



EVALUATION 2007/1

# SDC'S PERFORMANCE TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS FROM THE RECIPIENTS' PERSPECTIVE



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC



# **Independent Evaluation of**

## **SDC's Performance towards Empowerment of Stakeholders from the Recipients' Perspective**

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

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**Bern, February 2007**

## Independent Evaluation Process

Independent Evaluations were introduced in SDC in 2002 with the aim of providing a more critical and independent assessment of SDC activities. Joint SDC/seco programs are evaluated jointly. Independent Evaluations are conducted according to DAC Evaluation Standards and are part of SDC's concept for implementing Article 170 of the Swiss Constitution which requires Swiss Federal Offices to analyse the effectiveness of their activities. SDC's **Comité Stratégique (COSTRA)**, which consists of the Director General, the Deputy Director General and the heads of SDC's six departments, approves the Evaluation Program. The **Evaluation + Controlling Division (E+C Division)**, which is outside of line management and reports directly to the Office of the Director General, commissions the evaluation, taking care to recruit evaluators with a critical distance from SDC.

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

The CLP also discusses the evaluation results and recommendations. In an **Agreement at Completion Point (ACP)** it takes a stand with regard to the evaluation recommendations indicating whether it agrees or disagrees and, if appropriate, indicates follow-up intentions. In a COSTRA meeting, SDC's Senior Management discusses the evaluation findings. In a **Senior Management Response**, it expresses its opinion and final decisions for SDC. The Stand of the CLP and the Senior Management Response are published with the Final Evaluators' Report. The Senior Management Response forms the basis for future rendering of accountability.

For further details regarding the evaluation process see the Approach Paper in the Annex.

### Timetable

Step	When
Evaluation Programme approved by COSTRA	February 2006
Approach Paper finalized	May 2006
Implementation of the evaluation	June to November 2006
Agreement at Completion Point	December 2006
Senior Management Response in COSTRA (SDC)	February 2007

# I Evaluation Abstract

DONOR	SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
REPORT TITLE	Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance towards Empowerment of Stakeholders from the Recipients' Perspective
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SECTOR	11230; 15001; 15010; 15050; 15063; 42001; 95201
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EVALUATION TYPE	2.6; 3.2
STATUS	C
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## Subject Description

The main objectives of this evaluation were to

- assess SDC's performance in empowerment of communities by examining SDC's interactions with implementation partners and, in turn, their interactions with the communities,
- appraise SDC's approaches to building on capacities and sensibilities of implementation partners' organisations to be responsive to community needs and priorities,
- initiate an institutional learning process within SDC on how to consistently include the stakeholder perspective in its activities.

SDC selected Bolivia and Burkina Faso as country case studies illustrative of significant empowerment strategies of SDC.

## Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was designed as an exploration of SDC's institutional ecology and its inter-institutional exchanges. The first step was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development in available documentation and through interviews with program staff in the Headquarters (HQ) and SDC Country Offices (COOFs). The next step was to obtain stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the donor-recipient relationship.

Data collection, which took place between June and August 2006, included review of documents, semi-structured interviews with SDC staff and partner organization staff and extensive participatory exercises with beneficiary communities in Bolivia and Burkina Faso.

## Major Findings

The evaluation team found ample evidence that the recipient communities in the two case study countries are experiencing empowering changes in their lives. This was reflected in their expression of enhanced abilities, evolving needs and priorities, and attempts to negotiate changes in various aspects they deem important. The communities attributed many of the positive changes to SDC funded programs. They mentioned capacity building, community organization, opportunities for women, building on local ethos and tradition and involving the community in the design and monitoring of programs as some of the factors contributing to their empowerment. They also had the openness to be self-critical and take

responsibility for some of the disempowering changes like the deterioration of natural resources in their area.

It was evident that the various SDC programs have been instrumental in building peoples' confidence and ability to make good use of support provided by any appropriate external agency. Although working with relatively modest funds, SDC and its partners have thus made a substantial human investment towards creating "development-ready" communities. In the evaluation team's judgment, this qualitative outcome is more difficult to achieve than building infrastructure and distributing inputs.

The evaluation team examined empowerment initiatives of SDC and its partners as a means towards poverty reduction, the overarching goal of Swiss cooperation. Seen from this perspective, the team felt that "development readiness" is a necessary but not sufficient condition for communities to take charge of their own development. In addition they require the technological and material inputs to convert their newfound enthusiasm and hopes into visible signs of prosperity and well being. The evaluation team found that SDC's core strengths lie in mobilizing, organizing and developing capacities of communities to envision their own roadmaps to development. SDC need not and cannot support each and every need of the community. However, the team found that SDC would have the competence and credibility to mobilize the support of a wide range of actors and could help communities to seek partnerships with other development actors.

Therefore, the team recommends that SDC should act as an underwriter to help communities and community-based organisations to forge alliances with other donors. This would ensure funding for activities beyond SDC's priorities. Thus SDC could leverage its core competencies and create wider impact. The evaluation team feels that other donors, especially those focused on specific domains, like health or watershed, will find "development ready" communities a fertile ground for their inputs. SDC HQ as well as COOFs need to formally integrate this approach into SDC country strategies and develop proactive alliances at the national and international level towards such a multi-faceted approach to poverty reduction. SDC could pilot such an effort in a few countries in the near future.

Such an approach would require a wider participation of the communities. The evaluation team observed that the prevalent participatory approaches to program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the COOFs have made a distinctive impact on community empowerment. In order to enhance this further, the team suggests:

- helping the selected communities to periodically envision their development priorities and master plan by undertaking participatory comprehensive need assessment exercises rather than restricting such needs assessment to the areas of direct assistance from SDC as is presently done.
- building these inputs in the formulation of SDC country strategies in addition to the existing process of multi-stakeholder consultation.

SDC appropriately concentrates on underdeveloped regions, but apart from gender equity, it does not probe into other issues of substantive equity within these regions and within communities. By focusing on interventions which benefit the community as a whole and viewing the community as homogenous, the most marginalized are made to compete with others on unequal terms. Features in SDC programs such as mandatory front-ended beneficiary contributions have resulted in the exclusion of the poorest and unintentionally they have been further marginalized.

Wherever applicable, SDC needs to consider making appropriate changes to its existing program design so as to initiate affirmative action towards the people suffering from abject

poverty. More concerted efforts towards this end will help SDC to reiterate its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) while steering its empowerment efforts towards its goal of poverty reduction. Since SDC is committed to the MDGs, the evaluation team suggests that the COOFs must apply the MDG definition of abject poverty as the first level parameter to identify the poor. Wherever formal data is not available the community itself could be involved in defining contextually relevant and measurable parameters to identify the poorer among the poor.

As SDC does not work directly with the community, facilitating and enabling its partners to empower the beneficiary communities in recipient countries are significant interventions. In both the case study countries, the evaluation team came across SDC's exemplary contribution to development in the form of sensitive, proficient and effective partners, particularly civil society organizations. These partners were seen not only as helping the beneficiary communities in design and implementation of various programs, but also as furthering development processes in the respective countries.

In order to suitably assist their efforts, SDC HQ and COOFs could play a role similar to that of a 'venture capitalist' to build on field-tested partnership development models. A guideline for various stages of engagements with partners from identification and nurturing potential ideas to institutional support, assisting them in exploring partnerships with other donors and becoming a resource agency for other donor supported programs and evaluations need to be evolved. As a pre-requisite, SDC should formally acknowledge partnership development as an intended result of its involvement in recipient countries.

SDC is increasingly making efforts to work with recipient governments, who perform two broad roles: that of policy maker and of implementer. As far as policy making is concerned, SDC has had several positive experiences. COOFs have been able to influence policy-making especially in sectors where SDC had extensive knowledge of field conditions and demonstrated impact. Governments have responded positively to such initiatives by committing themselves to countrywide replications. On the other hand, the evaluation team found that when COOFs relied on government for program implementation, recipient communities reported inefficiency, apathy and a lack of vision.

SDC has demonstrated innovation in creating effective multi-stakeholder fora for consensus building in specialized areas. For example, FONAEF (Fonds national pour l'alphabétisation et l'éducation non formelle) in Burkina Faso is an innovative funding and institutional arrangement for scaling up non-formal education programs. FONAEF is illustrative of how SDC can succeed in influencing grassroots level as well as policy level changes in a specific sector. FONAEF has acquired the legitimacy and funding but not the bureaucratic apathy and inefficiencies of government. It has also been able to harmonize the funds and programs of other donor organizations. These programs have been conceptualized and implemented by local Citizens Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs. Such a funding arrangement needs to be encouraged because of its effectiveness in furthering the agenda relevant to the empowerment of marginalized groups.

### **Lessons Learned**

SDC's Senior Management has agreed that SDC needs to:

- Establish a better shared understanding of empowerment within SDC.
- Better enable partners to give appropriate support to communities.
- Ensure that Project Cycle Management practice and cooperation strategy design better reflect stakeholder perspectives.
- Make a special effort to ensure that the most marginalized members of communities are not left behind.

- Reflect on the extent to which SDC should act as an underwriter/broker for communities and should place more emphasis on systematic up-scaling, leveraging and alliance building in its Cooperation Strategies and projects.
- Recognize partner development as a key result area for SDC.
- Strengthen knowledge sharing with regard to what works in empowerment (e.g. learning from and propagating successful innovations such as FONAENF).



## **II Agreement at Completion Point Stand of the Core Learning Partnership and of Senior Management regarding Main Recommendations**

### **A Overall appreciations**

#### **Stand of the CLP**

The Core Learning Partnership (CLP) welcomes that the evaluation was commissioned to a team from the South. This created the opportunity to evaluate programme and project results from a perspective closer to the needs and priorities of the recipients. The CLP underlines that - generally speaking - such a change of perspective is not done sufficiently and should definitely be promoted in SDC-evaluations. The evaluation team showed great commitment and empathy in its fieldwork and the interviews at Headquarters. The CLP appreciated the "fresh perspective" of the evaluation methodology and process which provided room for relevant discussions and institutional learning on development paradigms during the CLP meetings. The CLP welcomes the fact that the report is written in a language which is not overloaded with development jargon.

By starting from the recipients' perspective, the evaluation methodology has particularly emphasized community-based poverty reduction / empowerment. From the CLP perspective, this approach resulted in the evaluation inadequately considering and addressing good governance aspects. For example, the notion of "state-building at local level" and the opportunities and comparative advantages SDC has in this area were not sufficiently examined. SDC needs to work with Governments at all levels of the State.

The focus on "community empowerment" in the evaluation is too narrow in the sense that it does not consider empowerment as a key factor for governance. Strengthening the capabilities of the poor is crucial, but strengthening the capacities of the State to respond to the needs of the poor is of even more importance to alleviate poverty. Furthermore, new tools for empowerment (e.g. in policy dialogue) have to be developed if donor agencies are to systematically implement the Paris Agenda.

#### **Senior Management Response**

Senior Management welcomes the double Southern perspective of the evaluation (i.e., community perspective and team from the South) and very much appreciates the interesting insights of the evaluation team. In general, it sees its views reflected in the stand of the CLP to the recommendations. The Social Development and the Knowledge Management Divisions are mandated with conducting the follow-up process for implementing the Agreement at Completion Point.

## **B Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1: Establish a shared understanding of empowerment as a means to achieve poverty reduction.**

### **Link empowerment (as a means) and poverty reduction (as a goal)**

SDC's 'nurturing' ways have undoubtedly initiated empowering processes in the recipient communities, however if empowerment is formally treated as strategy for poverty reduction, SDC can be more effective and efficient in alleviating poverty, its overarching goal. This clarity can resolve many issues, for example, whose empowerment, contextually relevant empowering issues, empowerment vis-à-vis which institutions – state, markets, religion or kinship? This will propel SDC to work towards bridging the gap between “development readiness” and development.

Owing to plurality as a culture, currently there are several views about what and how SDC can contribute to recipient community empowerment; the evaluation team suggests that the Headquarters (HQ) should dedicate a time bound (a year or so) long process to come up with widely shared understanding on SDC's role. Such a process will have to be based on the ground level experiences, as excessive uses of normative or model based approaches are found constraining by the country level field functionaries.

To achieve this, SDC should convene an experience-sharing workshop of Country Office (COOF) directors along with key COOF staff on the theme of empowerment for poverty reduction. Each of them could be expected to share case studies of effective empowering approaches. If the evaluation team has to generalise from the experiences of the two countries, it could be said that specific empowerment approaches and strategies could be context specific, but SDC's roles and norms are generic.

### **Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees that SDC should make the link between empowerment and poverty reduction more explicit at the analytical level. SDC's poverty principles highlight that “Empowerment is an emancipation process in which the disadvantaged are empowered to exercise their rights, obtain access to resources, and participate actively in the process of shaping society and making decisions”.

The CLP is of the opinion that the evaluation recommendation to view empowerment as a strategy for poverty reduction is too narrow a view, because empowerment is more than a mere instrument for poverty reduction. In that empowerment transforms inequitable structures and gives marginalized groups access to policy dialogue, empowerment is also a goal in itself .

The CLP endorses the evaluation recommendation to share principles and experiences about the “what” and “how” of empowerment (promote cross-learning within SDC). Convening workshops is only one of many possible ways of doing this.

However, developing a uniform/normative understanding of empowerment and SDC's role in promoting empowerment would be too constraining. It is essential to allow for adapting to different contexts. SDC should keep its wealth of innovative ways of promoting empowerment processes.

### **SDC Senior Management Response**

SDC should establish a better shared understanding of empowerment. The Social Development and Knowledge Management Divisions are mandated to conduct an appropriate process.

**Recommendation 2: Set guidelines for partners to ensure that they appropriately align with community priorities and deal with societal inequalities.**

SDC does not directly work with the communities, SDC's role is primarily to assess and enable partner organisations to act as facilitators for empowerment. Since empowerment happens from within and is a continuous process, even the partners are not chasing a preset goal, but have to steer a catalytic process for empowerment.

To achieve this, SDC should develop non-negotiable guidelines in the design and implementation of programmes to ensure that all programs have an empowering influence. These guidelines will not be about what to do, but about how to give support for community empowerment. The guidelines should include strategies to deal with issues like inter group and intra-group power dynamics, checking alignment of thematic foci with the community priorities, etc. The above-mentioned workshop will also feed into designing of these guidelines.

**Stand of the CLP**

For SDC, working with partners is a key focus of the empowerment process, a fact that is reflected in most of the evaluation team's recommendations. SDC promotes committed and caring partners who are able to facilitate an empowerment process for all sectors of society.

Extensive experience exists in integrating the gender perspective in programmes and projects. This experience could serve as a model for SDC staff to learn how to ensure that partners' empowerment approaches are relevant.

Instead of guidelines, the CLP suggests formulating key questions to keep partners alert on inter and intra-group inequalities and power issues. There is a difference between "non-negotiable" guidelines and clear and transparent declarations of SDC's priorities and aims. The CLP recommends that SDC clearly and transparently state its priorities and aims to partners rather than develop and enforce 'non-negotiable' guidelines.

**SDC Senior Management Response**

SDC should reflect on how it can best enable partners to give appropriate support for community development in the sense of the recommendation but in a form appropriate to the SDC context.

**Recommendation 3: Periodically conduct comprehensive assessments of community needs and priorities and systematically engage communities in program design and PCM.**

**Enhance community participation in programme life cycle**

The recipient community perceives the very process of engaging in development as a major trigger for empowerment. Hence, SDC should ensure that the programme life cycle is devised not only 'for the people', but also 'by the people'.

To achieve this, efforts will be required at two levels, at SDC level and at partner organisation level. At SDC level, it can be done by organizing regional (Africa/ Latin America) workshops involving representatives of all stakeholders – particularly poorer sections of the community – to define what is empowering, and how it is helping address poverty and formulating country level strategies based on the recipient communities' agenda for change, in addition to input from other sources.

**Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees with the need to improve community participation in the programme cycle. The suggestion that SDC convene multi-stakeholder seminars is well taken, under the condition that local and national state representatives be included and that 'poorer sections' of communities be empowered to participate actively. As an additional enrichment, non-SDC partners could also be included.

Such seminars do not necessarily have to be held at the regional level. Depending on the context, sub-national or national seminars might be more appropriate and bring better results. Therefore the specific context needs to be taken into consideration when initiating this type of seminar (e.g. clarify whether similar initiatives have already been undertaken successfully, for example, in Latin America).

At partner organisation level, SDC should encourage periodical community envisioning to feed into programme planning, consultation with the communities to negotiate nature and duration of SDC support, designing monitoring system to capture empowerment (such as pictorial calendars, photo documentation, critical incidence analysis, diaries), and its impact on poverty. If the above processes are carried out in transparent and inclusive manner, system of downward accountability can also be established.

### **Stand of the CLP**

Integrating people's / communities' visions and aspirations into programmes requires more serious efforts on the part of SDC if it intends to wholeheartedly put people in the driver seat rather than treating them as beneficiaries. Project cycle management offers many opportunities to put this in practice. In addition, the CLP considers the review and the designing of cooperation strategies as other opportunities to systematically explore the views of the concerned on poverty impact. SDC should identify and share good practices with regard to monitoring poverty and empowerment.

### **SDC Senior Management Response**

SDC should ensure that its project cycle management practice and cooperation strategy design adequately reflect community perspectives.

### **Recommendation 4: Ensure that the poorest are not left behind.**

#### **Extend privileged treatment to people suffering from abject poverty:**

The evaluation team observed differential marginalisation in the recipient communities. In order to efficiently use resources, SDC needs to give privileged treatment to people suffering from abject poverty, because they also tend to be marginalised on other dimensions like access to education, health and social exclusion.

To achieve this, SDC should encourage partners to apply the MDG definition of abject poverty as the first level parameter to identify the poor. Wherever formal data is not available the community itself could be involved in defining contextually relevant and measurable parameters to identify the poorer among the poor. The programmes need to be redesigned to ensure that these 'poorer' participants get included on priority and receive preferential treatment vis-à-vis other participants. Concessions in contributions by making participant contribution back ended, of smaller instalments and in kind; phasing inputs over a longer period, as they can not absorb larger assistance as better offs can – could be some of the ways to give such preferential treatment. Such an approach would also help SDC demonstrate its commitment to MDGs.

### **Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees with the assessment that SDC has a rather undifferentiated view of communities (i.e., communities are seen as homogenous entities) and that a deeper, disaggregated analysis of recipient communities is absolutely necessary. SDC's undifferentiated view of communities can result in SDC programmes reinforcing discrimination / inequitable power structures or contributing to disempowerment of the poorest. A deep understanding of the marginalisation mechanisms within communities is a key factor for success. Therefore the CLP agrees that there is a need to build a shared understanding between SDC and its partners regarding how to deal with the social differentiation inside the communities. The principle of ensuring inclusion of the poor is not only crucial but also an ethical duty. Holistic and differentiated analysis is required to design inclusive

programmes which should follow do-no-harm principles. The CLP agrees that privileged treatment may be a way of making programmes inclusive, but designing a programme according to specific livelihoods objectives might be more appropriate.

The CLP agrees that the \$1.00 a day definition of poverty might be a primary criteria for the identification of the poor. However, as also mentioned by the evaluation team, a participatory assessment by the community provides a clearer picture for understanding who the poor are within a specific context.

The CLP is of the opinion that in addition to SDC's specific commitment to the MDGs, reference should also be made to the Millennium Declaration which addresses governance and inclusion which are crucial elements of all empowerment process.

### **SDC Senior Management Response**

SDC must make a special effort to ensure that the most marginalized members of the community are not left behind.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure comprehensive coverage of community priorities by converging programs in the same location. Act as an underwriter to assist communities in accessing additional resource from others.**

#### **Act like an underwriter to upscale and broad base successful field experiments**

Though it recognises poverty as a multi dimensional phenomenon, for maximising impact of limited resources, SDC has reduced the number of priority countries and thematic foci. In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of available resources, converging programmes in the same location and addressing the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty is crucial. This may be done by reducing in the number of project locations within a country, and facilitating convergence between programmes in selected locations.

#### **Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees that concentrating SDC's efforts in order to become more effective is relevant. However, the recommendation gives the impression that all aspects of poverty would have to be covered within a single programme. A holistic/multi-dimensional view does not imply that activities have to address all dimensions. However, a holistic understanding is a prerequisite to be able to strategically choosing relevant entry points and activities.

The CLP feels that reducing the number of project locations may not necessarily be a good solution in all contexts and does not necessarily contribute to poverty reduction. In addition, when it comes to questions of sustainability and up-scaling, concentrating resources in just a few locations could be contra-productive.

Alternatively, SDC should act like an underwriter to help communities and community-based organisations to forge alliances with other donors and resource organisations to obtain techno-managerial support. This will ensure funding for activities beyond SDC's priorities. The evaluation team feels that other donors, especially those focussed on specific domains, like health or watershed, will find "development ready" communities a fertile ground for their inputs. SDC HQ as well as COOFs need to formally integrate this approach into the country strategies and develop proactive alliances at the national, regional and international level for a multi faceted approach to poverty reduction. SDC could pilot such an effort in a few countries in the near future.

#### **Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees that SDC should support communities' and Citizens Based Organisations' attempts to network and forge alliances with others and more systematically use its "leverage" in favour of communities and community-based organisations. There was a broad agreement within the CLP that SDC must reinforce its efforts to better link its development partners with other agencies and actors. In doing so, SDC could include an up-scaling perspective right from the beginning in each of its projects. These projects could then serve as pilot projects for other

actors. SDC has the comparative advantage to do so (often well placed to be the intermediary, known for quality, close enough to communities as well as to the government). Such leveraging could mobilize additional support from the state, private sector or other development partners. Such alliance building and leveraging should also be furthered through a decentralization of the Harmonisation and Alignment Agenda.

### **SDC Senior Management Response**

The recommendation that SDC should act as an underwriter/broker for communities and that SDC Cooperation Strategies and project activities should place more emphasis on systematic up-scaling, leveraging and alliance building is very interesting and will need to be further discussed by Senior Management.

### **Recommendation 6: Formally acknowledge partner development as an intended result and crucial factor for furthering empowerment**

#### **Create Partnership Management Cell**

The evaluation team strongly feels that identifying and nurturing partnerships, particularly with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), is a distinctive strength of SDC. This augurs well with SDC's role of enabling partners to facilitate empowerment of the recipient communities. The evaluation team recommends that SDC should formally acknowledge partnership development as a crucial function for realizing its empowerment agenda.

To achieve this, SDC should create a partnership management cell, preferably within the bilateral division in SDC HQ. This cell should consolidate SDC's experiences of working with CSOs; develop guidelines for various stages of engagements; include partnership as a key result area in country strategies. The cell should also be responsible for monitoring of partnership initiatives and assist in formally incorporating partnership development efforts in the country strategies.

#### **Stand of the CLP**

The CLP fully agrees with the evaluation team's view that strengthening partners (as an aspect of capacity development which contributes to empowerment) is a distinctive strength of SDC. SDC should consider partnership development as an end in itself. Strong partners have the potential to contribute towards checks- and- balances in partner countries. The CLP fully supports these twin objectives.

Contrary to the recommendation of the evaluation team, the CLP does not agree with the recommendation to create a Partnership Management Cell. It views this as neither necessary nor desirable. According to the understanding of the CLP, partnership takes place mostly at a decentralized level, be it within Civil Society, the State, Multilateral Organisations or others. Establishing a Partnership Management Cell at Headquarters level would be contradictory to the CLP's understanding of decentralized procedures.

### **SDC Senior Management Response**

Senior Management agrees with the stand of the CLP. SDC will not establish a Partnership Development Cell at Headquarters.

**Recommendation 7: Act as a venture capitalist by more systematically promoting the institutional development of partners and assisting them in developing partnerships with other donors.**

**Be a 'venture capitalist' to boost promising partner organisations**

SDC's partners were seen not only as helping recipient communities in design and implementation of various programmes, but also as becoming central to furthering development processes in the respective countries and regions. In order to suitably assist their efforts, SDC HQ and COOFs could play a role similar to that of a 'venture capitalist' to build on field-tested partnership development models.

To achieve this, COOFs should set institutional evolution milestones with selected partners. SDC normally engages with partners through a three to five year contract. This contract should include how SDC and the partners will achieve institution development milestones along with the programme objectives. COOFs should design and use guidelines for various stages of engagements with partners from identification and nurturing potential ideas to institutional support, assisting them in exploring partnerships with other donors, and becoming a resource agency for other SDC supported programmes and evaluations, need to be evolved.

**Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees that SDC should play a more proactive and more systematic role in supporting the field-tested partnership development models arising from long term processes which SDC itself has promoted. These include building and developing alliances and partnerships. In its role of facilitator, SDC should improve its performance by linking SDC partners systematically with other sources of funding.

The CLP agrees that in the initial stage of collaboration with a new partner clear objectives / milestones with regard to their institutional development should be set to guide all stakeholders throughout the process.

**SDC Senior Management Response**

Senior Management agrees that partner development, including the institutional development of partners, is a key result area for SDC.

**Recommendation 8: Learn from and replicate successful approaches (e.g. multistakeholder platforms like FONAENF in Burkina Faso).**

**Graduate SDC-Govt interface towards FONAENF-like arrangements**

SDC is increasingly making efforts to work with recipient governments, who perform two broad roles - as policy makers and as implementers. As far as policy making is concerned SDC has had several positive experiences. COOFs have been able to influence policy-making especially in sectors where SDC had extensive knowledge of field conditions and demonstrated impact. Governments have responded positively to such initiatives by committing themselves for countrywide replications. On the contrary, the evaluation team found that when COOFs relied on government for programme implementation, many a time, they have encountered inefficiency, apathy and a lack of vision.

To achieve this, SDC should build upon effective platforms for multi-stake holder involvements. The evaluation team came across one such excellent model in Burkina Faso, FONAENF. It is an innovative funding and institutional arrangement for scaling up non-formal education programmes. It is supplemented by ALPHA, a programme unit created by SDC for ensuring quality control and institutional development for reaching the un-reached. FONAENF is illustrative of how SDC can succeed in influencing grassroots level as well as policy level changes in a specific sector. FONAENF has acquired the legitimacy and funding but not the bureaucratic apathy and inefficiencies of government functioning. It has also been able to harmonise the funds and programmes of other donor organizations. These programmes have been conceptualised and implemented by local Citizens' Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs. Though such a

funding arrangement may not adhere to conventional aid modalities like 'donor harmonisation', it needs to be encouraged because of its effectiveness in furthering the agenda relevant to the empowerment of marginalised groups.

### **Stand of the CLP**

The CLP agrees that multi-stakeholder approaches can be promising. Joint poverty monitoring can be an excellent platform for multi-stakeholder initiatives. However, the CLP has some reservations regarding the importance given by the evaluation team to the FONAENF project. Without a careful reading of the Case Study Report Burkina Faso, the recommendation is not clear. Nevertheless, if FONAENF is such a success story, peer exchange would be helpful for replicating the approach in other contexts. However, there is a possibility that the success of the approach might be specific to Burkina Faso and may not be replicable.

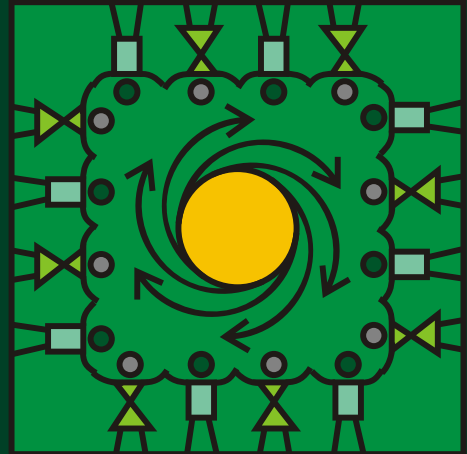
Although the CLP agrees that multi-stakeholder approaches are promising, the CLP underlines the importance of also working with partner governments as development actors. The CLP stresses that the State's foremost responsibility is to implement primary services for the population. Therefore, SDC must collaborate with governments (in addition to its collaboration with actors of Civil Society), even if the collaboration is sometimes not straightforward and is time consuming. Empowering partner governments is a development objective.

### **SDC Senior Management Response**

Senior Management agrees that SDC should strengthen its knowledge sharing with regard to what works in empowerment (e.g., multi-stakeholder initiatives) and mandates the Knowledge Management Division to pursue this issue.



Independent Evaluation of  
SDC's Performance towards  
Empowerment of Stakeholders  
from the Recipients' Perspective



# Evaluators' Final Report

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

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November 2006



## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, our thanks and encouragement goes to the many empowered women and men in SDC supported programmes who enthusiastically participated in our community exercises and gave the Evaluation Team valuable insights into processes of empowerment. It was stimulating to exchange experiences with people from faraway lands and to learn from them.

The Team would like to acknowledge the contribution of SDC's Country Coordination Offices in Burkina Faso and Bolivia, their partner organisations and project teams and the translators for making it possible to carry out the evaluation. Without their time and cooperation, this would not have been possible. The team would also like to thank SDC India for the much needed orientation and methodology testing at the start of the mission.

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Finally, the evaluation team would like to stress that the full responsibility for the text of this report rests with us, as the authors. The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent those of SDC or of the people consulted.

**Seemantinee Khot**

Evaluation Team Leader

20<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006, Pune India

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## Acronyms

<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organization
<b>CHF</b>	Swiss Franks (Currency)
<b>CLP</b>	Core Learning Partnership
<b>COOF</b>	SDC Country Coordination Office
<b>COSUDE</b>	de la Confederación de las Oficinas Federales
<b>CS</b>	Cooperation Strategy
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>E+C</b>	Evaluation and Controlling
<b>EOM</b>	End of Mission
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HQ</b>	Head Quarters
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>NGO</b>	Non Government Organization
<b>NPO</b>	National Program Officer
<b>NRM</b>	Natural Resource Management
<b>PRSP</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>SECO</b>	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
<b>SWAP</b>	Sector Wide Approaches
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>WB</b>	World Bank

### Burkina Faso Specific:

<b>CAGEC</b>	Cellule d'Appui a la Gestion Communale
<b>CEFRAP</b>	Center of Studies, Formation and Achievements Agropastorales
<b>CREPA</b>	Centre Régional pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement à faible coût
<b>DGCL</b>	General Director of the Development of Local Collectivities,
<b>EIER</b>	Ecole Inter-Etats des Ingénieurs de l'Équipement Rural
<b>EPCD</b>	Etablissement Public Communal Pour le Développement
<b>FENABF</b>	Fédération Nationale Des Artisans Du Burkina Faso
<b>FENOP</b>	Appui à la Fédération Nationale des Organisations Paysannes
<b>FNGN</b>	Appui à la Fédération Nationale des Groupements Naam
<b>FONAENF</b>	Fonds national pour l'alphabétisation et l'éducation non formelle
<b>GREFCO</b>	Groupe de Recherches, de Formation & de Conseils
<b>PREST</b>	Programme de pistes rurales à l'Est
<b>Tintua</b>	Name of an NGO dedicated to Non Formal Éducation

### Bolivia Specific:

<b>ACOBOL</b>	Bolivian Association of Women Councillors (ACOBOL)
<b>AMDECO</b>	Association of Mayors, Cochabamba
<b>AOS</b>	Ayunda Obrera Suisa
<b>ASOPROF</b>	Bean Producers Association, Santa Cruz
<b>CSUTCB</b>	Confederacion Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
<b>EFA</b>	Education For All
<b>EMPODER</b>	Indigenous People and Empowerment Program
<b>FAM</b>	Federation of Municipal Associations
<b>GODEL</b>	Thematic area of good governance, and democratisation in COSUDE Bolivia
<b>Govt.</b>	Government
<b>IC</b>	Inter Cooperation
<b>LPP</b>	Law of Political Participation

<b>PADEM</b>	Support for Municipal Democracy Program
<b>PADER</b>	Promotion for Rural Economic Development
<b>PDCR</b>	Participation Rural Investment Projects
<b>PDM</b>	Municipality Development Plan
<b>PROBONA</b>	Native Forests and Andean Agri Systems
<b>PROMEQ</b>	COSUDE Bolivia thematic area of the promotion of local economies through small and micro-enterprise development with business development services including micro-finance
<b>PRONALAG</b>	National Leguminous Grain Project
<b>SAM</b>	Municipal Associative System (SAM)
<b>SUMI</b>	Universal and Child Health Insurance
<b>UAGRM</b>	Agricultural University of Gabriel Rene Moreno, Santa Cruz

## About this Report

This is the final report of an Independent Evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC). The evaluation was aimed at assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of SDC's performance towards empowering marginalized groups in recipient communities to help themselves.

The **first part** presents a **Synthesis** of the findings of two country case studies, Burkina Faso and Bolivia, and series of interviews with SDC staff at its Head Quarters in Bern. It begins with the background of the evaluation and briefly describing the methodology and data collection processes followed. The next section captures observations and findings related to the key aspects evaluated and finally enlist conclusions and recommendations.

The **second part** covers **Burkina Faso Case Study** and the **third part, Bolivia Case Study**. The first and second sections of the case study reports include background of the evaluation and describe the methodology and processes followed. The next three sections capture observations and findings relating to the key aspects evaluated, namely;

- Perceptions of the community and other stakeholders about empowerment,
- SDC's responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the marginalised, and
- SDC's partnership practices.

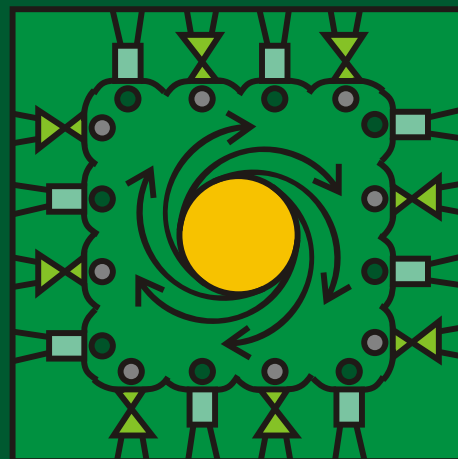
Each findings section describes SDC's espoused theory as elicited from documentation available to the evaluation team and gleaned from interviews with SDC staff in Bern and in the case study countries. This is followed by a description of the reality and practices as was observed by the team with reference to the evaluation key questions.

The findings from the Country Case studies inform the Synthesis Report, which offers deeper analysis and recommendations for SDC as an institution.

The Annexes include the Approach Paper, tools of data collection, names of the persons interviewed and quantitative data.



# Part 1: Synthesis Report



## Executive Summary

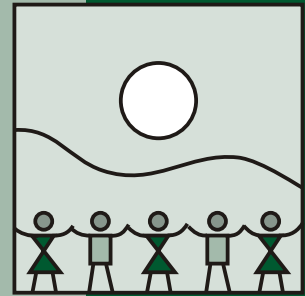
1. The main purpose of this Independent Evaluation was to assess SDC's performance in empowering marginalized groups of recipient communities for poverty reduction, as well as to understand the perspectives of those directly engaged in implementing development programs as an important link between recipient communities and SDC. For the first time, SDC invited a team of development professionals "constructively engaged in causes of the poor" from the South to constitute an evaluation team with the intention of controlling biases, if any, of Northern or donor-based perspectives and priorities. SDC selected Bolivia and Burkina Faso as country case studies illustrative of significant empowerment strategies of SDC. This was supplemented by interviews of program and senior management staff at SDC Headquarters (SDC HQ) in Bern. Data collection took place between June and August 2006.
2. The evaluation methodology was appreciative, qualitative and exploratory. The evaluation was designed as an exploration of SDC's institutional ecology and its inter-institutional exchanges. The first step was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development in available documentation and through interviews with senior program staff in the HQ and the case study SDC country offices (COOFs). The next step was to get other stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the institutional dimension of relationships between SDC and its various partners. The evaluation team identified representatives of three stakeholder groups: the recipient communities, partner organizations and SDC staff at HQ as well as in the COOFs.
3. The evaluation team did not use any predefined construct of empowerment. It worked on the premise that empowerment is an experiential process and that factors leading to empowerment or disempowerment are person, community and context specific. For people in under-developed economies, being able to recognise, articulate and deploy their abilities according to evolving needs and priorities, and to negotiate changes with actors who influence changes, are important indicators of empowerment. Hence it was important to find out if there was any movement in this direction, and whether the communities in the case study countries experienced that movement. The evaluation team further assumed that, if sufficiently empowered, communities would also be able to identify factors that contributed to or inhibited their progress towards those desirable changes.
4. It was amply evident that the recipient communities in the two case study countries experience empowering changes in their lives. Their expression of enhanced abilities, evolving needs and priorities, and attempts to negotiate changes in various aspects they deem important, reflected that they are experiencing empowerment. The communities attributed many of the positive changes to the inputs provided by partners in SDC funded programs. They mentioned capacity building, community organization, opportunities for women, building on local ethos and tradition and involving the community in the design and monitoring of programs as some of the reasons for the empowerment experienced by them. They also had the openness to be self-critical and take responsibility for some of the disempowering changes like the deterioration of natural resources in their area. It was evident that the various programs have been instrumental in building peoples' confidence to make good use of support provided by any appropriate external agency, for making positive changes in their lives. Though working with relatively small funds, SDC and its partners have thus been able to make a substantial human investment towards creating "development-ready" communities. In the evaluation team's judgement, this qualitative outcome is more difficult to achieve as compared to creating structures and distributing inputs in any community.

5. The evaluation team observed that SDC's understanding of empowerment is not restricted to political empowerment alone but is able to initiate and sustain other contextually relevant aspects of empowerment such as peace making efforts in Bolivia. The evaluation team felt that, in the changing context of globalisation, empowerment of communities vis-à-vis the institution of markets is becoming as important as empowerment vis-à-vis the state. SDC has been making some efforts in that direction as well.
6. SDC's efforts tend to empower a group as a whole, vis-à-vis other groups, for example empowering uneducated people through informal education vis-à-vis the formally educated. However it is necessary to attend to intra-group power dynamics, to ensure empowerment of the marginalised sections within the recipient communities, for example, women in the community vis-à-vis men, common members vis-à-vis leaders of the community.
7. The overarching goal of Swiss cooperation is poverty reduction. The team looked at empowerment initiatives of SDC and its partners as a means to poverty reduction of the recipient communities. Seen from this perspective, the team felt that development readiness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for communities to take charge of their own development. In addition they require the technological and material inputs to convert their newfound enthusiasm and hopes into visible signs of prosperity and well being. According to the evaluation team, SDC's core strength is mobilizing, organizing and developing capacities of communities to envision their own roadmaps to development. SDC need not, and possibly can not, support each and every need of the community using its own or its partners' own resources. However, it can certainly help communities in articulating their vision, priorities, master plans, and help them to seek partnerships with other development actors, such as international donors and government at various levels in the respective countries. The team found that SDC has the orientation, competence and credibility in mobilising the support of a wide range of actors.
8. Therefore, the team recommends that SDC should act as an underwriter to help communities and community-based organisations to forge alliances with other donors and resource organizations to obtain techno-managerial support. This will ensure funding for activities beyond SDC's priorities. Thus SDC can leverage its core competencies and create wider impact. The evaluation team feels that other donors, especially those focussed on specific domains, like health or watershed, will find "development ready" communities a fertile ground for their inputs. SDC HQ as well as COOFs need to formally integrate this approach into the country strategies and develop proactive alliances at the national and international level for a multi faceted approach to poverty reduction. SDC could pilot such an effort in a few countries in the near future.
9. Such an approach would require a wider participation of the communities. The evaluation team observed that the prevalent participatory approaches to program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the COOFs have made a distinctive impact on community empowerment. In order to enhance this further, the team suggests:
  - helping the selected communities to periodically envision the development priorities and master plan, instead of restricting to areas of direct assistance from SDC, by undertaking participatory comprehensive need assessment exercises.
  - building these inputs in the formulation of its country strategies in addition to the existing process of multi-stakeholder consultation. The nature and duration of SDC's involvement in their ongoing endeavours and struggles must be decided in consultation with the communities themselves.

10. Keeping in line with the Swiss overarching goal of poverty reduction, it is necessary that SDC and its partners focus their efforts in empowering the marginalised sections of the community, who suffer from abject poverty. In their visits to both the case study countries, the evaluation team noticed that SDC operated with a shared understanding of designing programs for communities that have been excluded from the benefits of mainstream development efforts (these primarily consisted of rural, tribal, nomadic people living in under-developed regions), thereby implying that the marginalised communities are a homogenous entity.
11. The discussions with the communities and partners revealed that there are further stratifications within the communities. SDC needs to give privileged treatment to people suffering from abject poverty, within the identified marginalised communities in underdeveloped regions, because they also tend to be marginalized on other dimensions like access to education, health and social exclusion. Therefore, identifying the most marginalized among the poor is critical. Since SDC is committed to the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the evaluation team suggests that the COOFs must apply the MDG definition of abject poverty as the first level parameter to identify the poor. Wherever formal data is not available the community itself could be involved in defining contextually relevant and measurable parameters to identify the poorer among the poor. The discussions with the community pointed out that it was indeed possible for the communities to identify such proxy parameters. It was indeed revealed that some of SDC programs excluded many such people from the benefits of some of the programs, due to eligibility criteria like a front-ended contribution of up to 40%.
12. In the evaluation team's experience, designing programs exclusively for the poorest of the poor, without involving economically advantaged groups, is neither feasible nor desirable. However, wherever applicable, SDC needs to consider making appropriate changes in its existing program design so as to initiate affirmative action towards the people suffering from abject poverty. More concerted efforts towards this end will help SDC to reiterate its commitment to MDGs while steering its empowerment efforts towards its goal of poverty reduction.
13. As SDC does not work directly with the community, facilitating and enabling its partners to empower the beneficiary communities in recipient countries is a sizeable intervention. In both the case study countries, the evaluation team came across SDC's exemplary contribution to development in the form of sensitive, proficient and effective partners, particularly civil society organizations. These partners were seen not only as helping the beneficiary communities in design and implementation of various programs, but also as becoming central to furthering development processes in the respective countries and regions.
14. In order to suitably assist their efforts, SDC HQ and COOFs could play a role similar to that of a 'venture capitalist' to build on field-tested partnership development models. A guideline for various stages of engagements with partners from identification and nurturing potential ideas to institutional support, assisting them in exploring partnerships with other donors, and becoming a resource agency for other SDC supported programs and evaluations need to be evolved. As a pre-requisite SDC should formally acknowledge partnership development as an intended result of its involvement in recipient countries. It needs to consolidate its experiences of working with civil society organisations by creating a partnership management cell, preferably within the bilateral division in SDC HQ. This cell could be responsible for knowledge management as well as monitoring of partnership initiatives and could assist in formally incorporating partnership development efforts in the country strategies.

15. SDC is increasingly making efforts to work with recipient governments, who perform two broad roles: policy makers and implementers. As far as policy making is concerned SDC has had several positive experiences. COOFs have been able to influence policy-making especially in sectors where SDC had extensive knowledge of field conditions and demonstrated impact. Governments have responded positively to such initiatives by committing themselves to countrywide replications. On the other hand, the evaluation team found that when COOFs relied on government for program implementation, recipient communities reported inefficiency, apathy and a lack of vision.
  16. SDC has been able to develop a unique model for involvement of multiple development actors in Burkina Faso. FONAENF (Fonds national pour l'alphabétisation et l'éducation non formelle) is an innovative funding and institutional arrangement for scaling up non-formal education programs, supplemented by ALPHA for ensuring quality control and institutional development for reaching the un-reached (a program to provide technical and financial support to NGOs for alphabetization of groups left out of the formal and informal education system). FONAENF is illustrative of how SDC can succeed in influencing grassroots level as well as policy level changes in a specific sector. FONAENF has acquired the legitimacy and funding but not the bureaucratic apathy and inefficiencies of government functioning. It has also been able to harmonize the funds and programs of other donor organizations. These programs have been conceptualized and implemented by local Citizens Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs. Though such a funding arrangement may not adhere to conventional aid modalities like 'donor harmonization, it needs to be encouraged because of its effectiveness in furthering the agenda relevant to the empowerment of marginalized groups.
-

# 1 Background and methodology



## 1.1 Background to the Evaluation

SDC commissioned this Independent Evaluation to understand and integrate the perspectives of communities, as well as of those directly engaged in implementing development programmes as an important link between recipient communities and SDC. Therefore the focus of the evaluation was on SDC's institutional responsiveness to the needs and priorities of communities, especially those of the marginalised groups, in recipient countries. The purpose was to assess processes by which SDC ensures accountability towards recipient communities, in addition to governments in recipient countries, the Swiss government and its taxpayers.

This Independent Evaluation is unique in that for the first time, SDC invited a team of development professionals “constructively engaged in causes of the poor” from the South as to constitute an evaluation team. The intention was to control for biases, if any, of Northern or donor-based perspectives and priorities. A team of Indian development consultants was contracted in April 2006. Care was taken to select a team having “sufficient distance” from SDC and national governments. The Evaluation process was designed by the evaluation team in consultation with SDC's Evaluation + Controlling Division and the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) in May 2006.

SDC selected Bolivia and Burkina Faso as country case studies illustrative of significant empowerment strategies of SDC. The evaluation team met a cross section of stakeholders, in the two selected countries, with a focus on collecting recipient communities' perspectives. This was supplemented by interviews of programme and senior management staff at SDC Head quarters (SDC HQ) in Bern. Data collection took place between June and August 2006.

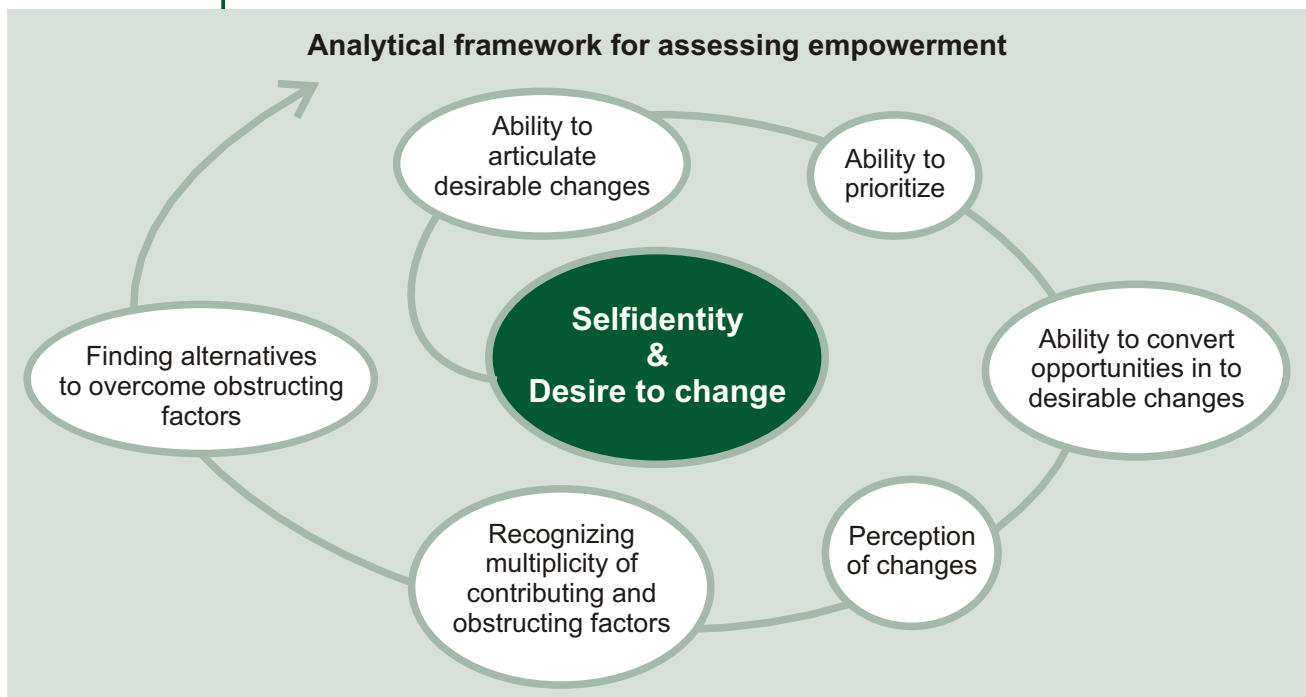
## 1.2 The Team's understanding of Key concepts

The evaluation team's understanding about “empowerment” and indicators to assess empowerment influenced the evaluation design. According to the evaluation team, empowerment is an experiential process. What is empowering or disempowering is person, community and context specific. Therefore considering that any external definition of empowerment would not be suitable for all, the team found it necessary to use the community's own perception about what is 'empowering', and applied it for assessing the existence of empowering processes. The first sign of empowerment that the team looked for was an **articulation** of what the community found 'empowering', assuming that this would happen only if one has experienced and recognized an empowering change. Changes pertaining to which **issues** are found empowering by the recipient communities was of interest to the evaluation team. In under-developed communities there are several issues that are desirable for attaining empowerment. Being able to prioritize what is most desirable is the next stage on the path of empowerment.

