexts.

This is particularly the case for projects that were a success both in terms of effectiveness and sustainability and that are relevant to address development challenges elsewhere too. In Mongolia, this includes innovative solutions, *[Note: in final version, insert the elements selected for the deep dives]*. These elements are discussed in a separate set of case studies ("deep dives") developed in the context of this experience capitalisation.

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Annex 1: Interviewees

Table 5: Interviewees

Project	Name and role
Scholarship	Ms. Baljinnyam Baja, Project Manager, Zorig Foundation
	Ms. Tsolmon Bayaraa, Executive Director, Zorig Foundation
	Ms. Buyanjargal Natsagdorj, Project Manager, Zorig Foundation
VET/YEPP	Ms. Altansuvd Navchaa, Head of Section of sending workforce to abroad, MLSP
	Ms. Otgonmyagmar Tsagaan, TVET Department
	Mr. Bilguudei Darisukhbaatar, Head of Employment Training Department
YDP	Ms. Unuruu Enkhtaivan, Programme Manager, UNFPA
	Ms. Battuya Khurlee, Programme Manager, UNFPA
	Ms. Bayarmaa Narantuya, Head of Division in the Population Department, MLSP
	Ms. Uyanga Zalaa-Uul, former Programme Manager, UNFPA
VSD	Ms. Bumdari Dagva-Ochir, National University of Mongolia
	Ms. Beate Dippmar, Regional Director, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
	Ms. Altansuvd Navchaa, Head of Section of sending workforce to abroad, MLSP
	Ms. Tungalung Chimid, Director, VETP
SME	Mr. Markus Epper, Country Director Mongolia, BPN Foundation
	Ms. Erdenesuren O, Programme Coordinator Mongolia, BPN Foundation
ESD	Mr. Nyam-Ochir Tumur-Ochir, Head of General Agency of Education, MECS
	Ms. Shinetsetseg Erdenebayar, Director, Information and Training Centre for Nature and Environment
	Mr. Turbadrakh Tumenjargal, Ministry of Environment and Tourism
	Mr. Itgel Miyejav, Director of the National Institute for Education Research
	Mr. Lkhagvasuren Purev, former Head, National Institute for Education Research
	Ms. Zayasaikhan Dugeree, Senior National Programme Officer, SDC

Annex 2: Portfolio overview

The data in the tables stem from project documents as well as SDC's project database.[16]

Scholarships Programme in Mongolia

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Scholarships Programme in Mongolia	Phase 2-4	Education	Zorig Foundation	10.2014 - 05.2018	200'000
Note: outcomes below only refer to Phase 3.					
Outcome 1: 200 male and female talented students improve their employability by receiving scholarships for demand-oriented higher education.					
Outcome 2: Through participation in community development projects, students contribute to social development in urban and rural areas.					

Vocational Education and Training in Western Mongolia Project / Youth Employment Promotion Project

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Youth Employment Promotion Project	Phase 3	Vocational education	GFA Germany	01.2019 - 06.2021	1'980'000
Outcome 1: National laws and regulations are more conducive for youth employment.					
Outcome 2: Youth Employment Support Services (YESS) are integrated in the local public employment services and YESD are scaled up under the leadership of the MLSP					
Outcome 3: The national start up support programme is strengthened through capacity-building and the integration of lessons learned from the project.					

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Youth Employment Promotion Project	Phase 2	Vocational education	GFA Germany	01.2016 - 12.2018	2'400'000
Outcome 1: National policies and programmes are conducive for youth employment.					
Outcome 2: Effective employment support services are provided to young people.					
Outcome 3: Young people operate innovative start-ups with growth potential.					

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Vocational Education and Training in Western	Phase 1	Vocational education	GFA Germany	01.2011 - 12.2015	4'460'000

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[16] https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/projekte/projekte.html

Mongolia Project					

Outcome 1: The attitude towards VET has positively changed in the six western aimags.

Outcome 2 – The Regional Methodological Centre (RMC) in Zavkhan aimag is capable of being a decentralised office of ATVET, implementing policies and providing services to six VET schools in the region.

Outcome 3 – VET schools in six western aimags provide demand-driven training in selected occupations.

Youth Development Programme

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Youth Development Programme	YDP	Vocational education	UNFPA	04.2013 - 06.2018	4'750'000

Outcome 1: Increased availability of life-skills education for young men and women in target areas/institutions

Outcome 2: Gender based violence (GBV) prevention model institutionalized and capacity of educational staff built to reduce GBV and foster positive relations between students

Outcome 3: Improved and expanded provision of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in target areas

Outcome 4: Policies, behaviour change communications (BCC) and advocacy in place to address youth issues

Vocational Skills Development Project

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Vocational Skills Development	Phase 2	Vocational education	GIZ	03.2016 - 02.2019	5'370'000

Mongolian youth and adults make better use of employment opportunities on the labour market in the mineral resource sector, including up- and downstream industries.

Output 1: Vocational education and further training is better aligned with the needs of the labour market;

Output 2: Vocational orientation and vocational counselling services are improved.

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Vocational Skills Development	Phase 1	Vocational education	GIZ	03.2016 - 02.2019	4'630'000

Target groups (m/f) make use of short-term skills training courses which enhance their marketable skills;

Target groups (m/f) make use of improved career guidance services based on labour market needs and individual capabilities

SME Development Project

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
SME Development Project	SME	Employment & economic development	BPN Foundation	02.2012 - 01.2017	1'405'000

To support in a structured and demand-oriented manner highly competitive SMEs - managed by both women and men - in all aspects of successful and ethically high-standard business activity.

Note "expected results":

1. Supported companies owned and managed by both women and men increase their business turnover, employ more staff and generate income.

2. Supported companies succeed in niche markets and contribute to a "brand" for Mongolia.

3. Supported companies organize themselves and become and influence the SME sector

Education for Sustainable Development in Mongolia

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Education for Sustainable Development	Phase 2	Education	GIZ	06.2019 - 12.2023	2'600'000

The necessary competences are embedded within the Mongolian education system, both at central level, among policy and decision-makers, and at local level, among teachers, practitioners and local authorities, to ensure a sustainable application of ESD.

Note "expected results":

Targeted trainings and on-the-job trainings are organised to deepen the knowledge of ESD at macro, meso and micro levels.

Quality resources and practical tools for ESD application are available to teachers and other practitioners.

ESD model schools are identified and supported to further integrate ESD effectively in education and school management, as well as in school-community initiatives

Title	Phase	SDC sector	Implementer	Duration	Budget
Education for Sustainable Development	Phase 1	Education	GIZ (Uppsala, Ministry of Education, ITCNE)	12.2013 - 12.2018	8'460'000

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is integrated in the Mongolian school system and a framework (institutional, legal, and organizational) for sustainable development (SD) and green development (GD) is in place.

Note "expected results":

ESD is integrated and adjusted in the curriculum of all the 628 schools (1-12 grade).

Awareness among leaders and the people (adults, youth, parents, community, and organizations) on ESD/SD/GD is increased and selected companies and organizations are certified according to ISO 14001.