The evaluation team worked with the assumption that 'empowerment', if it exists, will manifest in its deployment, that is an empowered individual will use and convert opportunities to move towards her/his desired situation. Hence it was important to find out a) if there was any **movement in the desirable direction**, b) whether the individual concerned experienced that movement and c) knew if the changes were bringing them closer to their desired changes or not.

The team also acknowledged that empowerment did not mean fulfilment of all desires, but that it referred to the consistent engagement with finding alternatives, refining one's abilities and moving ahead. An active pursuit to move in a desirable direction would be ridden with challenges and periodically might give a sense of disempowerment. For the empowered, dealing with those challenges and finding alternatives would help individuals regain control over the process.

Empowerment is not static. Both disempowering and empowering forces and outcomes are an integral part of the process, and being aware/conscious of this dynamism is another sign of empowerment. Calibrating oneself and deploying one's abilities according to changing/evolving needs and priorities, and negotiating changes with other actors, who influence the changes, is yet another indicator of empowerment. Many assumptions about good life decide the direction and destination of the journey of empowerment. Life experiences and changes in the environment can dramatically alter the meaning, process and destination of empowerment.



The box above captures the conceptual understanding used by the evaluation team while assessing 'empowerment'. The team used participatory community exercises, home visits and informal interactions to observe the following as indicators of empowerment. (a) Sense of self identity (reflected in self-confidence), (b) Desire to change (reflected in articulation of what is desirable), (c) ability to prioritise (reflected in reasons given) (d) Perception of change on issues (e) Recognition of contributing and obstructing factors (f) Process of identifying alternatives to overcome obstructing factors, and (g) Continuity of process of redefining desirable changes and role for themselves.

The evaluation team studied whether the phenomena of empowerment were evident at both individual and community level and were complementary to one another. The team ascertained if marginalised sections in the recipient communities had their own agenda of empowerment, and whether there was a shared understanding of that agenda within and across different sections of the communities, and between communities across regions.

The evaluation team avoided direct questioning on 'whether SDC programmes were empowering or not'. Instead they left it to the people to decide what contributed to changes in their lives, and noted any references made to development programmes.

### 1.3 Evaluation Design

The evaluation methodology was “appreciative”, “qualitative” and “exploratory”.

The evaluation was designed as an exploration of SDC's institutional ecology and its inter-institutional exchanges. The first step was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development in available documentation and through interviews with programme staff in the HQ and COOFs. The next step was to get other stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the institutional dimension of relationships between SDC and its various partners. The evaluation team identified representatives of three stakeholder groups: the recipient communities, partner organisations and SDC staff at HQ as well as in the COOFs. The team probed into stakeholders' responses to reveal deeper meanings.

**Table 1 : Sample Covered in the evaluation study countries**

Stake holders	Method of data collection	Burkina Faso	Bolivia	SDC HQ	Total
Community	Participatory Exercises	822	133	-	955
Partner Organization staff	Semi structured interviews	45	49	-	94
SDC	Review of documents and Semi structured interviewst	9	8	50	67
Total		876	190	50	1116

### 1.4 Nature of the Evaluation and its Implications

**Purposive Sampling:** The purpose of community exercises was not to evaluate the extent of empowerment or its spread across programmes and projects. The evaluation design aimed at understanding the meaning of empowerment as perceived by 'empowered' recipient communities. The programmes or projects were selected in consultation with COOF programme staff in the two case study countries, and the Country Desk Officers. Their opinion about the level of community empowerment at the selected location was taken into consideration. Thus, the sample selected was not necessarily representative of a typical SDC programme, but illustrative enough to appreciate what could happen in an SDC supported programme. The selected projects and programmes were studied with a view to understand factors and processes contributing to empowerment, with the potential to be replicated across programmes of SDC in various countries.

**Qualitative Study:** The aim of data collection was to collect perceptions, feelings, images and not necessarily quantitative data. No effort was made to measure the degree of empowerment on a predetermined scale. Instead the team attempted to appreciate processes employed by SDC to interact with its partners, who in turn interact with the communities with a view to empower them. Thus the study has come up with a variety of findings and conclusions that are to be viewed as working hypotheses for further exploration and discussion.

**Exploratory inquiry:** The evaluation team had its own understanding of empowerment. It also accessed SDC's understanding of empowerment by reading available SDC documentation and through views expressed in interviews by SDC staff in COOFs and at HQ. The evaluation team consciously decided to go into the field without any specific conceptual framework. In fact in all locations and discussions with communities, the evaluation team refrained from using the word empowerment. Instead the team discussed and probed into what it takes for a person or group to take charge of their lives. This approach helped the team to understand the factors and variables deemed necessary by the community to take charge of their lives. The team drew inferences from patterns, if any, in the



responses of the community. Hypotheses were found and validated through triangulation of the data collected.

It would be inaccurate to state that the evaluation team's own understanding of empowerment did not play a role in arriving at findings. Just as the evaluation team developed hypotheses based on the data collected in the field, it was consciously comparing its own understanding, experiences and vision of empowerment with whatever was observed in the field. Similarities and differences between the team's own understanding and the data collected also formed a basis for generating hypotheses. Thus many of the conclusions and recommendations are not just interpolations or extrapolations of the data, but are connected to the values, beliefs and worldview of the evaluation team. Wherever possible, the conclusions and recommendations impacted by the subjective understanding of the evaluation team are indicated separately from those based on the field data and other interactions. The report uses phrases like "the evaluation team felt" or "in the opinion of the evaluation team" to indicate that the team's opinion and judgment may not necessarily have a direct link with the data collected.

**Not a comprehensive study:** Certain areas like different aid modalities and their impact on empowerment are not thoroughly covered in this study because programmes with all aid modalities were not available in the case study countries to allow for a comparative perspective. For example, in Burkina Faso, general budget support is prevalent through SECO but has been discontinued in Bolivia since 2000. The evaluation team chose to focus on SDC's partnership arrangements and tried to understand the relevance and effectiveness of the different arrangements in different contexts. The section on conclusive observations thus avoids specific reference to technical terms like "budget support" and "harmonisation" denoting different aid modalities. Instead recommendations focus on partnership arrangements and mobilisation mechanisms in relation to other donors aimed at maximising the empowerment of the recipient communities.

**A study on processes, and not on impacts:** The team visited and studied a few projects within SDC programmes to obtain a deeper understanding on empowerment issues. However this study is not about the impact of these specific programmes. The purpose of the study is to understand the wider processes of empowerment. Data was also collected from a wide variety of stakeholders not necessarily connected to the selected programmes. This approach to data collection helped the team to grasp the depth and breadth of the institutional processes of SDC and its partners. The programmes as well as the developments in the case study countries were studied more as a backdrop to the processes of empowerment. Hence no specific recommendations are made with respect to a specific programme or the case study countries. The recommendations refer to SDC's processes on partner selection, responsiveness to community's needs and priorities, SDC's partnership practices and aspects of programme management strategy that might have a bearing on empowerment of the recipient communities.

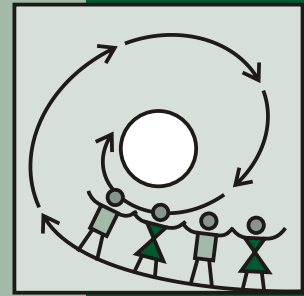
**Limited sample:** The evaluation team took time to acquaint themselves with SDC's operations by making orientation visits to SDC programmes in India. Thereafter they proceeded to carry out two in-depth country case studies in Burkina Faso and Bolivia. The findings and conclusions drawn from these case studies were shared with senior managers and specialists in SDC HQ to check them for salient features in SDC's institutional reality.

**Plurality a norm:** An interesting feature observed by the evaluation team was that most of the SDC staff had their own set of convictions and visions of development and empowerment. Apparently SDC offers a lot of freedom to its own staff, at various levels, to follow their convictions in programme implementation strategies. In fact in conversations with many senior people, a common remark was "this is my personal view, but this may not be the SDC mainstream view". This kind of democratic and empowered organisation culture makes it difficult to apply blanket generalisations across the organisation.

The conclusions and recommendations should therefore be seen in this light.



## 2 Synthesis of findings and conclusions



Based on the two country case studies and interviews with SDC staff at the HQ in Bern, the evaluation team studied whether and how the empowerment manifested in the recipient communities' and sought to understand SDC's operational model of empowerment ;

### 2.1 Manifestations of Empowerment:

#### 2.1.1 Recipient communities experience empowering changes:

It was amply evident that the recipient communities in the two case study countries experience empowering changes in their lives. Their expression of enhanced abilities, evolving needs and priorities, and attempts to negotiate changes in various aspects they deem important, reflected their empowerment. The communities attributed many of the positive changes to the inputs provided by partners in SDC funded programmes. They mentioned capacity building, community organisation, opportunities for women, building on local ethos and tradition and involving the community in the design and monitoring of programmes as some of the reasons for the empowerment experienced by them. They also had the openness to be self-critical and take responsibility for some of the disempowering changes like the deterioration of natural resources in their area. It was evident that the various programmes have been instrumental in building peoples' confidence to make good use of support provided by any appropriate external agency, for making positive changes in their lives. Though working with relatively small funds, SDC and its partners have thus been able to make a substantial human investment towards creating "development-ready" communities. In the evaluation team's judgement, this qualitative outcome is more difficult to achieve as compared to creating structures and distributing inputs in any community.

#### 2.1.2 Recipient communities' horizons are expanding:

The team observed that the desirable dimensions of empowerment are changing progressively with changes in their capacities and challenges. To illustrate, in Burkina Faso, initially the community struggled to overcome the adversities caused by mismanagement of natural resources. Simultaneously it also had to cope with the weakening of its traditional knowledge systems coupled with inadequate access to modern systems. In such an environment a broad-based, non-formal education programme (better termed life-education) opened up many vistas for the community, leading to a state of empowerment vis-à-vis issues of deteriorating livelihoods.

However, now the recipient communities are preoccupied with "needs" related to marketing of the surplus produce obtained due to the application of knowledge and skills acquired through the life education programme. The community thus having been empowered to deal with issues of subsistence-level existence is now struggling with achieving the next level of economic empowerment. It is looking forward to educating the children and access to basic health facilities. This shows that there are stages of empowerment and with every stage, newer needs and aspirations emerge, each requiring a different set of interventions and a new kind of

“power” to address those. What is possibly more important is the community's ability and willingness to participate as equals in the empowerment process with the self-confidence that they too have major roles to play in transformation of their lives.

### **2.1.3 Empowerment is a non linear process:**

The team observed that empowering processes were contextual and often SDC-supported interventions were designed on the basis of certain assumptions of the context of community. The processes were therefore liable to suffer when the context changed substantially. This also gave rise to disempowering processes. For example the Bolivian context has changed considerably since the granting of universal franchise to indigenous peoples in 1952, 127 years after independence. With the implementation of the Law of Popular Participation and the recent election of the first indigenous President, political transitions are increasing capacities of marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples to make demands on the state and hold their government accountable as a means to address the historical structural inequalities in power and resources that were the key causes of poverty and marginalisation. SDC's emphasis on political empowerment was thus aligned with the context.

At the same time, over the years, there has been a substantial change in the context. Increasing pressures to adjust to economic globalisation with adoption of neo-liberal policies gave rise to empowerment needs aimed at increasing beneficiaries' access to and participation in the market. In the new political climate, these neo-liberal market policies of privatisation of public services and natural resources, and relaxing restrictions on foreign companies competing in the domestic economy are being perceived as taking away the power of the state to impact the lives of poor people, and reducing the resources available to the state to implement empowering processes. Thus, while the community has got empowered vis-à-vis the State, the power of the state is weakening vis-à-vis the institution of the market. This change in the context has changed the rules of the game.

### **2.1.4 Intra-group empowerment not addressed adequately**

In both the case study countries, SDC considers the community as the basic unit for empowerment. Programs address the economic and political empowerment of disfavoured groups vis-à-vis other dominant groups, for example small and subsistence farmers in relation to landlords and traders, the illiterate with regard to the educated elite and the indigenous vis-à-vis the *mestisos or caras* in Bolivia. While it is necessary and useful to empower the community as a whole, it is also important to address issues related to individual empowerment within the community.

Documents and discussion with SDC staff acknowledged the difficulties of an outsider donor to work directly at the micro level. Therefore in Bolivia, SDC has resorted to capacitating selected, young community leaders with the hope that they will pass on the benefits of their education and training to their community members. SDC in Bolivia assumes that these leaders will act in the best interests of all sections of the community. However there was neither any evidence of any specific efforts to ascertain this nor of measures taken to empower the common people. This was apparent in the community exercises where leaders' priorities contrasted from those of other community members. The empowerment of leaders thus can be a viable starting point, but in the long run, empowerment of members vis-à-vis leader also need to be addressed.

In Bolivia women's participation in the political empowerment process seemed to be lower than that of men. This points towards the need to probe deeper into community hierarchies to reach the most marginalised sections and sub-sections of the marginalised communities. The exclusion of women also suggests that along with political and economical empowerment, it is also necessary to address empowerment in relation to kinship based institutions that govern the norms related to familial aspects of life and livelihoods choices of people in rural areas.

Thus implementing programmes in a region where everyone is considered poor may not necessarily lead to the empowerment of all marginalised members of the society. Needs of the poor with regard to other dominant groups might be similar but issues of intra-community inequity require special attention.

#### **2.1.5 Empowerment needs to be utilised:**

The evaluation team perceived empowerment in the communities they interacted with, along with confidence and a sense of legitimacy about their own needs and aspirations. They demonstrated optimism and the will to work towards fulfilling their needs with the help of external agencies like SDC and its partners. If poverty alleviation was not possible for them, they were keen to make sure that the next generation did not remain poor. This is evidence that beneficiaries are developing aspirations for transformative changes, and that they want to assert these aspirations.



SDC programmes focusing on education, capacity building and community organisation have created a sense of empowerment that now requires opportunities to translate the newly acquired knowledge and skills into concrete actions and desired changes. For instance, having learnt the ways and means of improving productivity of natural resources, community members in Burkina Faso wanted agriculture implements to apply their newly acquired knowledge. However design limitations and decreasing funding in SDC programmes is bringing constraints to beneficiaries for utilising newly acquired skills and knowledge to carry themselves to progressive stages of empowerment and development.

The evaluation team feels that development readiness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for communities to take charge of their own development. In addition they require the technological and material inputs to convert their newfound enthusiasm and hopes into visible signs of prosperity and well-being. According to the evaluation team, SDC's core strength is mobilising, organising and developing capacities of communities to envision their own roadmaps to development. SDC need not, and possibly cannot, support each and every need of the community using its own or its partners' own resources. However, it can certainly help communities in articulating their vision, priorities, master plans, and help them to seek partnerships with other development actors.

## **2.2 SDC's Operational Model of Empowerment:**

### **2.2.1 Empowerment approach is attempted in every programme:**

In the case study countries, various thematic programmes have been designed as a means to achieve different spheres of empowerment for the poor. In Burkina Faso alphabetization programmes and community organisation are seen as a means to build capacities for improving livelihood opportunities; and gender sensitisation and affirmative activities are designed to impact issues of special significance for women's social empowerment. The communities did not perceive any necessity of empowerment vis-à-vis the government. This could be attributed to the fact that the government is impoverished and does not have adequate resources to support livelihood needs of its population. In the minds of the population, the State is totally absent and hence issues like the winner of local or national elections remain peripheral.

On the other hand, in Bolivia, competency in decentralisation programmes is a means to achieve political empowerment. This is done with a strong belief that civil and political rights empower people not only to claim their economic and social rights but also to demand accountability for good public services, for pro-poor policies and moving beyond mere participation in decision-making to an emphasis on control. While not explicitly stated in the documentation available to the team, empowerment appeared to be an integral theme in all the programmes.

### **2.2.2 Still, no shared definition of empowerment:**

In spite of, or possibly because of several stand-alone field successes, empowerment has remained a much-debated concept in COOFs as well as SDC HQ. There have been reflections on the concept with several studies commissioned to understand other donors' definitions and approaches. Through analysis of available documentation and discussions with senior SDC staff, the team realized that though there is a lot of similarity and convergence between what is written, believed and practiced, there is still no official "SDC" position or definition on beneficiary empowerment. The documents only reflect the different authors' points of view and do not have the value of an officially sanctioned, institutional position. In fact, views of the senior staff also had varied opinions about what is 'empowerment' and what contributed towards community empowerment.

This openness has resulted in two outcomes. On the positive side, it has given enough flexibility to make the empowerment agenda contextually relevant.

Significant individuals in regional divisions, COOF and partner organisations have been able to follow their own convictions and theories. On the negative side, there is no cross learning, in the absence of a systematised mechanism for sharing experiments and experiences. The HQ is not able to play its role of cross fertilization of successes and generation of shared norms, including a framework for measuring empowerment.

### **2.2.3 Greater emphasis on 'supply' side of empowerment:**

In SDC it is understood that empowerment cannot be 'done' or 'given', but has to 'happen' from within. It needs to be induced through bottom-up transformation; with careful consideration for the need to exert top-down pressure. Capitalising on its field successes, SDC has invested considerable time and effort in influencing governments towards pro-poor laws, policies and programmes. It has tried to pursue the agenda of the decentralisation of powers of the central government. It has supported sensitisation and capacity building of government officials and elected representatives at various levels. It has used infrastructure development programmes to inculcate participatory decision-making processes within municipalities; and has encouraged drafting of pro-poor laws. Thereafter SDC has also funded training of community leaders as well as elected representatives in deploying the provisions of such laws. All these interventions are indicators of 'supplying' enabling environments for marginalised groups to engage in empowering processes.

In Burkina Faso, SDC has supported grassroots level Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to articulate their demands and influence government policies, sometimes with resistance from the government. Thus SDC seems to have more success in supplying opportunities or inputs to support empowerment as compared to engendering a consciousness among beneficiaries to demand empowering processes, particularly in the political arena as in the case of Bolivia. Possibly as a 'foreign' donor, working with the national government to create an enabling environment at the macro level is a more viable strategy than directly fostering demand from communities at the micro level for empowerment.

### **2.2.4 Focus on underdeveloped regions and communities not on marginalised within these:**

Though there is no standard SDC definition of under-developed or marginalised, there was a shared understanding about marginalised communities in the COOF as well as among HQ staff. SDC starts with identifying poorer regions within a country, for example in Fada, Burkina Faso. Within the underdeveloped regions it identifies communities, which are cut off from mainstream development processes, for example the rural population or nomadic tribes. Within these regions, SDC intends to develop gender responsive strategies. Thus SDC's definition of marginalisation is underdeveloped regions, rural people, nomadic tribes, and women within such regions. This definition identifies groups of people and works at the micro level and macro level for eliminating poverty of identified beneficiaries. SDC typically undertakes interventions that benefit the community as a whole and are not specifically focused on families or individuals.

This definition of SDC does not specifically address differences of poverty levels within the beneficiary community. All members of the community are homogenously treated as poor and are expected to be able to avail of benefits just like anyone else. SDC does make efforts occasionally to help communities to identify poorer groups within the community and make special provisions for them. For example as mentioned in an SDC HQ interview, in Chad the local community leaders have tried to mobilise funds from non-resident members of the community to subsidise the education costs of poorer individuals in the village.

### **2.2.5 Priority to 'poor with potential': (This expression was used by SDC staff. It meant poor with resources and initiatives)**

SDC works with the poor who have a higher likelihood of uplifting themselves out of poverty due to a willingness to change their lives or access to resources. In programme design terms, this translates as 'including a component of community members' contribution to help finance the intervention'. For example in the Adele programme, members of the community are expected to contribute 40%-50% of the value of the asset that they would like to procure for improving their livelihood. The community members are expected to prepare their own proposals for funding by programme structures created by SDC. This arrangement ensures that people with resources get selected as participants. It leaves out the more marginalised sections of the society who cannot afford to contribute their share or do not have adequate training to prepare proposals. SDC has tried to work around some of these limitations by training facilitators who can write proposals for the community etc. Thus SDC's approach is to develop an area or community as whole, rather than poorer sections within the selected communities.

### **2.2.6 No alignment with the Millennium Development Goals:**

Contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is one of the major commitments of SDC. Though the SDC country strategy papers refer to the MDGs, SDC programme design does not specifically address the MDGs. Some of the SDC HQ staff expressed that a number of field level initiatives originated in response to community needs before the MDGs came into vogue and hence were not designed within the MDG framework. The MDGs are used as a reference point to ensure that SDC's programmes are only broadly aligned with the MDGs, but specific matrices of the MDGs are not internalised and mainstreamed into SDC programmes. For example MDG 1, to reduce abject poverty by half by 2015, offers a concise definition of intended beneficiaries as those living in abject poverty, defined as 1 dollar per day (purchasing power parity equivalent). SDC does not make efforts to find out whether its programme beneficiaries suffer from abject poverty, because some of the SDC staff considers this as an uni-dimensional measurement of poverty.

In the experience of the evaluation team, people suffering from abject poverty also experience marginalisation on various other fronts like access to health and education. A potential tool for the identification of marginalised communities is thus not utilised. Similarly, it becomes difficult to ascertain the contribution of SDC programmes to the MDGs. SDC's social development division has made case studies of SDC's efforts in reaching out to the poorest among the participant communities. These case studies demonstrate that it is possible for SDC to make special efforts to reach out to the most marginalised. However this view is not widely shared in SDC.

### **2.2.7 Empowerment not specifically linked with poverty reduction:**

**Poverty is multidimensional, but SDC's approach is sector-specific:** SDC policy documents recognise that poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon, not restricted to just income poverty but accounts for other aspects like the lack of access to public services such as education, health, drinking water, and social exclusion. Thus poverty reduction necessitates a multidimensional approach covering a wide range of sectors. However, after a recent portfolio analysis, SDC decided to focus on only two or three themes or sectors in each country, and hence restricted its aid to only those aspects of poverty. While to a certain extent this helps in empowerment and poverty reduction; such programmes by themselves are not sufficient to cause a major impact on poverty. SDC expects that programmes implemented by other development agencies, government or other donors that address needs pertaining to the other sectors, supplement its own country programme. However, there is neither any specific strategy to make this happen nor to ascertain if it takes place in the field. Programs are born out of a notion that if people are organised, have undergone capacity building and are able to articulate their demands, subsequent

stages of empowerment and poverty reduction will ensue. In practice however these are necessary but insufficient approaches for poverty reduction. It creates a sense of empowerment and raises expectations and aspirations that are not necessarily fulfilled because of a lack of resources to follow up.

The evaluation team appreciates that it may not be possible for SDC or its partners to address each and every need of the community through its resources. However, SDC also does not seem to have a vision or strategy to help the recipient communities to deal with multiple dimensions of poverty.

**Lack of convergence between programmes:** SDC believes in promoting innovative development strategies and building development models around them. While important, this has unintended negative consequences. For example SDC Bolivia has 35 programmes covering the two major thematic focuses of good governance and local economic development. Some of the programmes have had a substantial impact for example PRONALAG (a technology transfer programme, with research and extension components to promote cultivation of several bean varieties as a second crop to stop migration during the dry season, implemented by the Agricultural University of Santa Cruz, UAGRM. Popularising beans as a food habit and a good source of protein is also one of the main objectives of the programme). After the programme began other development actors became involved in organising farmers to market *frejol*. This in turn improved the programme, previously focused solely on developing different varieties of *frejol* and its agriculture practices appropriate to the specific regions.

In the last two or three years SDC Bolivia has made efforts to superimpose several programmes in the same location. A similar approach in Fada, Burkina Faso, has been adopted whereby funding municipalities for infrastructure support, non-formal education programmes, and economic development programmes have converged into the same area. These programmes have been able to build on one another in order to maximise the overall impact on poverty reduction. In other cases where programmes are addressing only one aspect of poverty alleviation, it is unable to visibly change the lives of beneficiaries. Empowerment and gender equity strategies are integrated into these programmes raising awareness and aspirations. But due to the restricted scope of the programme, this newly created momentum cannot carry beneficiaries forward to subsequent stages of empowerment.

The comments mentioned above have touched upon only those aspects of poverty reduction related to the present study and do not represent a comprehensive critique of poverty reduction efforts overall. Empowerment and implementation of poverty reduction strategies is a very complex process. The evaluation team did not come across any studies assessing the effectiveness of empowering approaches in reducing poverty. Research into the costs and strategies of lifting a family or village out of poverty has led to the conclusion that poverty reduction strategies must both be multidisciplinary and include substantive investment in both soft and hard inputs. The SDC country strategy does not make a conscious effort in calculating the investment required for lifting beneficiaries out of abject poverty and as such are limited in their contribution to poverty reduction. In some cases only personal initiative of SDC programme staff or of SDC's partners has mobilised necessary help from other sources like other international or multilateral donors, as in the case of the World Bank's PDCR project in Bolivia. It appears that SDC is more concerned with building development models rather than significantly alleviating poverty for its beneficiaries. SDC has reduced the number of priority countries to increase its ability to impact poverty alleviation. However a similar exercise is not carried out within these countries to identify priority communities and arrange integrated and substantive interventions for poverty reduction.

### **2.2.8 Programs 'for' the beneficiaries but not necessarily 'by' the beneficiaries:**

SDC country and programme strategies are decided through a participatory process involving its partner organisations, local and national resource persons, consultants,





representatives of the government, international NGOs, other donors and SDC HQ staff. It appears as if the selection of thematic foci for a country is based on certain predetermined factors, budgetary requirements and a normative understanding about their contribution to the end goal of poverty reduction. Nevertheless many promising and innovative ideas are generated in strategy formulation meetings, and are implemented by SDC and its partners. In Bolivia, for example, the idea of promoting '*frejol*' originated from a professor at the Agricultural University of Santa Cruz who was concerned about improving the well-being of small farmers who were forced to migrate for want of a second crop. This led to the development of the PRONALAG programme.

SDC depends on secondary sources for identifying the needs of the community. It does not carry out its own assessment of the needs of its beneficiaries. The evaluation team does not expect that SDC staff enter into a dialogue with beneficiary communities because of its role as a donor and the consequent connotations. Still SDC could engage local consultants to carry out a participatory needs assessment

of the recipient communities, done on a sample basis across different regions of the country akin to a market research process initiated by a commercial enterprise for designing products and services. Such primary data could be a critical input in the formulation of SDC's country strategies. Though practiced in some countries like Nepal in South Asia, or attempted in parts of South and East Africa, this is not a regular feature of the development of the country strategy.

**Needs assessments are sector-wise:** Wherever SDC or its partners have carried out needs assessments, it is in the context of specific programme or theme. SDC began supporting education programmes in Burkina Faso with the firm belief that education is empowering as it builds the confidence and capacities of the poor to 'express' and 'act on their desires'. In due course, integration of a life-skills approach into literacy programmes led to the design of a non-formal education programme as a tool for local development. For example having decided to work in non-formal education people are consulted on where the classes may be conducted, for how long, the language of instruction, and other preferred means of imparting knowledge such as through radio, as well as topics of immediate interest and applicability. However no assessment was carried out as to whether education itself was the priority for the beneficiary community, or whether more important needs could be addressed.

There are however some SDC partners, like TinTua in Burkina Faso, who carry out elaborate comprehensive life needs assessments of selected communities. They use the information to prepare proposals for other donors depending upon their priority sectors.

**Inadequate involvement of the community in programme evaluation:** In almost all programmes in Burkina Faso, an annual meeting of all stakeholders is organized where beneficiary representatives provide feedback about the programme implementation. This feedback is acted upon by making appropriate changes in the following year's work plans. In Bolivia there are different mechanisms to involve beneficiaries in programme review. SDC has initiated the process of peer review, wherein the staff and community leaders in a programme area like EMPODER visit other areas to study and evaluate one another's progress and challenges. External consultants are appointed to involve communities in programme evaluation. However the team could not find much evidence where the common community members had a role in evaluating the programmes.

## **2.2.9 SDC's partnership management practices: Working with Civil Society organisations:**

### **2.2.9.1 Strengths of SDC's partnership management practices:**

**SDC has a flair for identifying ideas and people with potential:** SDC seems to have processes in place to identify and engage with people with potential and help them convert their ideas into successful development projects or programmes. In the initial phases, even before allocating financial assistance, COOF programme staffs create platforms for sharing and developing an idea, and in many cases, also give moral support to the persons concerned.

**SDC encourages and builds on local initiatives:** SDC enters into medium term (3-5 years) funding arrangements based on mutually agreed milestones. Almost every partnership lasts over a period of 10-15 years and is established only after a careful partner selection process that builds upon locally available competencies and experiences. Partners are encouraged to define locally relevant problems and solutions and to become familiar with similar issues or projects in other SDC programmes. Thereafter SDC enters into a long-term relationship with the partners, supporting them through thick and thin. SDC's patient and considerate attitude facilitates partner development and evolution of programme ideas into effective development interventions. SDC's image is that of a long-term trusted partner with an unwavering commitment to the cause as well as to the partner.

**SDC plays a subsidiary role and encourages the partners to set the agenda:** SDC does not dictate any specific idea or school of thought but encourages partners to come up with their own ideas. SDC also does not impose its own set of consultants or Swiss NGOs unless there is an explicit desire expressed by the partners to do so. Once a project is sanctioned, SDC does not indulge in micromanagement or backseat driving, and gives partners adequate freedom and flexibility to implement the project. SDC helps to develop intervention strategies further and to revise budgets in response to any midcourse changes if required.

SDC does not prescribe pre-designed formats for proposals and monitoring. It encourages partners to follow their own monitoring systems or helps them to strengthen existing monitoring systems in order to improve overall quality.

**SDC knows how to “give with grace”:** SDC staff creates an atmosphere where partners feel free to share their difficulties and express their views. Many partners disclosed that they could interact with SDC staff as peers rather than as bosses. Even small things like the location of monitoring meetings are mutually decided to make participation easier for the partner. For example in Bolivia, partner meetings are held in Cochabamba, more convenient for the partners rather than in La Paz where SDC offices are located.

**SDC follows the approach of persuasion and dialogue, rather than imposing its agenda on partner organisations:** SDC encourages the partners to undertake external evaluations and facilitate exposure and learning opportunities for the partner in forums such as international workshops and training programmes. For example, in Burkina Faso, SDC conducted gender awareness programmes for partners to help them mainstream gender concerns into their programmes. Thus with a view to long term partner development, SDC believes in investing in people, processes and institutions.

**SDC funding goes beyond programmes or projects:** SDC funds capacity building of partner programme staff. For example in Bolivia, SDC not only conducts specific training programmes and exposure visits, it also encourages partner programme staff to build their own libraries of development books, given free by SDC. After a programme has stabilized, SDC also invests in institutional development of the partner organisation.

**SDC advocates the development and spreads the word about good work done by partner organisations:** Many partners feel that having SDC as a donor helps them to attract other donors as SDC's assessment of different partners carries considerable weight in the donor community. SDC has also provided supplementary funding to partners, originally funded by other donors, for activities not covered by those funds. SDC advocates the relevance and effectiveness of successful partner programmes thereby utilising its clout as a respected bilateral donor.

**SDC nurtures specialist organisations that focus on a particular theme:** It uses their services as resource organisations for other SDC funded projects. SDC seeks the opinions of well-established partners on sector strategies. Even in monitoring meetings, SDC is open to suggestions not only with respect to a specific project but also on overall strategies, policies, and programmes of SDC.

SDC seeks involvement of partners in the evaluation of programmes by contracting partners who have acquired expertise in respective areas. SDC and its programme partners share complementary roles in macro-level state policy dialogue.

#### **2.2.9.2 Weaknesses of SDC's partnership management practices:**

**Lengthy decision making processes:** Since SDC prefers not to directly impose its expectations on partners, there are often long delays in discussing projects or proposals. Partners recounted their experiences of SDC making them rework proposals until SDC's expectations are met, giving the appearance that it has come forth naturally from the partner. Many partners felt that this process could be less arduous and time consuming if SDC could be more upfront about its non-negotiable requirements like participatory processes and gender mainstreaming.

**SDC is a demanding donor:** Some partners felt that SDC is a relatively demanding donor considering the amount of funds it offers. It frequently asks for detailed reports and commissions external evaluations that at times are unfairly time consuming and resource intensive for the partners.

**Problems with activity diversification from partners:** SDC's relationship with partner organisations falters when a partner organisation tries to diversify its activities beyond those originally supported by SDC. Many partner organisations, particularly field-based NGOs or CBOs have felt it necessary and important to diversify their activities in response to the needs of its beneficiary communities. In such situations COOFs have a tendency to reduce support or take lot of time in approving the new activities. This attitude combined with SDC's recent decision to support a limited number of sectors in a country inhibits partners from responding to community needs and allowing them to progress to higher stages of empowerment and development.

**No formal mechanism to validate SDC's role in enabling partners:** SDC principally does not work directly with communities. It seeks to enable recipient governments and partner organisations as well as all stakeholders between SDC and the community to help them reach out to marginalised groups, and to be responsive to their needs and priorities. However, the evaluation team did not come across any processes or tools to verify whether the civil society organisations find SDC's support enabling. Similarly there is no formal mechanism to assess the partner's readiness and capacities to empower the community.

#### **2.2.10 SDC struggles while working with governments in recipient countries:**

In view of the Paris Declaration, and general trends in international development, SDC is making conscious efforts to increase work with and through recipient governments. In case study countries, interviewees shared that their government needs to be empowered as an institution and hence donors like SDC should distribute aid through government machinery. SDC does believe that working through local government like municipalities would develop these systems and could be a good conduit to people at the grassroots level. It was quite clear that governments in countries like Burkina Faso are strapped of resources and hence need help. However many issues remain unresolved in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of government institutions as an implementer of development programmes, particularly its ability to support empowering development processes.

**Predicament of Municipalities:** SDC has put a lot of emphasis on working with municipalities both in Burkina Faso and Bolivia. For very different reasons, in both these states, municipalities are not empowered adequately by their respective central governments. In Burkina Faso, municipalities do not receive adequate financial support from central budgets, and hence are not in a position to take up any substantive activities for local town development, particularly for marginalised groups. Dominant social groups try to corner the resources available to the municipality and very little is left for the development of marginalised groups. SDC's efforts in funding municipalities for the development of pro-poor infrastructure have not yielded adequate results and SDC has decided to stop funding infrastructure projects. On the other hand, in Bolivia, due to the Law of Popular Participation, municipalities were substantially empowered both in terms of governance and funds. But expectations of beneficiaries are substantially higher than the funds allocated to municipalities. After the recent elections, communities' expectations and hopes have risen beyond the ability of local leaders to meet them. The central government on the other hand advocates directly distributing funds to community organisations, bypassing municipal-level intermediaries.

**Failure to emphasize pro-poor agenda:** SDC has made a lot of efforts in capacity building and institutional development of selected municipalities. Unlike an NGO or a CBO, any government system is accountable to more demands and pressure arising from different constituencies. Given the power dynamics of the different constituencies, mainstreaming pro-poor policies can be extremely difficult. For

example, according to some of the interviewees, the Bolivian government does not have many successful state-level policies because every new government has changed the policies of the previous government, often not allowing enough time for institutionalisation and implementation. Similarly in Burkina Faso, interviews revealed that the government of Burkina Faso has set their MDG targets much lower than those of the United Nations. While stating the reasons for this, besides resource limitations, government sources also expressed that they would prefer to use available resources for infrastructure development like power generation and constructing roads that would benefit a large majority of the population, and not exclusively the poorest/marginalised.

Similarly, unlike NGOs or CBOs, key government functionaries keep changing, particularly the elected representatives, reduces the chances of policy development, continuity, and implementation.

**Success in influencing sectoral policies not overall development strategy:**

The evaluation team observed two different approaches to influencing government policies in each case study country. In Burkina Faso, SDC is a partner to the PRSP process through SECO; however SDC has been successful in influencing government policies only in areas where it has demonstrated excellent results on the field, restricting its clout to a particular sector, policy area or development issue. Even government representatives expressed appreciation for SDC's suggestions in areas where SDC has a demonstrated expertise. Despite SDC's belief that being a part of the general budget support programme gives it the influence it has, the Burkina Faso experience demonstrates that SDC's influence is primarily in such areas where SDC has a proven and acknowledged domain expertise.

In Bolivia, SDC has also been able to influence national policies and programmes based on its fieldwork, such as pro-poor education programmes informed by its field-level successes. However its influence also permeates into the governance system as a whole, reflected in its role in piloting the idea of local self-government, helping draft the Law of Popular Participation, and compiling self-governance strategies in Bolivia funded by other donors. Though after the recent election of Bolivia's first indigenous President, this is increasingly being perceived as interference by a foreign donor in internal governance.

**Inadequacies of Government as implementer:** In the case study countries, especially in Burkina Faso, interviews with government representatives did not bring forth any coherent perspective on development. Most government officials seemed to be chasing quantitative targets without an awareness of their broader forward and backward linkages. For example reaching literacy targets without linking it with livelihoods opportunities. There was apathy and remorselessness. On the other hand the Bolivian government seemed to have initiated many pro-poor programmes but extreme swings in those policies due to ideological shifts are creating their own problems and pressures. Changes in the programme implementation staff are sometimes perceived to be politically motivated rather than professionally. The government's contribution to the promulgation and implementation of pro-poor laws is crucial for empowerment and poverty reduction but the government's efficacy as an agent of development was not very convincing in both the countries.

### 2.2.11 Conducive internal management practices

**Freedom to Employees:** SDC's people-management practices have made it a responsive and inclusive organisation. In the COOFs, NPOs as well as office staff feel involved and motivated. SDC encourages free exchange of ideas and opinions irrespective of organisational hierarchy. Program staff is encouraged not to direct partners but to engage in mutual dialogue to influence partners if necessary.

SDC has recruited local people as national programme officers, some of them having earned a distinctive position in the national arena. For example, the national programme officer in COOF Bolivia was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting and coordinating Dialogue 2000, a national-level process involving multi-level stakeholders and the government. Many examples were cited of SDC

programme staff having gone on deputation or been absorbed in government structures to scale up successful interventions or to develop a national policy or programme based on SDC's successes in the field.

The roles of expatriate staff and national staff are well delineated. Expatriate staff is generally involved in issues where the protocol demands that they must be involved. However they take the support of the national staff to help them do so.

**Internal Democracy:** Internally, SDC is a fairly democratic organisation. It encourages plurality of thought, action, and independent decision making among its staff members. It lends a fair amount of autonomy to programme staff, particularly in day-to-day operations. This has possibly led to a high degree of ownership and conviction in the staff about their work, with working late and on holidays indicative of this commitment.

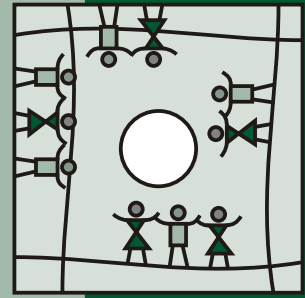
There is a broad consensus within SDC about its values, principles, and orientations, particularly with respect to its commitment to poverty reduction, development of underdeveloped areas, community development, community organisation and a faith in capacity building processes. Simultaneously, there is great diversity in terms of programme priorities, partner selection and aid modalities between countries. SDC's staff in country offices seems to be more empowered than those of its HQ. This has led to the increase in responsibility and role of the COOF director in shaping country programmes. Thus country programmes differ not only because of context but the personalities and preferences of COOF directors.



**Relations with other donors:** SDC seems to share a good working relationship with all donors operating in recipient countries. Many other donors value SDC's work at the field level. This is evident in SDC's ability to mobilise the resources of other donors, both bilateral and multilateral, to support development processes in areas and communities where SDC has an established presence. In Burkina Faso, FONAEF stands out as a unique model of multi-actor collaboration, including government, local NGOs, private organisations as well as international donors, in scaling up non-formal education at the macro level. However, seeking such support from other donors only happens at the initiative of SDC programme staff or partner so that this potential has not been consciously exploited to the extent possible.



## 3 Recommendations



The evaluation team has observed that SDC has several effective empowerment approaches. In line with the evaluation team's appreciative approach to studying empowerment, the recommendations are based on these already existing approaches, core competencies and organisational culture of SDC. In the opinion of the team, the recommendations need to be implemented through a participatory process by engaging the COOFs and evolving a shared understanding.

### 3.1 Link empowerment (as a means) and poverty reduction (as a goal):

SDC's 'nurturing' ways have undoubtedly initiated empowering processes in the recipient communities, however if empowerment is formally treated as strategy for poverty reduction, SDC can be more effective and efficient in alleviating poverty, its overarching goal. This clarity can resolve many issues, for example, whose empowerment, contextually relevant empowering issues, empowerment vis-à-vis which institutions – state, markets, religion or kinship? This will propel SDC to work towards bridging the gap between “development readiness” and development.

Owing to plurality as a culture, currently there are several views about what and how SDC can contribute to recipient community empowerment; the evaluation team suggests that the HQ should dedicate a time bound (a year or so) long process to come up with widely shared understanding on SDC's role. Such a process will have to be based on the ground level experiences, as excessive uses of normative or model based approaches are found constraining by the country level field functionaries.

To achieve this, SDC should convene an experience-sharing workshop of COOF directors along with key COOF staff on the theme of empowerment for poverty reduction. Each of them could be expected to share case studies of effective empowering approaches. If the evaluation team has to generalise from the experiences of the two countries, it could be said that specific empowerment approaches and strategies could be context specific, but SDC's roles and norms are generic.

### 3.2 Develop clarity of SDC's role in empowerment:

SDC does not directly work with the communities, SDC's role is primarily to assess and enable partner organisations to act as facilitators for empowerment. Since empowerment happens from within and is a continuous process, even the partners are not chasing a preset goal, but have to steer a catalytic process for empowerment.

To achieve this, SDC should develop non-negotiable guidelines in the design and implementation of programmes to ensure that all programmes have an empowering influence. These guidelines will not be about what to do, but about how to give support for community empowerment. The guidelines should include, strategies to deal with issues like inter group and intra-group power dynamics, checking alignment of thematic foci with the community priorities, etc. The above-mentioned workshop will also feed into designing of these guidelines.



### **3.3 Enhance community participation in programme life cycle:**

The recipient community perceives the very process of engaging in development as a major trigger for empowerment. Hence, SDC should ensure that the programme life cycle is devised not only 'for the people', but also 'by the people'.

To achieve this, efforts will be required at two levels, at SDC level and at partner organisation level. At SDC level, it can be done by, organizing regional (Africa/ Latin America) workshops involving representatives of all stakeholders particularly poorer sections of the community to define what is empowering, and how it is helping address poverty and formulating country level strategies based on the recipient communities' agenda for change, in addition to input from other sources.

At partner organisations level, SDC should encourage periodical community envisioning to feed into programme planning, consultation with the communities to negotiate nature and duration of SDC support, designing monitoring system to capture empowerment (such as pictorial calendars, photo documentation, critical incidence analysis, diaries), and its impact on poverty.

If the above processes are carried out in transparent and inclusive manner, system of down ward accountability can also be established.

### **3.4 Extend privileged treatment to people suffering from abject poverty:**

The evaluation team observed differential marginalisation in the recipient communities. In order to efficiently use resources, SDC needs to give privileged treatment to people suffering from abject poverty, because they also tend to be marginalised on other dimensions like access to education, health and social exclusion.

To achieve this, SDC should encourage partners to apply the MDG definition of abject poverty as the first level parameter to identify the poor. Wherever formal data is not available the community itself could be involved in defining contextually relevant and measurable parameters to identify the poorer among the poor. The programmes need to be redesigned to ensure that these 'poorer' participants get included on priority and receive preferential treatment vis-à-vis other participants. Concessions in contributions by making participant contribution back ended, of smaller instalments and in kind; phasing inputs over a longer period, as they cannot absorb larger assistance as better offs can could be some of the ways to give such preferential treatment.

Such an approach would also help SDC demonstrate its commitment to MDGs.

### **3.5 Act like an underwriter to upscale and broad base successful field experiments**

Though it recognises poverty as a multi dimensional phenomenon, for maximising impact of limited resources, SDC has reduced the number of priority countries and thematic foci. In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of available resources, converging programmes in the same location and addressing the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty is crucial. This may be done by reducing in the number of project locations within a country, and facilitating convergence between programmes in selected locations.

Alternatively, SDC should act like an underwriter to help communities and community-based organisations to forge alliances with other donors and resource organisations to obtain techno-managerial support. This will ensure funding for activities beyond SDC's priorities. The evaluation team feels that other donors, especially those focussed on specific domains, like health or watershed, will find "development ready" communities a fertile ground for their inputs. SDC HQ as well as COOFs needs to formally integrate this approach into the country strategies and develop proactive alliances at the national, regional and international level for a multi faceted approach to poverty reduction. SDC could pilot such an effort in a few countries in the near future.

### **3.6 Create Partnership Management Cell**

The evaluation team strongly feels that identifying and nurturing partnerships, particularly with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), is a distinctive strength of SDC. This augurs well with SDC's role of enabling partners to facilitate empowerment of the recipient communities. The evaluation team recommends that SDC should formally acknowledge partnership development as a crucial function for realizing its empowerment agenda.

To achieve this, SDC should create a partnership management cell, preferably within the bilateral division in SDC HQ. This cell should consolidate SDC's experiences of working with CSOs; develop guidelines for various stages of engagements; include partnership as a key result area in country strategies. The cell should also be responsible for monitoring of partnership initiatives and assist in formally incorporating partnership development efforts in the country strategies.

### **3.7 Be a 'venture capitalist' to boost promising partner organisations**

SDC's partners were seen not only as helping recipient communities in design and implementation of various programmes, but also as becoming central to furthering development processes in the respective countries and regions. In order to suitably assist their efforts, SDC HQ and COOFs could play a role similar to that of a 'venture capitalist' to build on field-tested partnership development models.

To achieve this, COOFs should set institutional evolution milestones with selected partners. SDC normally engages with partners through a three to five year contract. This contract should include how SDC and the partners will achieve institution development milestones along with the programme objectives. COOFs should design and use guidelines for various stages of engagements with partners from identification and nurturing potential ideas to institutional support, assisting them in exploring partnerships with other donors, and becoming a resource agency for other SDC supported programmes and evaluations, need to be evolved.

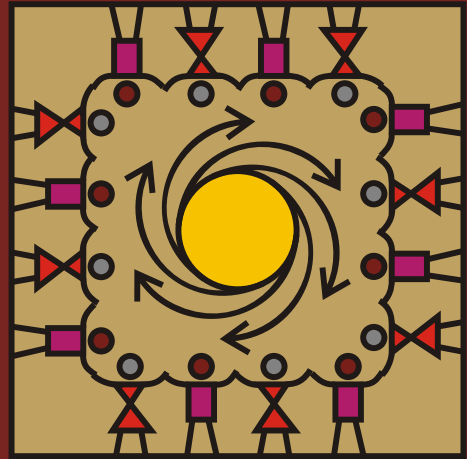
### **3.8 Graduate SDC-Govt interface towards FONAEF like arrangements**

SDC is increasingly making efforts to work with recipient governments, who perform two broad roles - as policy makers and as implementers. As far as policymaking is concerned SDC has had several positive experiences. COOFs have been able to influence policy-making especially in sectors where SDC had extensive knowledge of field conditions and demonstrated impact. Governments have responded positively to such initiatives by committing themselves for countrywide replications. On the contrary, the evaluation team found that when COOFs relied on government for programme implementation, many a times, they have encountered inefficiency, apathy and a lack of vision.

To achieve this, SDC should build upon effective platforms for multi-stake holder involvements. The evaluation team came across one such excellent model in Burkina Faso, FONAEF. It is an innovative funding and institutional arrangement for scaling up non-formal education programmes. It is supplemented by ALPHA a programme unit created by SDC for ensuring quality control and institutional development for reaching the un-reached. FONAEF is illustrative of how SDC can succeed in influencing grassroots level as well as policy level changes in a specific sector. FONAEF has acquired the legitimacy and funding but not the bureaucratic apathy and inefficiencies of government functioning. It has also been able to harmonise the funds and programmes of other donor organisations. These programmes have been conceptualised and implemented by local CBOs and NGOs. Though such a funding arrangement may not adhere to conventional aid modalities like 'donor harmonisation', it needs to be encouraged because of its effectiveness in furthering the agenda relevant to the empowerment of marginalised groups.



**Part 2:  
Burkina Faso  
Case Study Report**



## Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team would like to acknowledge the contribution all those who gave their time for interviews and community exercises in Burkina Faso.

We are grateful to the COOF staff for their time and efforts made to accommodate the needs of the team and for making field missions possible. We thank the project teams of TinTua, Adele, PDVM and FNGN who were all involved in making our field visits meaningful.

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Ms Anne Bichsel helped the team so much that sometimes we feel that we should recognize her as another team member. She selflessly endured the team's travel nightmares, endless demands for documents and interview appointments, translation glitches in the End of Mission workshop and stood-by the team when they were down and out. She challenged the team with her charm and a great sense of humour - the team values her contribution very much.

Last but not least, our thanks and encouragement goes to the many empowered women and men in SDC supported programs in Bogande, Malamu, Matiakouli, Tankiaka, Koumbri, Kodougou, and Ouahiguya who enthusiastically participated in our community exercises and gave the team valuable insights into processes of empowerment. It was stimulating to exchange experiences with people from faraway lands and learn from them.

The evaluation team would like to stress that the full responsibility for the text of this report rests with us, as the authors. The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent those of SDC or of the people consulted.

**Seemantinee Khot**

Evaluation Team Leader

20<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006

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## Executive Summary

1. This evaluation focused on SDC's institutional responsiveness to community needs and priorities and empowering approaches. Bolivia and Burkina Faso were selected as country case studies as examples of significant empowerment approaches of SDC. The first step in the evaluation was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development. The next step was to get other stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the donor – recipient relationship.
2. The evaluation methodology was appreciative, qualitative and exploratory taking into account the perspectives of all stakeholders, particularly those of recipient communities. The evaluation team endeavoured to make the data collection process empowering for all those involved so as to bring forth more relevant data and increased ownership of outcomes.
3. Burkina Faso faces significant development challenges largely due to the degradation of natural resources. Rainfall, ground water levels and vegetative cover are declining, leading to declining productivity. Of the estimated 12.1 million people, almost half live in poverty; 80 percent are subsistence farmers. There are 60 ethnic groups with a multitude of languages. French continues to be the official working language marginalizing a significant number of those who did not get an opportunity to learn French through the formal education system. People's participation in governance is minimal. Democratic and decentralization processes have just begun and the government is grappling with basic development issues of poverty, illiteracy and civic amenities. The country depends heavily on international aid which constitutes 10.8 percent of GDP.
4. As an SDC priority country since 1976, SDC's approach in Burkina Faso is two fold: a) creating spaces and opportunities for beneficiaries to participate in development processes and b) building institutional capacities at the national, regional or local level. SDC<sup>1</sup> has strategically chosen to avoid the creation of Swiss projects and instead supports a range of national partners. SDC's approach is distinctive in that it supports Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Its primary objective is to build the capacities of CSOs to design people-centred programs. Another priority is the creation of platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogue and corresponding platforms for exchanges between donors to allow better coordination of their actions and sharing of different visions of development. General budget support is provided to government with the intention of promoting pro-poor policies.
5. The issues deemed important for empowerment by the recipient communities were concerned with the basic necessities of life, namely: food, water and health. Communities also expressed needs for both 'soft' and 'hard' dimensions of empowerment. By and large, communities perceived positive changes on all issues. While education, information, organization, self-confidence, and sharing domestic work were seen as important, the lack of appropriate technology, material inputs, infrastructure and markets were seen as blocks to progress. The communities' ability and willingness to play a role in the transformation of their lives was evident. Evidence of empowerment manifested in their self-confidence, desire to change, articulation of needs and priorities, perception of change and recognition of a multitude of contributing factors. More importantly they were engaged in the processes of identifying alternatives to overcome obstructing factors. While both men and women shared examples of how they experienced positive transitions in their lives, it was particularly evident in the case of women. Men and women discussed changes in women's self-image, roles and participation in decision making, and men in particular admitted that their own views and attitudes towards women had 'improved'.

<sup>1</sup> Further reference to SDC in this summary refers to the SDC Country Office in Burkina Faso

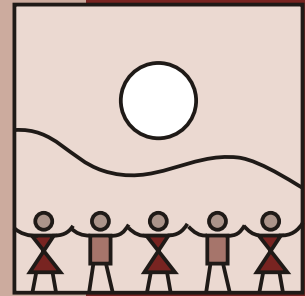
6. SDC has clearly demonstrated strengths as an empowering bilateral donor for beneficiaries and partners in Burkina Faso. Recipient communities identified many factors contributing to positive changes and development programs were seen as catalytic. For example, alphabetization programs increase participants' self-respect, provide them with learning opportunities and increase their access to credit. SDC's insistence on the inclusion of women in all programs has led to many effective strategies for women's participation in development and impacts are particularly visible among women, although there is room for improvement in meeting strategic gender needs. However, although SDC-supported programs have made communities feel that a process of empowerment is possible, they have not given them the actual experience of empowerment. SDC has been able to create "development-ready" communities, but not necessarily developed communities.
7. SDC concentrates on underdeveloped regions, but apart from gender equity, it does not probe into other issues of substantive equity within these regions. Since inclusion of marginalized groups is not an expressed priority, unintentionally they are further marginalized. By focusing on interventions which benefit the community as a whole, the 'marginalized', as per beneficiary definitions, are made to compete with others on unequal terms. Features in SDC programs like mandatory front-ended beneficiary contributions have resulted in the exclusion of the poorest. An additional feature of SDC programs in Burkina Faso is that the Country Office is better prepared to work with the 'poor with potential' rather than with those living in abject poverty. Beneficiaries with more potential to develop themselves are considered more promising investments than those with less potential requiring more inputs for the same development 'returns'. Furthermore there is little evidence of recipient community needs assessments feeding into the SDC Cooperation Strategy for Burkina Faso.
8. SDC invests ample time to understand its partners' values, ideology and commitment. Rather than imposing rigid working systems and guidelines, through a subtle process of acculturation, SDC tries to encourage partners to align their behaviour with SDC's principles and values. However SDC's relationships with its partners seem to develop problems when partners attempt to diversify their activities. Additionally, SDC lacks a firm strategy for phasing out long-standing partners resulting in ambiguity in program planning.
9. Despite the difficulties of working with the government as opposed to CSOs, SDC chooses to continue working with the government with the hope of influencing its policies towards a pro-poor perspective. SDC has earned credibility among other donors and the government owing to its knowledge of ground-level processes. This has also helped to strengthen the representation of community realities in national-level policy dialogue. With regard to general budget support, SDC has used its 'seat at the table' to effectively influence major policymaking processes. SDC has demonstrated innovation in creating effective multi-stakeholder forums for consensus building in specialized areas, for example, in education through the FONEANF program. It also demonstrates strengths in policy dialogue processes in the specialized areas of education, decentralization and governance. However, direct support to projects, for example, in infrastructure development, has not achieved SDC's objective of strengthening decentralization processes.
10. Wherever necessary, SDC employs a non-confrontationist strategy. It does not challenge power structures but rather co-opts them into its programs. The evaluation team observed that discomforts with SDC's approaches, if any, arose from SDC's non-confrontationist approach in dealing with power structures, its ambiguity in phasing-out long standing partners and its time-consuming decision making processes.

11. There is a strategic division in the roles between expatriate and national staff who are generally responsible for policy dialogue and operational aspects respectively. All staff enjoy operational freedom and are expected to manage respective partnerships independently. Rotation of program responsibilities and regular interactions with the Country Office director help ensure all staff have adequate opportunities for self-development. However, funding of Citizens Based Organisations (CBOs) has increased the demands on the Country Office team. Still, empowering aspects of the Country Office environment were evident.
12. SDC's performance in mainstreaming and reporting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was found to have much room for improvement. The MDGs are used by SDC only as reference points for funding proposals. In fact there is a subtle resistance to the MDGs, sometimes considered originating from global dialogues perceived to be far removed from the reality of ground level processes and superimposed on historically evolved development processes. Nevertheless, if SDC better operationalised the MDGs, communities could supplement proxy indicators and collect data as feedback. Changes in gender norms as a result of SDC-supported programs also remain unreported to the outside world. The discomfort within SDC to report on the MDGs is unwarranted.
13. Some suggestions for strengthening SDC's Burkina Faso strategy are offered below:
  - Focus on people suffering from abject poverty. Modify programs to prioritise the marginalized and poorest of the poor.
  - Strengthen gender responsiveness by identifying relatively more marginalized women (e.g. subordinate wives in polygamous marriages, sex workers, AIDS affected, childless women); and addressing strategic needs of control over resources.
  - Carry out and use comprehensive needs assessments with recipient communities and collaboratively develop relevant indicators for monitoring empowerment.
  - Focus resources in fewer geographical areas and support a range of livelihood-related issues to have more visible impacts.
  - Revisit partnership management practices, especially phasing out, supporting diversification and using bilateral experience to strengthen multilateral programs.
  - Engage with the government through multistakeholder forums (i.e., FONAENF-like modalities) in other issue areas to build upon field successes, avoid bureaucratic apathy and upscale programs
  - Formally acknowledge SDC's investment in partner development as an equally important impact of SDC's work and formalize and systematize partnership development strategies and programs. Ambiguities on exit strategies should be clarified to give partners clearer expectations and incentives to develop self-sustainable programs.
  - Operationalise strategies to mainstream the MDGs in planning, monitoring, allocating resources, evaluating and documenting outcomes to help align SDC's efforts with international standards, to showcase SDC's contributions towards achieving the MDGs, and to become a legitimate leader in promoting strategies to achieve the MDGs.
  - Disseminate findings of this evaluation with all stakeholders





# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 Background to the evaluation

This Independent Evaluation was commissioned to understand and integrate the perspectives on empowerment of communities and implementing partners an important link between recipient communities and SDC. The focus of the evaluation was on SDC's institutional responsiveness to the needs and priorities of communities, especially those of the marginalized groups, in recipient countries. The purpose was to assess the processes by which SDC ensures accountability towards recipient communities, in addition to governments in recipient countries, Swiss government and tax payers.

This evaluation is unique in that SDC has hired a team of development professionals from *the global south (India)*, who are “constructively engaged in causes of the poor”. The intention was to control for biases, if any, of Northern and donor-based perspectives and priorities. Care was taken to select a team having “sufficient distance” from SDC and national governments. The Evaluation process was designed by the Evaluation Team in consultation with SDC's Evaluation + Controlling Division and the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) in May 2006.

SDC selected Burkina Faso and Bolivia as country case studies illustrative of significant empowerment strategies of SDC. This was supplemented by interviews of staff at SDC Head quarters (HQ) in Bern. The data collection took place between June and August 2006.

## 1.2 The Burkina Faso context

Burkina Faso faces significant development challenges largely due to unfavourable climatic and geographical conditions. The region is adversely affected by the degradation of natural resources. Rainfall, ground water levels and vegetative cover are declining. The amount of land under cultivation is increasing but productivity remains low<sup>2</sup>.

Almost half the population lives in poverty. Around 80% of the estimated population of 12.1 million lives in rural areas and depends upon agriculture for its livelihood. Most people are subsistence farmers with rain fed agriculture, and grow food crops - millets, cowpea and tubers. Cotton is the major cash crop and accounts for 30% of GDP. International aid makes up to 10.8 % of GDP putting it ahead of export as a source of foreign exchange earning<sup>3</sup>.

### Box 1: Burkina Faso's Development Status

- Human Development Index Rank: 175
- Percentage living on less than one dollar per day: 44.9% (82000 CFA/ year)
- Percentage living on less than two dollars per day: 81%
- Infant Mortality Rate: 207 per 1000 (2003)
- Life expectancy at birth: 47.5 years
- Literacy rate for age 15 +: 12.5 %
- Primary school enrolment rate: 33% in 2005
- One of the lowest doctor - patient ratio: 1: >33000
- Percent of population undernourished: 17% (2001)

Source: HDR 2005.

2. Manson, Katrina and James Knight. *Burkina Faso. Bradt Travel Guides Ltd.*

*Chalford St. Peter. England, May 2005.*

3. *Ibid.*



### Box 2: People referred to as “the population”

Throughout the mission, the team was intrigued with the use of the term “the population” for referring to the community members. Even those educated in state schools used the term when referring to both large and small groups of rural people. In English the word “population” has macro-level connotations, implying the entire populace of a state and hence led evaluators to inquire after the meaning of the term. Its origins lie in the fact that despite social and cultural diversity, the poor in Burkina Faso are still considered as one large homogeneous group of people. This is indicative of how governance and political participation is perceived in Burkina Faso: the 'state' being at the center and everyone below is 'the population'.

Burkina Faso was a French colony until 1967 and French is the official language. The Mossi are the most dominant ethnic group. There are 60 other ethnic groups, all maintaining their identities mainly through their own languages. Indigenous languages are largely oral traditions and the scripts are not well developed. Therefore French continues to dominate public communication, even after Independence. Democracy is new and government budgets are largely operated through the central government. The first central elections took place in 1991 and local elections only in February 2006.

Current development priorities include building human capital by making the education system more efficient, effective and inclusive; increasing productivity particularly in agriculture, livestock, industry and services; increasing food security by enlarging livelihood portfolios to reduce dependency on rain fed agriculture; improving sanitation and health care; improving the capacities of community-based organizations to collectively organize backward and forward market linkages for production-based activities; and establishing an enabling environment for business and entrepreneurship development to thrive.

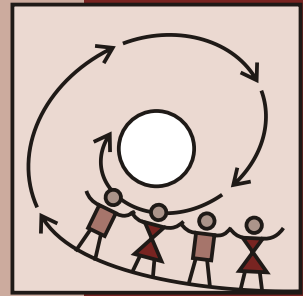
### 1.3 SDC in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has been a priority country for SDC since 1976. Its relatively small size as a donor agency with limited resources has led to the strategic choice to avoid the creation of Swiss projects and it provides maximum freedom to national partners, government as well as civil society organizations, in the design and implementation of programs. It focuses on four broad areas of activity: a) Development of the local economy by strengthening micro-enterprises and local artisans in pursuit of better access to markets and production factors, b) Rural development with the primary focus on intensifying modes of production and decentralization; c) Literacy and livelihood education, and d) Decentralization.

The program strategy follows a multi-stakeholder, participative approach and engages all partners in evolving their roles and responsibilities. Direct support to CSOs is one of the distinct features of SDC activities in Burkina. The primary objective is to build their capacities to design people-centred programs. SDC assists by forging the best possible synergies between and within public and private stakeholders according to their competences and their engagements.

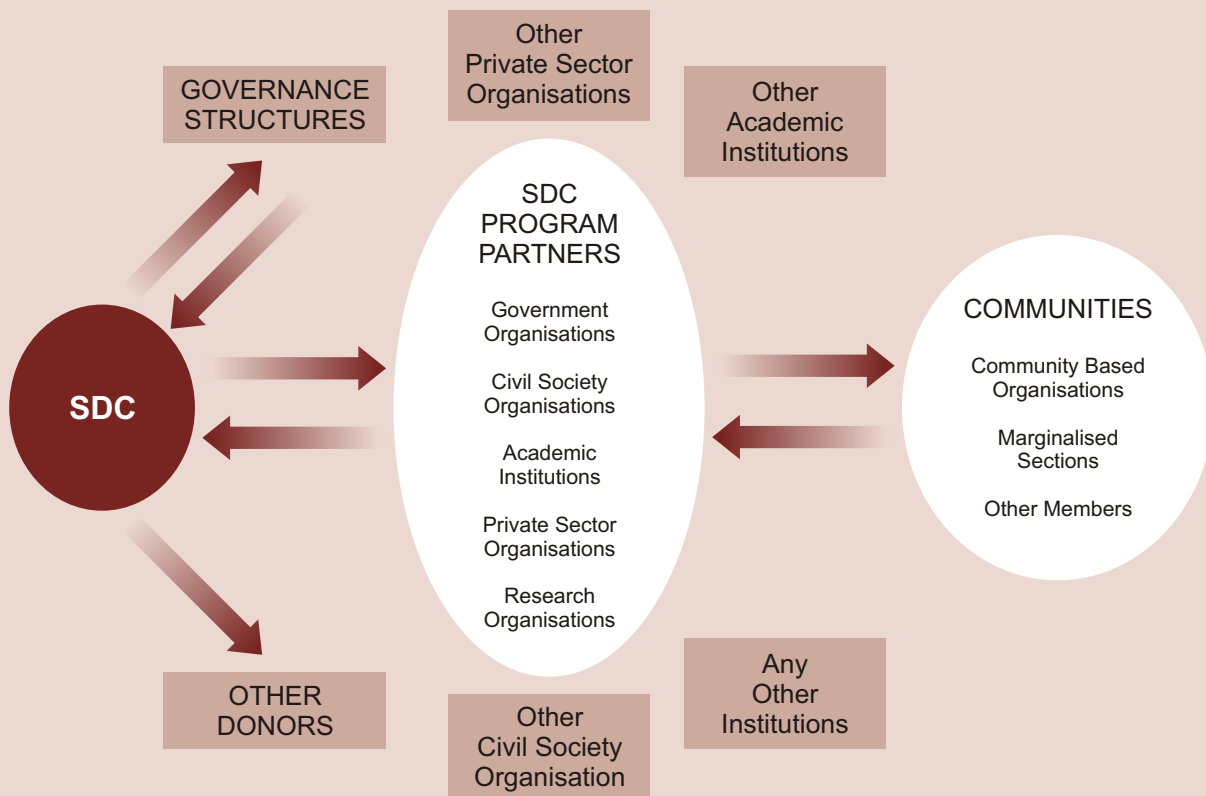


## 2 Methodology and Process of Evaluation



The evaluation was designed as an exploration of SDC's institutional ecology and its inter-institutional exchanges. The first step was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development. The next step was to get other stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the institutional dimension of relationships between the donor agency and its various partners.

Box 3: Scope of the Independent Evaluation to assess SDC's performance



In Burkina Faso the Evaluation Team reviewed if and how the three stakeholder groups; the recipient communities, partner organizations and SDC staff, found various relationships empowering. Box 3 above depicts the relationship links explored.

The evaluation methodology was appreciative, qualitative and exploratory. The team probed into stakeholders' responses to reveal deeper meanings. The concepts of 'empowerment' and 'marginalization' were central to the evaluation methodology however instead of following any externally defined indicators of empowerment or marginalization participatory exercises were conducted to get the communities' perspectives of what they meant.

## 2.1 Sample selection

The team sought the guidance of the SDC Country Coordination Office (COOF) staff to decide which projects and field locations to cover. Not quantity, but quality, stratification and diversity of the sample were more important. The time and logistical constraints also had to be considered. The COOF staff identified four programs but the Evaluation Team chose three, representing the thematic areas of Education (Alphabetization), Decentralization, and Rural Development. The programs visited by the team are given in Table 1 and details of the sample covered are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1: Sample Selection<sup>4</sup>**

Location/ Theme	Education	Rural Development	Decentralization
Fada N' Gourma	Tin Tua	Adele	EPCD (Cattle Market)
Koudougou			EPCD (Market, hospital)
Ouahigouya	Alpha	FNGN	EPCD (Slaughter House Market)



Program officers at the COOF were requested to brief the team about the program and detail the program management structures. In every location, the team tried to cover all three stakeholder groups. The team chose interviewees based on their roles in program management so as to collect a range of perspectives.

Individual interviews were held with SDC program officers, government representatives, senior management of partner organizations, and staff of partner organizations associated with the programs visited. Group interviews were held with field staff and focus group discussions with community representatives

and members. In each program area two communities were selected in consultation with partner organizations.

## 2.2 Process of data collection

For data collection, the Evaluation Team had two to three days in each program area and seven days at the COOF in Ouagadougou. As far as possible, the Team made it a point to meet respondents in their own settings. The COOF staff decided not to accompany the Team as their role as 'donor representative' could have affected the responses.

**Table 2 : Sample Covered in Burkina Faso**

Location / Project	Community	Partner Organization	SDC	Total
Fada: ADELE	213	7	1	221
Fada: TINTUA	103	9	0	112
Koudougou EPCD	104	5		109
Ouahigouya EPCD	2	2		4
Koumbri/FNGN	400	7	0	407
Alpha	0	0	2	2
Ouagadougou	0	15	6	21
Total	822	45	9	876

4. The selected regions of Fada N' Gourma, Koudougou and Ouahigouya were representative of the major regions (east, west, north), ethnic groups, and partnership mix that SDC works with.

**Orientation of Translators:** The Team depended heavily on translators to communicate with recipient communities. In order to minimize loss of data, reduce biases and ensure sound data collection, they invested considerable time in selecting and training translators. Four translators, two men and two women, fluent in French, Morré and Gourmantché, were hired. The team encouraged the translators to think critically to adapt data collection tools to the local context.

**Participatory exercises with the community members:** In every location, the team requested local program staff to organize community meetings. Rapport building with recipient communities was a priority. The team had the distinct advantage of being development practitioners from the global South. Both community members and partner organization staff alike were curious about the conditions in rural India. The evaluation team exchanged courtesies in local dialects, shared background information about team members and explained the purpose of the visit, giving time to answer their questions. The team took an appreciative approach to explore progressive changes, allowing discussion on various dimensions of empowerment. Thereafter using a set of 25 picture cards, the team initiated discussions on community perspectives on the different dimensions (see Annex 5). The discussions followed a consistent pattern of four main steps:

- Respondents selected five issues that they considered most important to take charge of their lives, with the freedom to add any missing dimensions,
- Then they ranked the dimensions in order of their importance and substantiated the ranking,
- The next step was to organize the issues by perceived changes in their condition. For this four cards with visual symbols for negative change, no change, positive change and very positive change were provided, and
- Finally they discussed the factors that contributed to or obstructed the perceived changes.

To aid independent thinking, the team stayed away from the group while they were selecting and ranking the cards. With the help of translators they noted points of debate, disagreement, consensus, and patterns in the participation of respondents across different social groups.

Other stakeholders were given semi-structured interviews as per the interview tools listed in Annex 6. (See Annex 2 for a list of interviews). All stakeholders were asked direct questions about their understanding of empowerment and marginalization, and how they thought the perspectives of marginalized groups were incorporated into the respective program designs. Government representatives and senior staff of partner organizations were further questioned on empowering aspects of partnership dynamics for beneficiaries, and for addressing power relations in communities. Interviewees were also asked for their opinion about distinguishing features of SDC as a donor.

### 2.3 Data analysis

**From Triangulation to Findings:** At the end of each field visit, the team organized their interviews into responses to the key questions and subsequently triangulated hypotheses. Findings that could be verified from three independent sources were finally included in the report.

The team also took cognizance of the interviewees' choice and priority of issues to



#### Box 4: The Communities' Interest in Evaluation

When the respondents were asked if they wanted to know anything about development experiences in India, the issues which they showed interest in were women's land rights, the type of agricultural implements used by Indian farmers, organic manuring, and milk producer organizations. These topics can be considered indicative of their valued issues of empowerment.



### Box 5: Nobody is marginalized in Burkina!

During the EOM, there was an animated debate on the terms “empowerment” and “marginalization”. Both the words do not translate directly into French and local languages. In the Burkina context, empowerment connotes a transfer of political power from the powerful to poor and powerless, and therefore could be seen as “threatening” by government officials. “Marginalization” was resisted as an alien concept as the Burkinabé consider their society highly inclusive. They cited examples of urban and rural communities taking care of physically or mentally challenged persons and the destitute. For them, only those ostracized for socially unacceptable behaviour could be called marginalized. Workshop participants advised the evaluation team to explore the range of perspectives available on these terms before arriving at any conclusive definition.

discuss, and the ease with which they used examples with their answers. Interviews with the COOF country director were given additional weight. Preliminary findings and observations were shared with her before presenting them in the End of Mission workshop (EOM) for discussion and checking factual correctness.

**The End of Mission workshop:** The EOM workshop was conducted to present and discuss preliminary findings with the COOF staff, heads of partner organizations among other respondents of the evaluation. The team also used the EOM as an opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies and misinterpretations due to language barriers.

## 2.4 Limitations

Sometimes respondents thought the evaluation process would decide the fate of their programs. At such times, the respondents went to great lengths to justify continued support from SDC. However the non-judgmental nature of the methods steered their attention towards broader perspectives of empowerment and marginalization.

The COOF staff felt that the evaluation would also provide some feedback on enhancing the impact of their programs. The Terms of Reference given by the E+C division in Bern were actually focussed on institutional processes of SDC, and not on programme evaluation. Nevertheless, based on the empirical data and field experience, the team accommodate the request of the COOF staff by providing recommendations informally.

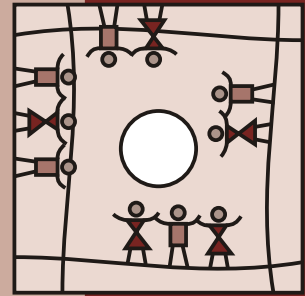
All field visits were scheduled in consultation with the team and concerned program staff. The team felt that if they had taken the community's opinion regarding place, time and discussion topics it could have helped to bring out more qualitative data. There were instances when community members arrived for meetings hours in advance and waited. There were also times when people chose to stay on beyond the agreed time as they were energized by the exercises, and were interested in the team's experiences as development practitioners.

## 2.5 Empowering aspects of the evaluation

The team insisted that the methodology should be in line with the subject matter and endeavoured to make the process empowering for all involved. Having reviewed the SDC *literature* on empowerment and marginalization, they decided not to force these definitions on respondents. The team chose to explore their meaning-making processes to understand how recipient communities and other stakeholders applied the concepts to their daily lives. The team strove to make the evaluation based substantively on community perspectives by investing ample time and effort in preparing and carrying out the community exercises.



### 3 Community Perspectives and Experiences of Empowerment



Like poverty, empowerment is seen as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is regarded as a development agenda for poverty alleviation. While making the link between empowerment and poverty reduction, depending upon the social and political context. In Burkina Faso SDC supports programs related to governance and decentralization, education and literacy, sustainable access to natural resources, the struggle against inequalities and discrimination, and gender.

Program planning and implementation is guided by the principles of participation and self-help vis-à-vis the state as well as a commitment to increasing individual choice, collective organization, and agency in the context of market reforms in the recipient countries. In the Burkina Faso COOF it is understood that empowerment cannot be 'done' or 'given', but has to 'happen' from within. It needs to be induced through bottom-up transformation; with careful consideration for the need to exert top-down pressure. SDC's support for community-level programs is typically in the form of capacity building, technology transfer, material inputs for income generation, and institution building. In government partnerships, SDC tends to engage in policy dialogue for pro-poor structural and legal changes.

SDC does not formally verify whether the governments, partners and communities find SDC's support empowering, how they deploy empowerment, or any increase in the efficiency of development aid. Empowerment at the government and partner organization level is expected to reflect in their financial self-sufficiency and democratic decision-making, while at the community level, in psychological, economic, social, political and legal spheres at the micro, meso, and macro levels of action. There are also no tools or mechanisms to assess these aspects either.

#### 3.1 Empowerment in Burkina Faso

Empowerment activities are an integral part of SDC's strategy for poverty reduction. To some extent their programmatic choices reflect this conviction. Perspectives on empowerment vary. The COOF staff advised that the word 'empowerment' has political connotations, and should be avoided as much as possible during the evaluation to avoid misinterpretations. According to them, in Burkina Faso, empowerment is largely understood as a process in which the powerless and poor access political power, and therefore might be seen as "threatening" by those in power. SDC has opted to work on seemingly "apolitical" dimensions, such as literacy and rural development.

For example, education programs such as Alphabetization are a means to help the poor bolster their self-confidence, imparting life skills and knowledge to help them analyze and develop potential solutions to their problems. People are now aware that they are responsible for the deterioration of their natural resources.

Another example is COOF supported rural development program to boost the local economy. This program seeks to empower beneficiaries politically and economically by organizing communities and influencing the government to create enabling conditions for the poor, subsistence farmers and artisans to secure a position in local markets, and eventually *demand* their *rights* and entitlements.



### 3.2 Framework for assessing empowering processes

Empowerment is an experiential process; what is empowering or disempowering is person/ community and context specific. Therefore any external definition of empowerment might not be suitable for all. The first signs of empowerment are to experience what is 'empowering', recognizing it, and being able to articulate it. For individuals in under-developed communities there will always be several issues that are desirable for getting that feel of empowerment. Being able to prioritize what is most desirable is the next stage on the path of empowerment.

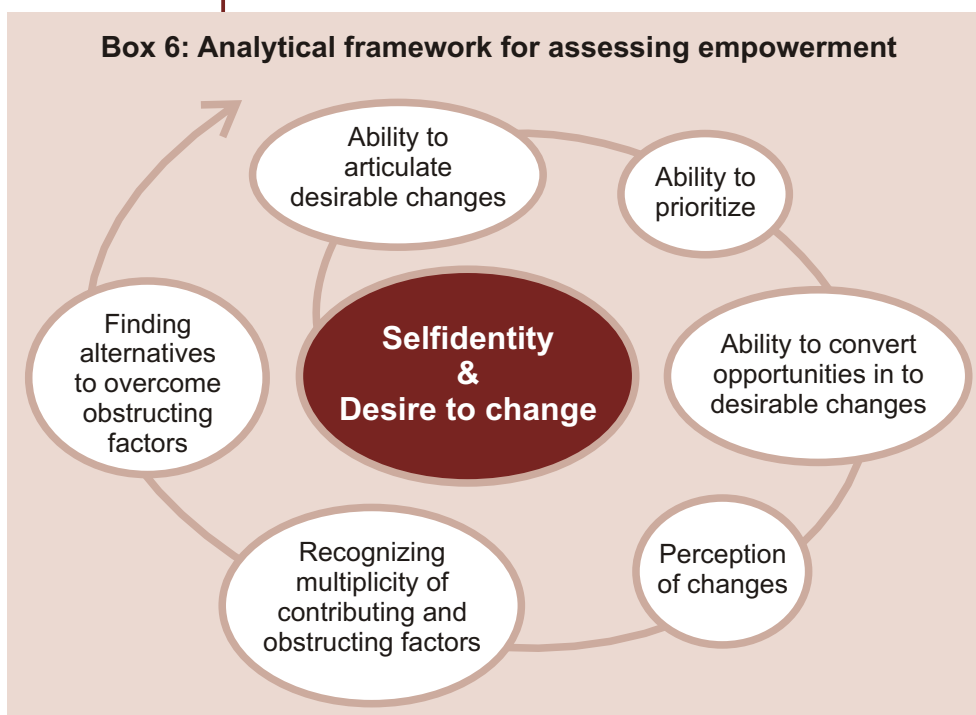
The Evaluation Team worked with the assumption that 'empowerment' if it exists, will manifest in its deployment, that is an empowered individual will use and convert opportunities to move towards his/ her desired state or situation. Hence it was important to find out if there was any movement in the desirable direction, and whether the individual concerned experienced the movement and knew if the changes were on track or not. These individuals would also be able to identify factors that contributed to or inhibited their progress towards the desirable changes.

The team also acknowledged that empowerment does not mean fulfilment of all desires, but it refers to the consistent engagement with finding alternatives, refining one's abilities and moving ahead. An active pursuit to move onto desirable direction would be ridden with challenges and periodically might give a sense of disempowerment. For the empowered, dealing with those challenges and finding alternatives would help individuals regain control over the process. Empowerment is not static. Both disempowering and empowering forces and outcomes are an integral part of the process, and being aware/ conscious of this dynamism is another sign of empowerment. Calibrating oneself and deploying one's abilities according to changing/ evolving needs and priorities, and negotiating changes with other actors, who influence the changes, is yet another indicator of empowerment. Many assumptions about what is good life decide the direction and destination of the empowerment journey. Life experiences and changes in the environment can dramatically alter the meaning, process and destination of empowerment.

The evaluation team studied whether the phenomena of empowerment are evident at both individual and community levels and are complimentary to one another, whether the marginalised in the recipient communities have their own agenda of empowerment, and whether there is a shared agenda across the community based on common needs. The team then studied what communities attributed changes to in the status of dimensions of empowerment, and whether these changes were perceived as relating to one's self, the development program, or the wider environment.

The greater the frequency with which respondents identified themselves or their communities as driving changes in empowering dimensions, the greater the level of empowerment. This conceptual understanding used by the evaluation team while assessing 'empowerment' is captured in Box 6.

#### Box 6: Analytical framework for assessing empowerment



The Evaluation Team used participatory community exercises, home visits and informal interactions as windows to observe the following indicators of empowerment, based on the framework.

- Sense of self identity (reflected in self-confidence),
- Desire to change (reflected in articulation of what is desirable),
- Ability to prioritise (reflected in reasons given)
- Perception of change on issues
- Recognition of contributing and obstructing factors
- Process of identifying alternatives to overcome obstructing factors, and
- Continuity of process of redefining desirable changes and role for themselves.

The Evaluation Team avoided direct questioning on whether SDC programs were empowering. Instead it was left to participants to list contributing factors to issues in their lives. Whether reference was made to development programs or not was observed.

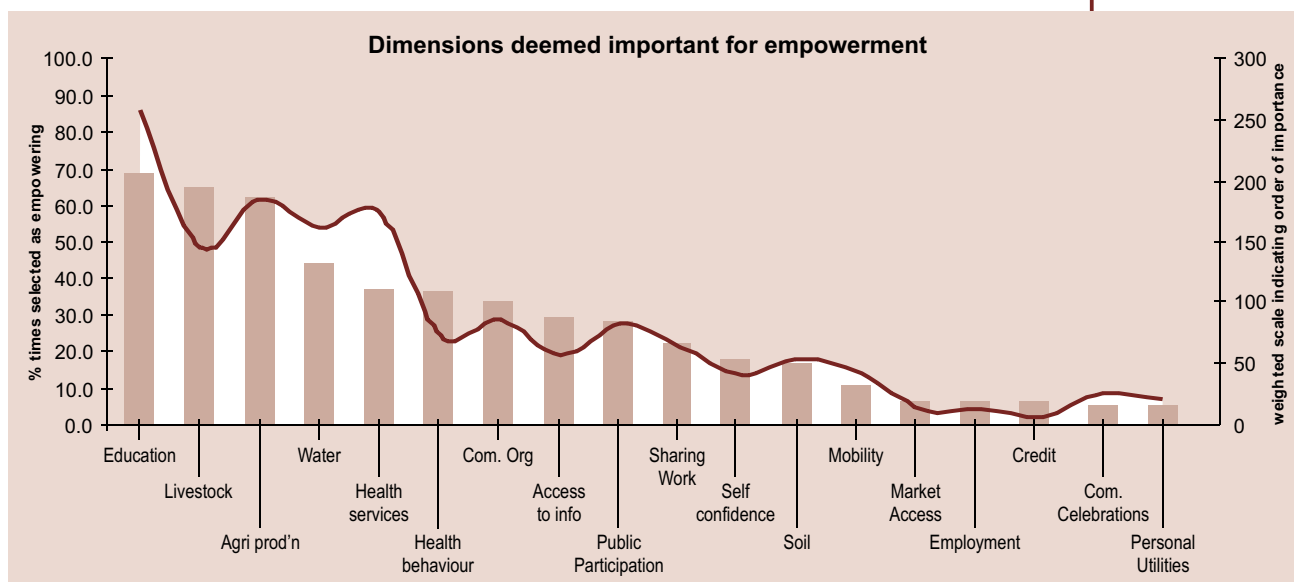
### 3.3 Evidence of empowering processes

The evaluation team found that recipient communities are placed at various stages of empowering processes. Apart from the content of what they shared, there were high levels of participation, indicative of community empowerment. Both men and women participated with enthusiasm. Those who had attended Alphabetization and were part of organized beneficiary groups were relatively more vocal. Their interest and willingness to express and debate differences of opinion are indicative of an empowering environment. There was no hesitation in pointing out drawbacks in the programs even in the presence of program managers. Those who were quiet for a long time and seemed not to be participating would often surprise facilitators by raising hands and making highly relevant points with confidence.

### 3.4 What do recipient communities find necessary for empowerment

The issues deemed important for empowerment by the recipient communities concerned the basic necessities of life, food, water and health (see graph below), and opportunities for non-formal education were picked as the most important dimension, essentially because in their experience it served as a channel for other aspects of empowerment. (See Annex 8 for more detailed figures.)

The community expressed needs for both 'soft' and 'hard' development. While education, information, organization, confidence, and sharing work were seen as important, they also required appropriate technologies, material inputs, and infrastructure for their well-being. For example, for increased mobility, both breaking psychological barriers and having roads and transport were mentioned as equally important.



Some observations corroborating community data are listed in the following table.

**Table 3 : Evaluation Team's observations corroborating with community sharing**

Selected Issues	Corroborative evidence
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education was not part of the initial set of cards it was added by the community and in spite of being drawn by hand, and not matching the other cards it was invariably picked first</li> <li>● There was very little debate regarding inclusion of the education card</li> <li>● Men, women and youth all opted for the education card over other cards</li> <li>● There was a marked difference between responses of the 'alphabetized' and 'non alphabetized' clearly indicative of positive impacts of education</li> </ul>
Livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All the households visited had livestock</li> <li>● Cattle fattening was mentioned as the most useful topic in Alphabetization</li> <li>● 'Wished for' staple diet included red meat</li> <li>● The cattle market was crowded and considered as the most important place in the area</li> <li>● Cattle looked obviously malnourished indicating shortage of feed and fodder and need for better management</li> <li>● Loans taken for the purchase of livestock were the largest</li> <li>● Cattle was independently owned by men and women</li> </ul>
Agriculture production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Soil and conservation work not done on most plots</li> <li>● Land under cultivation only 3.5 million ha out of 274, 200 km</li> <li>● Cropping intensity was &lt; 2</li> <li>● Most community members were subsistence farmers</li> <li>● Reasons for late sowing were unavailability of seeds, lack of plough, and hoes</li> <li>● Main problems reported were poor germination of seeds, low / no soil depth, lack of protective irrigation, limited knowledge about alternate varieties</li> <li>● Biomass processing (composting), drip irrigation were not practiced widely</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Even in village restaurants water must be purchased</li> <li>● The wells visited were &gt;100 feet deep</li> <li>● Decreasing rainfall (source)</li> <li>● Productivity in decline only millets grown</li> <li>● Interest in drip irrigation scheme</li> <li>● Women particularly mentioned drudgery due to water shortage</li> <li>● Well-deepening was reported as an important factor especially by women</li> </ul>
Health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Women often mentioned loss of indigenous health knowledge and practices as an area of concern</li> <li>● Incidence of AIDS increasing slowly but steadily</li> <li>● Hospitals lacked basic facilities.</li> <li>● Only one visiting doctor for 50 admitted patients in Koudougou</li> </ul>

It is interesting to note that the issues that the community did not find relevant in their current context related to their political rights, that is voting and solidarity in claiming rights. They see a stronger relation between degradation of natural resources and their empowerment, rather than with the State.

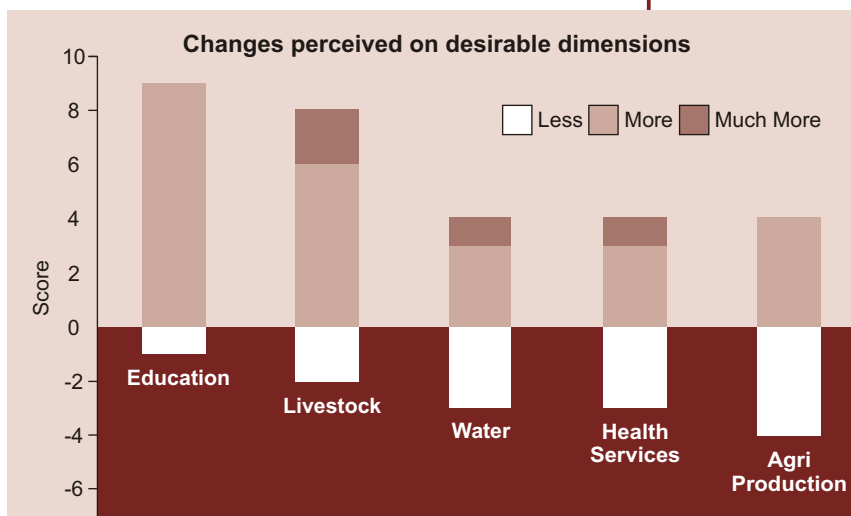
### 3.5 Perception of change on empowerment-related issues

By and large, the community perceived positive changes on all issues they considered important for their empowerment, but with each issue they also expressed some concerns. For example, while there was great satisfaction over non-formal education, prospects of formal education were doubtful. An increase in the number of unemployed educated people, especially youth, was an area of concern. Some community members expressed that the student: teacher ratio, medium of instruction and curriculum required improvement.

Thus in their view the process of change has begun however it is considered insufficient and more has to be done.

### 3.6 Changes in gender roles and relations

Both men and women reported changes in women's self image and participation in intra-family decision making as well as in their role in community-level decision making. This was one of the most prominent changes. Women's participation in equal numbers with men and their confidence to defend their opinions was visible. Women were publicly broaching strategic issues such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, birth control, and use of condoms. Men reported that women questioning oppressive customs, demanding changes in the behaviour of men, taking over new roles and influencing monetary decisions were new challenges for them.



### 3.7 Factors contributing to change

Recipient communities acknowledged multiple contributing factors for empowerment. That the community members recognized themselves as key players is an important indicator of their empowerment and emancipation. Some examples of the contributing factors are presented in table 4 below; the first row lists factors within communities, SDC programs and the larger context and the second row lists what the community thought is both the result of development programs and is further contributing to change.



**Table 4 : Contributing factors attributing positive change**

Self / Community	Program	Larger Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collective action: Non-hierarchical community, Support of Traditional leaders, Meetings conducted in public spaces (and not private), Relevant topics selected for public meetings, 'we feeling', Sharing of information within community</li> <li>● Community eager for change</li> <li>● Large family size can afford to spare some family members for taking up community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information about improved tools, Health education through popular media skits, TV, school.</li> <li>● Availability of Health services</li> <li>● Tree-planting campaigns</li> <li>● Availability of transport mobility, possibility of moving rapidly between places, provide others with news and help</li> <li>● Quality of persons selected as teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Market: foreign goods in the market, Demand from neighboring countries</li> <li>● Peace Relatively more peace compared to neighboring countries, No history of violence, peace loving people</li> </ul>
As outcomes of development interventions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parents becoming open-minded - sending girls to school</li> <li>● Loans and personal gifts from friends</li> <li>● Consciousness about personal hygiene and sanitation</li> <li>● Positive change in self worth, Recognizing one's own capabilities</li> <li>● Self help</li> <li>● Overcoming oppressive traditions</li> <li>● Investing in cattle - a way of sparing for harder days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alphabetization including numeracy, Employment opportunities resulting from education, Awareness of importance of clean and safe drinking water</li> <li>● Local economy :Cattle market , Credit to buy livestock and food, Pricing of assets / implements, Petty trading</li> <li>● Agriculture- related training (sowing technology, manure, contour binding, drip irrigation, soil conservation)</li> <li>● Sensitization about anti social / anti women practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overall approach to development focuses on communities' perspectives</li> <li>● Importance to education &amp; schools</li> <li>● Roads facilitating access to schools</li> </ul>

**3.8 Factors observed by the evaluation team**

**Taking the education route:** Community members whole-heartedly acknowledged “education” as an entry point to other dimensions of empowerment. Their experience shows that by applying the information and skills acquired through “Alphabetization”, they have been able to improve the status of their basic needs. Life-skills education has created capacities to explore livelihood options such as cattle fattening, producing two crops a year, and selling surplus beans in the market. However while none of these activities were entirely new to the area, people were still largely unaware of their potential to enhance their livelihoods through such methods. Beneficiaries consider themselves empowered to a certain extent by education programs, but the quality and curricula of education needs further modifications to make it more relevant to real-life needs and problems.

The second observable advantage of Alphabetization raised by the community was behavioural changes leading to changes in interactions between social groups. Traditionally different ethnic groups co-existed without much interaction between each other due to a difference in language. However with Alphabetization classes, they are required to spend 4-6 hours everyday with community members from other ethnic groups. This compels interactions between previously divided groups leading to greater understanding of each others' lifestyles and problems. Thus the Alphabetization program has become an effective platform to build solidarity and understanding for community members.

**Community Organization:** Organizing themselves into *groupements*, small common interest groups, was described during data collection as a gateway to development. It was perceived as a continuation of the Alphabetization program. People attributed all learning opportunities, exposure, and access to credit to *groupements*, a common feature of all SDC-supported programs. While describing the SDC-supported programs community members used expressions like “we have done this...” or “... then we decided to...” These were not only indicative of the level of cohesion in working together and ownership over the programs but were observable signs of an empowered community.

**Emphasis on the inclusion of women:** The inclusion of women in all programs is integral for SDC support. This has led to programs encouraging new roles for women and women-led initiatives, found to be effective for creating opportunities for women's empowerment. This was evident in meetings with the communities, where women were present in almost equal numbers, and often held key leadership positions. The issues they raised were also indicative of empowering changes.

**Co-opting power structures:** Though a hierarchical society, economically Burkina Faso is a fairly homogenous society. Most of the people are poor and so their living conditions are somewhat similar between social groups of different status. In the recent past, with the entry of democratic governance structures, the power of the tribal chiefs has been devalued and hence the power imbalances are not overtly visible. Nonetheless SDC and its partners are aware that empowering the poorest is also likely to affect the power dynamics by shifting the balance of power between social groups. This is not so evident in programs that cater to the common interests of the entire community. Wherever needed, SDC employs a non-confrontationist strategy to co-opt power structures into programs such that their involvement is regulated rather than eliminated. For example with the construction of cattle markets, traditional

#### Box 7: Alphabetization: why it is the most effective contributing factor

- Learning in local language made possible due to introduction of new scripts
- First training locals and then recruiting them as teachers on salaries
- Continuously evolving design and delivery based on community needs
- Engaging beneficiaries in a prolonged life education process (4 hours per day in the first year), followed up by groups formation and continuous inputs for livelihoods through groups
- Facilitation of new social institutions, giving 'identity' to those who did not have and providing forums for sharing. Frequency of meeting of primary groups is weekly or fortnightly keeping contact frequent.
- Peer pressure as a catalytic process to keep momentums
- Availability of funds, grants and credit.
- Support for equipment and structures.
- Established credibility leading to linkage with other donors

#### Box 8: Everyone is somebody

The team found the scheme of having many role-holding positions in the *groupements* very interesting. Every *groupement* they met had a President, a Vice President, a Treasurer, an In-Charge of Agriculture, an In-Charge of Cultural programs and several such posts. This seemed like a very effective strategy to give everybody an identity and an opportunity to contribute. In a hierarchical society with clear leadership norms, this form of shared leadership made a big difference. For those who were 'just one among many' felt important as they had designated roles and responsibilities.



### **Box 9: Poor access to health services**

“The government doctors run private clinics and give priority to private patients, it is unaffordable for us”

“Now we have to pay even in public hospitals for medicines”

“Poor quality tablets (adulterated medicines) do not cure diseases”

“There are many new diseases AIDS, blood pressure, and such”

“Imported food, unprotected sex and migration are affecting our health”

“We often suffer for a long time as cost of transport is also rising”

“Our grandmothers knew herbal and home remedies, these are not documented and now fewer women know about them”

*Source: Leaders of garbage collectors association in Koudougou*

middlemen in the cattle market who once monopolized the trade are now bound by fixed norms for commissions and tariffs set by the local communes. Co-opting village chiefs in the Alphabetization programs as coordinators and managers has also been a conscious strategy to minimize their resistance and to create harmony.

### **3.9 Factors obstructing change**

Again the communities identified many factors obstructing their empowerment, indicating a high level of involvement in their change processes. The primary obstruction to empowerment was reported as scarcity of food and water. Communities stated that this was due to degrading natural resources, characterised by soil erosion, water flowing to Mali, infertile lands, and desertification. Fodder and fuel scarcity were seen as causes of deforestation. They shared that when rains were adequate and predictable, land under irrigation increased along with food production. The declining size of animal herds was also driving young people to migrate out of their villages for survival, who often returned with 'newer' diseases.

People felt that certain traditions and customs adversely impacted their empowerment. Polygamy and large family sizes are seen as a burden on the family economy. The belief that more working hands being seen as way to survive, is fast eroding. Not being able to send all the children to school or being able to treat the sick have been seen as results of poverty. Compared to men, women could not fully participate in development programs and their lack of confidence and shyness were attributed to traditional notions about women's roles.

Communities had expectations from programs to help them address the obstacles to their empowerment by providing material inputs and developing human resources. Agricultural implements, primary health centres, and schools were the most common demands. Lack of well-trained and knowledgeable trainers and a need of increase in health staff were also expressed.

Communities across all programs saw themselves as change agents, but expressed the need for help in a) identifying alternatives, b) overcoming the obstructing factors mentioned above, and c) in redefining desirable changes and roles for themselves.

### 3.10 Challenges for sustaining empowerment

**Stagnation:** On the whole, it appears that SDC programs have empowered beneficiaries to the extent that they are 'development ready'. Their basic needs are being met and opportunities for political participation have been made available. Yet the community does not feel fully equipped to take charge of their future in the same ways that they have transformed their past. The team gathered a sense of helplessness about the slow pace at which changes are taking place. Up to date the role of communities and civil society in political decision-making has remained minimal. The next challenge for empowerment in SDC programs in Burkina Faso may be increased expectations of the communities from development programs.

**Deeper gender issues:** While the Burkina COOF has been fairly successful in involving women, there is a need to go deeper into the intra-family inequities among women and men. In polygamous marriages, the senior most or the 'favourite' wives tend to get more opportunities than the other wives. Issues of representation among women leaders are also a concern. Women leaders had not thought about issues specific to sex workers and AIDS-affected women. Notions of marriage are still quite restrictive for women and men. While marriage is considered necessary for women, unmarried men are seen as 'irresponsible'. Mossi men occupy more leadership positions as compared to men and women from other ethnic communities. These issues indicate a need for further gender analysis. While practical gender needs have been addressed effectively, there is more to be done for strategic gender needs in terms of supporting women in traditional and formal positions of power and increasing women's control over resources.

### 3.11 Empowerment of other stakeholders

The extent to which SDC stakeholder relationships are empowering can be revealed through the perceptions of the stakeholders. Below is a list of perceptions given by stakeholders characterizing their relationship with SDC.

Flexibility, transparency, and community interests above everything else were seen as non-negotiable principles in SDC partnership. As a result of these perceptions SDC partners know that quality of work cannot be compromised and have no hesitation about being transparent about the risks they take. In turn they have the same expectations in interactions with the community. The evaluation team observed that the staff of implementing partners was respectful to communities. Even in small issues like decisions about location and timing of meetings, they consulted the community.

The government staff deputed to programs supported by SDC considered their autonomy in their roles as the primary incentive for their jobs. Program staff knew the value of educational opportunities as they themselves had undergone the transformation process, which in turn motivated them to pass this experience on.

Further issues related to stakeholders other than communities are elaborated in the section on partnership management practices (5.2).

It will therefore be in order to say that recipient communities, particularly the women in Burkina Faso have benefited from SDC's empowering approaches. They were able to describe at length as to how education interventions such as Alphabetisation had enhanced their ability to take charge of their lives. However there is still scope for increasing awareness about livelihood related aspects of empowerment. The community was able to relate the changes in empowering dimensions of their lives to themselves, indicating empowering transitions in their lives. Still communities relate empowering dimensions more to concrete aspects of their lives, that is, basic needs

#### Box 10: Are the youth neglected?

During one of the community exercises, a team of young boys was highly enthusiastic as they were invited to participate. One of them shared that they were normally not called for meetings with outsiders and were rarely consulted on community decisions. Most community leaders met by the team were older people. In most programs, the majority of beneficiaries are adults. This could be because of the Alphabetization program. Local program staff also reported that the participation of youth was poor even in the youth centres built under the decentralization program.



**Table 5 : Perceptions positively affecting stakeholder SDC relationship**

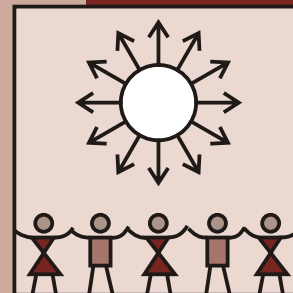
Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participatory</li> <li>● Committed to empowerment of both partners and community</li> <li>● Nurturing strong and consistent capacity building inputs at all level</li> <li>● Steady / faithful through thick and thin</li> <li>● Respect local culture and resources</li> <li>● Open, not imposing, Listens to partners</li> <li>● Identify talent / potential in advance</li> <li>● Accept risk</li> <li>● Good facilitator - respected by govt and donors</li> <li>● Clear gender biased (pro-women)</li> <li>● Support innovation</li> <li>● Gives with grace</li> <li>● Continues partial support even when there are disagreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff stressed as their number reducing but responsibilities increasing.</li> <li>● Too many interests - Multi-foci but has a small Wallet</li> <li>● Create small islands of small projects elaborate processes of dialogue, proposal- too Long - seemingly unending</li> <li>● Discreet " never come to know what is in their mind"</li> <li>● Obsession on phasing out</li> <li>● Stand on diversification too ambiguous</li> <li>● Too personalized tend to go too close to partners, and sometimes loose objectivity. Inter-institutional relations between SDC and Swiss NGOs are person dependent at country level</li> <li>● Try to be close to people but are dependent on intermediaries.</li> <li>● Central government authorities feel distanced or bypassed</li> <li>● Increasing pressure for visibility is distracting</li> </ul>

of water and food dependent on natural resources rather than abstract aspects of political conscientisation and education dependent on the state. "You can't eat education for lunch or dinner" a community leader stated.

Responding to the beneficiaries' expectations for assistance with more hard, as well as soft and human resource inputs for empowering transitions is the present challenge.



## 4 SDC's Responsiveness to the Needs and Priorities of the Marginalized



The Swiss Law of 1976 states that SDC's mandate is supporting the efforts of developing countries to reduce poverty especially of the most underprivileged areas and people in those countries. Subsequently in their last Annual Report (2004-05) SDC has also reaffirmed its mandate on poverty reduction in line with the UN Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.

### 4.1 Defining and identifying the marginalized

SDC acknowledges marginalization as a cause and an effect of poverty, and thus considers the empowerment of the marginalized a poverty reduction strategy. Marginalization is context-dependent and is influenced by many factors including income geographic location, gender, and ethnicity. In Burkina Faso, the concept of 'marginalization' is interpreted as exclusion due to reasons beyond one's control. This includes "disfavoured" groups and those ostracized based on economic, social and political criteria. However in many cases the very existence of marginalization was denied because of the common belief that everybody is poor but has their place in a social caste or ethnic group. Inclusion and acceptance is considered a part of Burkina Faso custom, although there is intolerance for homosexuals. SDC still encourages partners to focus on marginalized groups such as women, lower castes, Fulanis and blacksmiths.

**Focus on Marginalized regions:** Priority operational areas are decided on the basis of vulnerability, resource poverty, and economic underdevelopment. The selection is also informed by local development trends, historical experience, SDC's core development principles, and the priorities of the government of Burkina Faso to meet the needs of the mainstream poor. While SDC programs are designed to bring about changes for all poor in the community, there is no strategy to target the needs of those suffering from abject poverty. They focus on marginalized groups, livelihoods for subsistence farmers, and women.



#### Box 11: People are poor because Burkina is poor!

In interactions with government officials and elected representatives at various levels, the shared the view that Burkina Faso should focus on infrastructure development, increasing exports, power generation, and modern education to develop the country as a whole. They felt that as most of the people in Burkina Faso are poor, any development would automatically lead to poverty alleviation. Therefore the government did not dwell upon on the issues of the poorest or the marginalized in their interviews.

Despite the prevalence of government data identifying those living in abject poverty, (41% of the population), and despite the communities having a clear idea of who lived in abject poverty, there was little evidence of thought on strategies to address the needs of this group.



**Box 12: The community's definition of “the poorest”**

- Who are food insecure for = 6 months year
- Whose lands are inferior and have no means to cultivate (bullock, plough)
- No mobility not even bicycle
- No cloths to wear
- Can not afford to treat sick
- Can't educate children
- Who live in villages which have no access roads
- Who have no, or <1 ha unproductive land
- Have no bullock / goat/ hen agriculture implements
- All women. They have no place in family / society
- The homeless
- Illiterate
- Disfavoured groups: Muslim thalibe or fakirs, Fulanis, Aids-affected, Beggars

**4.2 Responding to the MDGs**

Since the year 2000, as per the SDC guidelines for Elaborating Cooperation Strategies for priority countries, all country documents are expected to refer to multilateral agreements, particularly the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs as a basis for planning development programs. In practice many SDC programs were designed

and initiated long before the MDGs were written, and hence are not geared to report on MDG-related achievements. In fact the evaluation team felt that there was aversion to mainstream the MDGs in the day to day operation of the programs. Concepts like 'marginalized' can be defined in many ways but the acceptance of the MDGs would require that the definition of the 'marginalized' be aligned with the MDG definition of abject poverty.

The government of Burkina Faso sources claim that as per the MDG definition, around 41% of the population is living in abject poverty. This indicates that it is possible to identify and target the poorest households. However SDC and its partners seldom use government data. Moreover SDC's reluctance to use economic indicators for the selection of beneficiaries prevents it from assessing its contribution

to achieving MDG 1, reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015. Program officers were of the view that as SDC does not work directly with communities it was difficult to attribute SDC's contribution to specific MDGs. Most SDC-supported programs are designed to benefit communities as a whole with no explicit focus on differences between individual or household poverty levels. Furthermore SDC leaves the selection of target groups to its partners. Some partners like TinTua have adopted participatory methods like Méthode Accelerate Rural Participation (The Participative Rapid Appraisal PRA, developed by Robert Chambers) to identify the poorest households within their operational area. Beneficiaries themselves determine the criteria for poverty ranking and also suggest what each household requires to move from one level to the next. However such methods are not shared between partners.

#### **4.3 Working with the 'poor with potential'**

Working exclusively with the poorest is **not** seen as an effective strategy for visible results in poverty reduction. It is even referred to as the "suicide approach" by some of the SDC senior staff at both the HQ and COOF. SDC prefers to work with the 'poor with potential', that is those who have access to facilities, productive assets, and are motivated to change their lives increasing the likelihood of lifting themselves out of poverty. It is presumed that the poorest generally do not have the time to invest in their own poverty reduction, nor can they afford to take risks that might result in greater vulnerability. For example, in the case of ADEL, a program for local economic development, the program design makes it difficult for those living in abject poverty to participate. Beneficiaries must pay for scribes trained by the project to write project proposals, contribute 50% of the intervention and equipment costs, invest time and travel costs to travel to program offices to defend their proposals and if sanctioned, to then complete procedural requirements.

#### **4.4 Needs assessments**

The Cooperation Strategy for a given country or region guides collaboration with the government and civil society in recipient countries, with other bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, and with Swiss and other international NGOs. It delineates SDC's strategic orientation with reference to choice of geographic and thematic thrust areas, transversal themes, aid modalities of cooperation, partnership arrangements and resource management. SDC's country strategy and program-level 'business plan' is prepared at the country level using available secondary information, national consultants and consultations with existing and prospective partners. In rare cases as mentioned in an SDC HQ interview, this is preceded by an open-ended comprehensive assessment of the life needs of the recipient communities in the region (South Asia). However in Burkina Faso there was no evidence of the latter, neither conducted by the COOF nor its partners. It appears as if the selection of thematic focus is based on certain predetermined factors, budgetary requirements and normative understanding about their contribution to the end goal of poverty reduction. SDC began supporting education programs in Burkina Faso with the firm belief that education as a development intervention is empowering as it builds the confidence and capacities of the poor to 'express' and 'act on their desires'. In due course, integration of a life-skills approach into literacy programs led to the design of a non-formal education program as a tool for local development. Thus SDC programs and country strategies are well thought out but do not first consider the needs and priorities or participation of communities, as they do not first conduct primary needs assessments with intended beneficiaries. Resource mobilization, while a useful approach, is not practiced as a deliberate strategy to ensure a multifaceted and concentrated attack on poverty.

After finalizing the program areas and the partners, a needs assessment is carried out at the programmatic level. This feeds into specific elements of program design, for example in the Alphabetization program people are consulted on where the classes may be conducted, for how long, the language of instruction, other preferred means of imparting knowledge like the radio, and livelihood topics of immediate interest and applicability.

Community needs and priorities evolve and change over time. SDC and its partners are flexible as far as accommodating changing needs that fit into the scope of the broad thematic area of the program. For example introducing French language classes to improve prospects for newly literate students was seen as a logical addition to the literacy program however for needs beyond the scope of the program design, such as grant-based support for procuring agriculture implements can not be considered. In many programs like Adele, the program staff made personal efforts to link communities with other resource agencies. It appeared that SDC was reluctant to finance any new activity beyond the core definition of the program unless the partner was able to demonstrate visible impacts.

#### **4.5 The communities' role in shaping the change agenda**

Once the program scope and beneficiaries are decided, SDC allows its partners full freedom to design operational structures and procedures. In almost all the programs, beneficiaries are organized into groups starting at the village level and federated upwards through democratic processes. In the case of Adele, in order to make the program more transparent and participatory, the program staff delegated the responsibility of deciding the type and quantum of assistance to be given and develop criteria for selecting beneficiaries for village-level committees. All decisions made by these committees are ratified by a general assembly of beneficiary communities. The syllabus of the Alphabetization program is revised on the basis of peoples' feedback of the five most-liked topics and the teaching material is based on peoples' real-life problems and solutions, all in local languages. Higher level committees called *diemas*, a group of representatives of CBOs, review and follow up on implementation and also revise plans. Wherever possible SDC programs have co-opted indigenous systems for monitoring the performance of community-based organizations, for example, Diema presidents are accountable to a village-level committee of Sages. The COOF invites group representatives to provincial and regional review meetings to defend the reports, to provide feedback on program design and contribute to work-plans for the following year. Thus most of the program operations are managed and monitored by the beneficiaries themselves.

At the COOF level all concerned stakeholders meet once a year to collectively improve the effectiveness of their activities through joint planning, implementation, monitoring and (self) evaluation processes. Program participants are also invited to provide specific feedback on various aspects of program evaluation. In some cases, external evaluations carried out with the help of consultants have led to change in program focus within mutually agreed frameworks. For example Tin Tua took up decentralization as a theme on the basis of an SDC-funded evaluation in 1993.

#### **4.6 Reaching out and benefiting communities**

The Burkina COOF has systematically worked towards integrating gender concerns in the Alphabetization program. Along with its partners it has devised strategies to encourage and facilitate women's participation in the program such as creating gender sensitive literacy instructors, reducing women's drudgery by introducing millet-pounding machines, simplifying procedures, and introducing subsidies to facilitate access to credit so as to create opportunities for women to use new skills and knowledge. The program design also reflected gender responsiveness by modifying content to include issues of special importance to women such as female circumcision, the age of marriage and adjusting schedules of the alphabetization classes to suit women's needs.

Programme Alpha is another example of an alternative program created by SDC to help identify the special needs of the poor, but only after a program is designed and initiated. Alpha provides technical and financial support to NGOs for Alphabetization of groups left out of the formal and informal education system such as rural women, AIDS-affected youth, migrants and physically-challenged people. It also facilitates linkages with other funding sources for other needs.

In the medium-size town development program PDVM, SDC chose infrastructure

development as a means to strengthen local governance and to boost the local economy. The COOF believed that infrastructure development projects implemented by democratic and decentralized structures like local municipalities, would protect the interests of the poor in the long-term by A) creating opportunities and facilities like markets and bus stations for the poor to live and work in small towns serving as a disincentive for further rural-urban migration, B) creating employment opportunities for local artisans, and promoting the use of local material in all civil construction, and C) generating revenue for municipalities through tariffs and taxes that can be used for the construction of other public infrastructure in the communes. However in reality, except for 'B' these objectives have not necessarily been achieved. For example shops in the market that were allotted to women and the physically challenged have now been sold off or passed on to others. The poorest do not necessarily have the same capacity to articulate and assert their needs as other more dominant social groups. One of the consequences is that they have to contribute (as in the case of the construction of a hospital wall in sector 8 of Koudougou) towards the direct cost of project interventions, but do not benefit to the extent.

SDC has for the most part managed to extend program benefits to its intended beneficiaries and the marginalised, particularly women, except where the government is the implementing agency.

#### **4.7 Areas of strength and areas for improvement**

SDC is a small donor with limited funds, and hence prefers to invest in experimentation of development strategies in relatively small areas at the grassroots level over long periods of time. However this is restricted by a policy to engage with a fixed number of sectors and themes per priority country, akin to operating in an action research mode with the intention of creating models. These models are often critiqued as 'islands of excellence' rather than for up-scaling for wider impacts.



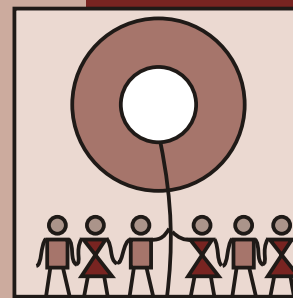
There have been attempts to converge the multi-sector programs for a larger impact on poverty dimensions. Though not a purposeful planned strategy, SDC has been supporting three to four different sector initiatives in the north-eastern region of Fada, one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country. Due to SDC's presence in the area other donors have also entered the area raising the per capita development investment from 900 CFA in 1989 to 12,500 CFA in 2005. Furthermore, SDC has been able to scale up the Alphabetization program throughout Burkina Faso by mobilizing the support of various actors like the government, other donors, NGOs and private organizations.

The Alphabetization program generates awareness about the value of 'education' to solve problems of day-to-day living for the poor. It creates demand for formal education, but people are dissatisfied with the quality and relevance of the education imparted in the formal schools. Consequently there was a drop in enrolment figures. The government did take some cognizance of the issue and to some extent this has resulted in education policy reforms leading to an increased number of bilingual schools, inclusion of vocational education, and life skills in the syllabus. However there is still need for a more concerted effort to have continuous calibration and attention to accounting for evolving needs in program design.

It should be noted that as the Alphabetization program has successfully enhanced the status of its recipients, those community members who have not benefited from the program tend to feel alienated. Being literate is leading to both economic and social upward mobility. As a result a new social gap between those who are literate and illiterate is growing. The Evaluation Team observed that 'the alphabetized' dominated the discussions and often ignored the opinions expressed by the others. Aiming at 100% coverage and creating forums for 'non-members' participation could help reverse these trends of arising social divisions.



## 5 SDC's Partnership Practices



SDC does not implement development programs itself. The Swiss Strategy 2010 emphasizes that SDC seeks holistic collaboration with like-minded partners, within the government and civil society arenas. The development of capacities and competencies of SDC's partners is perceived as a central challenge for attaining the MDGs and is also a concern for donor harmonization and alignment. Although SDC aims to work in cooperation with governments as their principal partner for development work it has been following a strategy of partner diversification for several years. For instance, the West Africa strategy paper states that SDC's intent is to support local peoples' organizations by building their capacities to improve their production capacity and to increase their incomes through better management of their own enterprises. SDC helps them mobilize financial and technical resources, provides access to market information, and spaces for policy advocacy. The premise of such partnerships is to help them develop their own competencies and self-reliance rather than create dependencies. Strategies and modalities are decided through consultative processes.

At the country level, projects and programs are being realized more and more in cooperation with community administrations, international, national and local non-governmental organizations and the private sector. While doing so, SDC follows a variety of engagement patterns within the instruments of bilateral as well as multilateral aid patterns.

### 5.1 Partnership development processes with civil society organizations

In Burkina Faso, partnership development has been an organic process. The COOF is working with a range of people and organizations in the country with a stated preference to work with partners closest to the people, that is, civil society organizations or local municipalities, or communes.

**NGOs:** In the case of NGOs, the partnership starts with the persons who found the organization. They approach SDC with program ideas and having found those to be promising and in line with their principles, SDC starts a relationship by providing moral support, followed by technical assistance and capacity development support for mutually agreed activities. This phase of 'meeting of the minds' lasts about three to five years and is the most critical period before entering into long-term, strategic relationships. Once SDC is convinced that the NGO partners share their overall vision of development, and that the organizations were able to demonstrate impact in their chosen sector, the partnership moves on to the next stages of program funding and institutional support.

**Community based organizations (CBOs):** Initially, in CBOs, SDC's partners were apex-level organizations. Due to problems with internal governance and decisions to diversify beyond a mutually agreed scope of activities, SDC decided to work directly with regional and commune-level organizations.

At present COOF program officers are closely associated with second tier producer organizations and provide inputs for institution building and facilitate development of backward and forward linkages; however it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain this kind of personal involvement due to the growth of SDC programs.





### Box 13: SDC's "brand" value

Every partnership has evolved over a long association with the partner organization's staff. Most partner organizations specifically acknowledged the brand value of SDC support. In their view SDC support has acted as a certificate of the quality of their organization and its programs, and this has been a critical factor in mobilizing support from other donors.

For instance, in the case of FNGN<sup>5</sup>, a 40 year-old partnership started with funding the Six Ss<sup>6</sup>, an international organization covering the Sahelian region. It subsequently fragmented, with the Burkinabé representation merging into FNGN at the national level. For many years SDC supported FNGN, but this support has now ended and it presently supports two Unions of FNGN namely Koumbri and Tikare.

**Civil society organizations created and nurtured by SDC:** Some programs are implemented by organizations managed by individuals who were previously program officers or consultants for SDC. They share the same values and principles of SDC, and so where SDC could not work directly, these organizations carry out the role of managing and providing capacity building support to some of the field programs. ARCHEA, a Swiss and a Burkinabé company, set up to coordinate activities of a production enhancement program (Adele) is one example.

**Educational, research organizations:** The COOF views partnerships with specialist organizations initiated at SDC HQ as mutually rewarding like CREPA and EIER. At the country level, these partners become a resource agency for field programs. As in the case of NGO's and CBOs, SDC's relationship with these organisations has also evolved through various stages.

**Swiss NGOs:** As part of a larger organizational mandate the COOF is obliged to work with Swiss NGOs as partners, while the nature and effectiveness of this partnership depends upon the inter-personal relations between the persons in-charge in the respective country. In Burkina, these agencies compete with other bilateral grantors for additional SDC support.

**Individuals as SDC associates:** SDC invests in nurturing individuals as valuable resource persons for specialized areas. After identifying these individuals SDC systematically builds their capacities through exposure, training, and assignments.

## 5.2 SDC's Partnership management practices

Partnership management is one of the distinctive strengths of SDC. Given that SDC does not work directly with communities, partnership development is seen as a means to strengthen and empower communities. Therefore building partners' capacities and internal governance systems to influence communities and maintain the benefit flow is an important activity in SDC programs.

**Capacity Development and Partnership management:** In strategy documents, though not mentioned explicitly, partnership development is expressed as "CapDev support" and commands attention in all of SDC's policies, programs and projects. Cap Dev support assumes a common value base, mutually agreed roles and tasks and a commitment to a common vision with context-specific knowledge and an in-depth understanding of all actors' competencies and knowledge levels. It is closely linked to the principles of partnership and knowledge management, and is integrated into each project as a fixed component.

SDC has an aptitude for identifying ideas and people with potential and then building their capacities. After a careful selection process, it then creates spaces for them to develop their ideas and provides moral support if they falter. Some partnerships last from 10 to 15 years. The vision formulated together with such partners is focused on enabling them to independently develop strategies and programs in response to the

5. FUGN is a national farmers' organisation consisting of 84 Unions, each covering 14-18 village level mixed-gender groups with 25-30 producer members per group. FNGN has full-time technical professional staff supported by SDC and engages consultants/ resource persons to provide technical assistance for improving productivity of diverse agricultural produce, input supply and establishing market linkages for its members. SDC is presently supporting two Unions namely Koumbri and Tikare for various activities.

6. SixS's = *Savoir se Servir de la Saison Sèche au Sahel*

evolving needs of the communities.

Another principle of CapDev support is that in its support for strengthening institutional partners, SDC presents itself as a modest actor with experience and strengths in alliances, and in general avoids uncoordinated solo efforts. In Burkina Faso SDC did not impose its own set of consultants or Swiss NGOs for monitoring or for organizational development of the partners unless there was a desire expressed by the partners to do so.

**Minimum rules:** SDC does not have fixed formats for monitoring or reporting. Partners follow their own monitoring systems instead of using a prescribed set of predetermined indicators and formats. M&E indicators evolved in consultation with partners. Program proposals are discussed with program officers who provide general guidelines or a broad framework within which the partner is expected to fit the proposal. Partners have full freedom to define their goals and objectives and to select their operational areas. Until recently there were no restrictions on taking up programs in particular sectors.

**Unequivocal, non-negotiable stand on gender:** SDC adheres to certain principles and values are non-negotiable. Gender equity is one of them. In Burkina, where the social values accord secondary status to women, SDC has engaged with both government and NGO partners with deliberate and consistent efforts to integrate gender concerns and make their interventions woman-friendly.

**Agenda-setting by local partners:** Wherever possible, SDC programs invite local partners including community representatives to set goals and agendas for programs. In the interest of organizational self-learning, SDC is keen on building a culture of self-evaluation and this is complemented by external evaluations. Experimentation is encouraged and budgets are revised to accommodate new ideas. PDVM in Koudougou provides an example where new activities related to sanitation and organizing of garbage collecting women, were added midcourse in response to emerging needs. SDC has demonstrated that providing opportunities, not power or control, are of primary importance to a learning partnership.

**Beneficiary contribution:** SDC believes that empowerment means providing spaces for local diversity, initiative and autonomy, indicated by SDC's preference to work with local organizations. The minimum conditions for any intervention with local organisations are people's contribution and good facilitation. For example in Adele's production enhancement program, groups submitting proposals according to basic guidelines are eligible to receive funding support; however those who cannot provide evidence of their own contribution are left out of the program. The procedure is transparent and decided through consultative processes with CBO members, implementation partners and SDC.

**Discomfort with partners diversifying programs:** SDC is uncomfortable with funding activities other than their own and the partners' proven areas of core competence. SDC does not have clear



**Box 14: Partnership as an output as a key result area**

It was apparent that SDC's involvement in partner organizations goes beyond viewing them just as instruments of executing specific project or program objectives. SDC seems to invest in institution strengthening, diversification of donor relationships and other such aspects which help the partner organization to become a strong development actor. Thus spotting, nurturing and strengthening development actors are a distinct core competence and an output of SDC's involvement in the respective country. Though SDC invests lots of resources in partnership development, it has not formally recognized it as one of the goals in the country strategy and one of its distinct contributions to the development of the country.



### **Box 15: Government absent in the public psyche**

It is worth noting that the 'government' was conspicuously absent in community responses during the field exercises. In contrast to the number of times donors were mentioned, they did not once refer to government programs in any of the discussions. They seemed to have no demands or expectations regarding basic services and amenities vis-à-vis the government. At the same time their faith in being able to access donor funds through their own community organizations was increasing.

guidelines on how to deal with partners responding to changing needs of beneficiaries, often a consequence of empowering processes. For instance, the non-formal education program resulted in widening the horizons of the communities and led them to think about other life needs. When the concerned partner approached SDC for funding new needs like food security activities through micro-credit, SDC was reluctant to do so because the partner was not able to achieve considerable impact to date.

Simultaneously, SDC seems to be comfortable with specialized partners serving the specific needs of many communities. The challenge for SDC is to help existing partners in seeking specific technical expertise from a variety of agencies and not invest their time and effort in re-designing tried and tested interventions or reinventing the wheel.

**Ambiguity about Phasing out:** As stated above, most of SDC partnerships are long standing. There are several instances where SDC has continued its association for over 10-12 years. Many partners are mature and

competent enough to mobilize funds and resources independently, yet they believe that SDC should continue to support them, almost permanently. SDC does not have a firm strategy for phasing out, which leads to debates between SDC and its partners. Partners shared that this uncertainty was disconcerting.

### **5.3 Partnership with the government**

SDC works with the Burkinabé government at the national, regional and provincial levels. Interaction between the government and the COOF takes place through a range of forms including (i) general budget support, (ii) directly-supported projects at the commune level, and (iii) as partners in autonomous national funding mechanisms like FONAENF. SDC has also provided expertise for reforms in public finance systems, and for capacity building of key officials through training and exposure.

Working with the government is more challenging compared to CSOs. Priorities and policies change with the changes in political leadership. When officials are transferred it adversely impacts the programs. For instance, some of the government officials interviewed seemed unengaged as they had recently taken over their current positions and were unaware about program details. The COOF is aware of possible inefficiencies while working with government, but is trying to work on those.

**Influencing government policies:** SDC has been successful in influencing the government in two areas: a) Organizing artisans and addressing their issues through means like better tax regimes and by promoting the purchase of locally made handicrafts and b) Modifying the non-formal education program. The government has not only accepted the model but has been pledging funds for an initiative of multiple stakeholders similar to FONAENF. This has also resulted in changes in mainstream formal primary and secondary schools, for example in the switch to local languages as medium of instruction.

On the other hand SDC has not been as effective in influencing decentralization processes. They have not been able to create convincing field-level demonstrations in this area.

SDC has used PDVM to contribute to the development of decentralization processes in Fada, Koudougou and Ouahigouya. It has channelled its funding to the communes through departments specially created for providing technical and managerial assistance to the project and consequently to the communes. These departments, known as EPCDs, are jointly governed by SDC and the central government. The annual budgets of the EPCDs are larger than the budgets of the communes they work for and the salaries of EPCD employees are also substantially higher than the salaries of the public servants in the communes. Though EPCDs are legally part of their respective communes, they function as autonomous entities.

Barring a few exceptions, the EPCDs have not transformed the governance processes of the respective municipalities.

The Burkinabé government is moving in the direction of gradual decentralization in favour of communes but it has not achieved a significant breakthrough. Still SDC has been relatively more insistent and successful with CSOs adopting decentralization as a key governance principle.

#### 5.4 Enabling SDC staff to sustain mutually empowering relationships

In the COOF there is a strategic division in the roles and responsibilities of expatriate and Burkinabé program staff. The national program officers (NPOs) are primarily responsible for operational aspects of the programs. They also provide relevant information and feedback to the expatriate staff for policy dialogue. Partner selection is done by expatriate staff but hinges largely on the judgment of the national program staff.

**Operational freedom:** All staff are given operational freedom and are expected to handle their respective partners independently. While working with CBOs requiring a unique facilitation, like the Union of Koumbri, the NPOs initially took on direct implementation responsibilities as if they were NGO leaders, while for others they were more concerned with processes and outcomes. NPOs can introduce new program ideas and implementation approaches on the condition that they are able to prove their relevance and merit. For instance, for designing drip irrigation system suitable to local needs, an NPO facilitated alliance building between farmer union and a university.

**Fostering learning:** There are several scheduled meetings and opportunities for interaction between the staff. They can also approach the COOF director for individual discussions on specific issues. Program responsibility is periodically rotated and hence each program staff member is eventually exposed to and informed about every program. All staff have adequate opportunities for self-development not only in developing domain knowledge and skills, but in

#### Box 16: Deploying lessons

The Secretary General of Koudougou commune mentioned that they had applied SDC's participative approach for improving the tax collection in the town. They involved representatives of tax payers to suggest ways to ensure better tax compliance and to improve tax collection administration. As a result, the commune doubled the tax revenue without increasing the tax rates. However this is appears to be rare as more examples were not forthcoming in discussions with other people.





#### **Box 17: Images of the relationship between SDC and partners**

“...SDC is like an elder brother, not a father. It guides but does not impose...

...Like a friend who you can consult when you want...

...I was on my bicycle going towards my destination. A van came along [SDC] and took me along with my bicycle. This helped me to move faster and cover more distance. When our directions are different I will continue with my journey bicycle...

...SDC is like a large steam ship and NGOs like a small boat. The large ship can carry a larger load, but has less dexterity. The smaller ship can carry less but can be maneuvered better ... “

crosscutting strategic areas such as gender and decentralization among others.

The COOF staff is encouraged to work with local and international consultants wherever complementarities of expertise is required. In fact, receiving inputs from external experts in the COOF strategy development both at country level and at sector program level was stated as a deliberate and regular practice.

**Acculturation:** Just as in the case of partners, SDC follows the path of acculturation to build a shared understanding of SDC values and principles among the staff. For example sometimes NPOs have a tendency to disregard partners' expectations and demands simply out of confidence of their own area knowledge, or in the interests of time as participatory decision making is relatively time consuming. In such times the COOF Director has patiently steered them back into consultative processes to allow the participation of partners. There is limited use of rules and directives.

The empowering effect of the COOF work environment was apparent in the candidness with which the staff shared their opinions and concerns during the interviews. They were self-critical and had suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of SDC. The same was seen in interactions with the partners who appreciated SDC staff for their consistency in appreciating and respecting their ideas and fostering a culture of mutual learning.

## 5.5 Funding arrangements

The evaluation team discovered that in Burkina Faso, SDC operates through well-defined aid modalities like general budget support and SWAPS, as well as innovative funding arrangements like FONAENF<sup>7</sup> that do not neatly fit into existing definitions. Instead of commenting on a variety of aid modalities, the evaluation team decided to highlight funding arrangements that seem to have a favourable impact on poverty reduction and on the empowerment of the marginalized and poverty reduction.

**Directly-supported projects implemented by civil society organizations:** Direct support has been found to be more effective funding arrangement especially for new project ideas. Besides funding project activities, capacity building of individuals coupled with institutional development support to the organization has enhanced chances of converting potential ideas into effective empowerment interventions. This funding arrangement seems to have delivered results especially with NGO and CBO partners as well as program management structures like CAGEC. Apart from effective program delivery this kind of arrangement has led to the emergence of strong development actors like Tin Tua and FNGN.

**Mobilizing the support of other donors:** While working with specific communities on sector-based programs, SDC and its partners have been able to successfully mobilize funds for other developmental needs of those communities. For example Tin Tua built the capacities of *diemas* to conduct household surveys and prepare proposals to solicit support from other donors. Adele staff linked communities requiring support on health issues to GTZ and Santenelle, for road construction to FEER and with UNDP for girl-child education. The evaluation team felt that in view of reducing finances, SDC could systematically build on this social and human capital by working out a well-planned strategy at the COOF level as well as at the SDC-HQ level.



7. FONAENF is an association where government is also a member besides donors and private operators of non-formal education centers

**Project-specific funding vis-à-vis global institutional funding:** Partner organizations can receive either global or institutional support once there is a successful conceptualization and implementation of projects. This is also an indicator of their transition to take on the role of a resource agency for other SDC-supported projects. Utilization of global funding is left to the discretion of the partner organization and may be used for testing innovative approaches or program expansion.

**Multi-actor initiatives:** In Burkina, SDC has initiated a novel funding mechanism called FONAEF for scaling up non-formal education. FONAEF is registered as an NGO. A variety of organizations, including the government, bilateral donors, local and international NGOs and private sector organizations contribute resources for FONAEF programs. In spite of putting in less than ten percent of the total funds, SDC chairs FONAEF by virtue of its local knowledge and long-standing experience in the education sector. This unique funding arrangement has led to a coordinated approach across a variety of actors. It has acquired the legitimacy but not the bureaucratic apathy of government functioning. Such a funding arrangement that may not adhere to conventional aid modalities like 'donor harmonization' needs to be encouraged because of its effectiveness in furthering the agenda relevant to the empowerment of marginalized groups in society.

To summarize, discussions with COOF staff and partners were indicative of the fact that developing and nurturing partnerships is a high priority in SDC. Though there are no explicit or written partner selection criteria, SDC generally does not engage with well known NGOs, which are few and far between in Burkina Faso. Most of the civil society partnerships were initiated with small, fledgling organizations that later grew into national organizations. Rather than imposing rigid working systems and guidelines, through a subtle process of acculturation<sup>8</sup> SDC tries to ensure that the partners' behaviour aligns with their own principles and values. On building mutual trust, SDC operates on strategic or institutional partnerships. Yet SDC's relationships with its partners seem to develop problems when partners attempt diversification of activities.

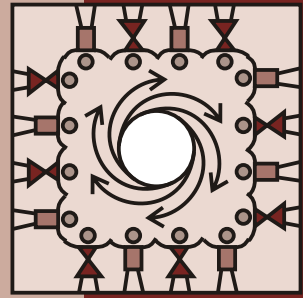
In view of the various international conventions and commitments SDC has made efforts to work with the government, but there is more scope for improving effectiveness of these efforts compared to its success in working with civil society organizations. SDC however has been able to influence government programs and policies in areas where it has demonstrated spectacular results in the field for empowering beneficiaries. SDC has also been successful in promoting innovative funding arrangements like FONAEF that are able to use the best of both worlds, that is of the government and others. It has acquired the legitimacy and resources of the government, and the knowledge, and the support and commitment of a variety of other partners.



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8. *Transfer of values and principles; working inside-out rather than outside-in, that is socialising through imposition of stated (and un-stated) rules and norms, using reflection processes over confrontation.*

## 6 Conclusive Observations



Given the mandate of SDC<sup>9</sup> to empower the marginalized, SDC's choice of concentrating on **Burkina Faso as a priority country is well-placed**. As one of the lowest ranking countries on the Human Development Index, the extent of poverty and lack of internal resources indicates promising outcomes are likely for the Burkina Faso country program.

In Burkina Faso, empowerment translates into providing people with appropriate skills, capabilities, resources and access to secure livelihoods. SDC has succeeded in empowering communities mainly through the Alphabetization program offering a combination of literacy and life skills. CBOs of the poor are deployed as a means to achieve political empowerment, resulting in capacities to analyze, organize and mobilize. Empowerment hinges on the popular interpretation of participation that invites people to take part in consultative processes and contribute.

Though **empowerment was not explicitly documented as a transversal theme** and empowering strategies were not explicitly stated in the program documents, **addressing the core issues** of empowerment through education seemed to be implicit in program design and flowed across programs. The strategy "maitrise d'ouvrage" guides organizational level empowerment.

On the whole programs were **perceived as 'empowering'** by the recipient communities. While both men and women shared examples of how they experienced (positive) transitions in their lives, it was **particularly evident in case of women**. It manifested in their self-confidence, desire to change, articulation of needs and priorities, perception of change and recognition of a multitude of contributing factors. More importantly they were engaged in the processes of identifying alternatives to overcome obstructing factors. Equally significant was the community's ability and willingness to play a role in the transformation of their lives, **evident through the 'power with'** phenomena.

SDC programs have made communities conscious of the possibilities of overcoming poverty through empowerment. Though these communities have still not received adequate opportunities, they are making efforts in the right direction, and whenever they opportunities are able to convert those in their own favour. Thus, SDC has been able to create **development-ready communities**. These communities are **not necessarily developed**, but have crossed the important first steps.

To SDC fostering democratization at the government level relates to a rights-based approach and empowerment. It believes that civil and political rights empower people not only to claim their economic and social entitlements but also to demand accountability for public services, pro-poor policies. It capacitates them to move beyond mere participation in decision-making to exercising greater control over public systems. However in Burkina it was observed that SDC has not addressed social empowerment as much as issues of gender inequality.

SDC has developed valuable experiences through implementing a few programs directly and has been able to demonstrate people-centeredness in program design and delivery. This experience must be emphasized with partners in order to make them more responsive to communities' needs and priorities.

*9. The Swiss Law of 1976 states that SDC's mandate is supporting the efforts of developing countries to reduce poverty especially of the most underprivileged areas and people in those countries.*



Indirectly, SDC helps the government to bring about structural changes to sustain empowerment, but this is a long, indirect route to empowerment. By supporting decentralization, the recipient communities are getting opportunities to exercise their political rights, but there are several challenges in the community's ability to deploy empowerment to change their lives. Government policies are not directly influenced by common people. SDC supports civil society participation in PRSP-like processes raising its importance and giving financial support for their time and travel. These efforts can be labelled as the 'supply' of empowering platforms, but this has not yet resulted in visible outcomes.

Based on the lessons from bilateral programs, there is scope for enhancing multilateral programs based on the lessons generated through bilateral aid. The evaluation team came across a number of innovations and effective initiatives that were not widely shared<sup>10</sup>.

SDC undoubtedly concentrates on the under developed regions, but **does not consider substantive equity** within the region, except in case of gender. By focusing on interventions which **benefit the community at large**, the 'marginalized' are made to compete with others on unequal footing. Recipient communities could detail characteristics of the most marginalized and the poorest families who are 'left behind' in development programs, but SDC programs have not given differential treatment to them. Features like mandatory front-ended beneficiary contribution ultimately result in the exclusion of the poorest.

**MDGs are used only as reference points** for credit proposals. The MDGs and their indicators were neither internalized, nor deployed in SDC programs; In fact there is a subtle resistance to the MDGs. If the MDGs were operationalised, the communities would be able to supplement proxy indicators and collect data as feedback. Changes in gender norms as a result of SDC-supported programs also remain unreported in the outside world. This could be done more effectively in the MDG language, now becoming more prevalent in the development sector. The discomfort within SDC to report on the MDGs is unwarranted.

The 'poorest on priority' is a recent policy of SDC according to the partners. By prioritizing women, SDC has demonstrated how to ensure substantive treatment, but it has not transposed these lessons to the case of the marginalized in relation to poverty. However, even with **gender issues** there is a **need to go deeper into inequity between women and men**. Though prima facie favourable treatment to women was impressive, further gender analysis pointed out that **intra family inequity issues needs to be worked on**. Similarly, just as practical gender needs have been adhered to, for example by providing drinking water sources, **strategic gender needs** also need focus, for example supporting women in traditional and formal positions of power, and establishing control over resources.

SDC's partnership management practices resonate well with SDC's documented self-image. Nurturing partners is possibly as important as empowering and developing communities. Therefore the Evaluation Team feels that SDC's contribution in empowering partners needs recognition as one of SDC's key strengths.

In the interest of empowering the marginalized for poverty reduction the following would enhance SDC's performance;

- Focus on people suffering from abject poverty in areas where SDC is active. Make the required changes in the program design to include the poorest on priority, lowering the barriers to participation.
- Operationalise the MDGs in planning, monitoring, allocating resources, evaluating and documenting outcomes. This would reflect the alignment of SDC's and partners' efforts with international standards and provide opportunities to showcase SDC's contributions.

*10. For example, strategies of Tin Tua's MARP, Agrifood processing in Basinery, Ouahigouya, and the women's Garbage Collection Association in Koudougou have not been shared and applied to other multilateral programs.*

- Strengthen gender responsiveness by identifying relatively more marginalized women, for example subordinate wives in polygamous marriages, sex workers, AIDS affected, childless women; and addressing their strategic needs
- Carry out and use comprehensive needs assessments with recipient communities on and develop relevant indicators for monitoring empowerment.
- Focus resources in fewer geographical locations so that limited funds can be used for supporting the entire range of livelihoods related issues. For this SDC may have to seek partnership from other donor agencies or international NGOs. SDC COOF as well as SDC HQ can undertake fundraising efforts for these communities. This will lead to more visible impacts.



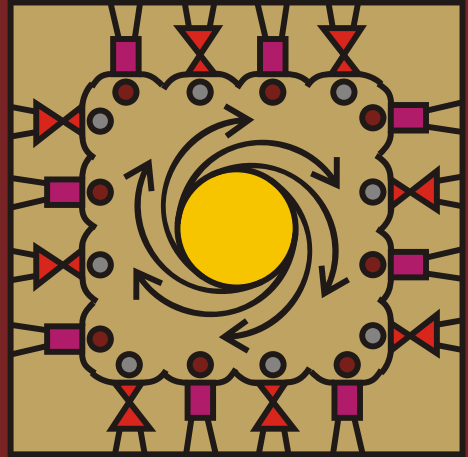
- Revisit partnership management practices, especially phasing out, supporting diversification and using bilateral experience to strengthen multilateral programs.
- Engage with the government through FONAENF-like modalities, in sectors other than education, to build upon field successes. Keep away from the bureaucratic apathy and still upscale programs. FONAENF along with the Alpha program is an excellent model for replicating a program which has been developed and tested over a period of time. Capitalize on it outside of Burkina Faso as well.
- Formally acknowledge SDC's investment in partner development as an equally important outcome and formalize partnership development strategies and programs.

The Evaluation Team recommends that findings of this evaluation are shared with all the stakeholders. The form, length and language may vary from one stakeholder to another, but it will be in order of the spirit in which the data was collected. It will facilitate SDC's attempts to ensure downward accountability along with upward one.





**Part 3:  
Bolivia  
Case Study**



## Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team would like to acknowledge the contribution to all those who gave their time for interviews and community exercises in Bolivia.

We are grateful to the COOF staff for their time and efforts made to accommodate the needs of the team and for making field missions possible. We thank the project teams of EMPODER, PADEM, and PRONALAG who were all involved in making our field visits meaningful.

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The patient support and help of Anne Bichsel kept both the evaluation and the team going. She selflessly endured the team's travel nightmares, endless demands for documents and interview appointments, translation glitches in the End of Mission workshop and lifted their spirits in times of crisis. She challenged the team with charm and a great sense of humour. The team values her contribution very much.

Last but not least, our thanks and encouragement goes to the many empowered women and men in SDC supported programmes in La Paz, Oruro, Challapata, Cochabamba, Tapacari, Tarata, Santa Cruz, and Chane who enthusiastically participated in our community exercises and gave the team valuable insights into processes of empowerment. It was stimulating to exchange experiences with people from faraway lands and learn from them.

The evaluation team would like to stress that the full responsibility for the text of this report rests with us, as the authors. The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent those of SDC or of the people consulted.

**Seemantinee Khot**  
Evaluation Team Leader  
20<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006

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## Executive Summary

1. This evaluation focused on SDC's institutional responsiveness to community needs and priorities and its empowering approaches. Bolivia and Burkina Faso were selected as country case studies as examples of significant empowerment approaches of SDC. The first step in the evaluation was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development. The next step was to get other stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the donor-recipient relationship. The evaluation methodology was appreciative, qualitative and exploratory taking into account the perspectives of all stakeholders, particularly those of recipient communities. The evaluation team endeavored to make the data collection process empowering for all those involved so as to bring forth more relevant data and increased ownership of outcomes.
2. Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in South America, with almost 60 % of its 8.5 million inhabitants living below the poverty line. There are huge development disparities between urban and rural areas. Indigenous groups who live in isolated pockets are underdeveloped in relative as well as in absolute terms. The development challenges are regionalised. The western Altiplano regions suffer from the effects of high altitudes and poorer soil conditions while the southern regions have more fertile soil but a history of slave labor on large, foreign-owned plantations. The implementation of the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) in 1994 enforced political decentralization to the municipal level. Local leadership has thrived due to the budgetary allocation to the municipalities. The current Bolivian context is characterised by the election of an indigenous leader as the President and constitutional reforms. There are high expectations as well as pessimism about future directions of economic and political development.
3. Bolivia has been an SDC priority country since 1969. SDC focuses on poverty reduction with emphasis on two broad themes: a) Governance and democratisation (GODEL) and b) promoting poverty-relevant economic growth (PROMEQ). SDC's Bolivia Country Office (COSUDE Bolivia) focuses on helping the poor to generate income and to strengthen their participation in political processes, especially in indigenous areas, i.e., in the departments of Oruro, Potosi, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca and La Paz, as well as through national programmes. COSUDE targets the "most underprivileged and discriminated population", specifically production and social organisations in urban and rural areas, with emphasis on MDG 1.
4. The issues deemed important for empowerment by the recipient communities were: education, health care, organised community action, sustainable natural resources management and food security, in that order. By and large, communities perceived positive changes in their lives and found themselves more aware and capable than before. This was manifested in their self-confidence, desire to change, articulation of needs and priorities, perception of change and recognition of a multitude of contributing factors. Concerns were expressed over sustainability of livelihoods and food security and lack of civic services, particularly health care. Political rights were neither raised as empowering issues nor as contributory factors for positive changes, possibly because communities feel assured of these and now are keen on seeing their lives transformed as a result. This was remarkable considering that political rights are still given such importance in the Bolivian context. The communities would like education, information dissemination, and municipal level decision making to be more responsive to their needs and priorities. The lack of appropriate



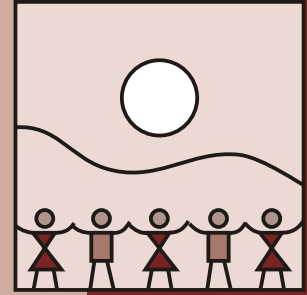
technology, material inputs, infrastructure and markets were seen as blocks to progress. However the communities' ability and willingness to play a role in the transformation of their lives was evident.

5. The evaluation team observed the political empowerment of the community leaders. This has come about through the political reform process in Bolivia. COSUDE Bolivia has played a role in helping and influencing the government to enact pro decentralisation laws and also in educating community leaders to exercise their newly acquired rights and roles. The evaluation team, however, felt that COSUDE's empowerment effort was too leader centric and male centric. The members of the community have experienced empowering changes; however, in some cases, their priorities for further progress are different from those of their leaders. For sustaining momentum of empowering work, responsiveness to community perspectives needs to be ensured.
6. Keeping in line with the overall understanding of SDC, COSUDE Bolivia identifies marginalised groups within society as those living in underdeveloped regions in rural and indigenous communities. COSUDE Bolivia does not probe further into issues of substantive equity within such communities. COSUDE Bolivia has also demonstrated contextual sensitivity by identifying communities who have remained underdeveloped due to chronic conflict situations. However, COSUDE Bolivia has not used "people suffering from abject poverty" as defined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as an explicit criteria for marginalisation. Recipient communities have clear ideas as to who are the most marginalised and the poorest groups, but COSUDE Bolivia programmes do not distinguish these groups in their treatment of recipient communities. In spite of the fact that the UN and subsequently the government of Bolivia have committed to specifically focusing on the MDGs in Bolivia, COSUDE Bolivia has remained skeptical about using the MDGs as a basis for planning, designing, monitoring and evaluating its programmes. As a result COSUDE's experiment of capacitating marginalised indigenous communities to play an active role in governance and its outcomes are not translated into a common development language for the outside world. The discomfort within SDC and COSUDE Bolivia to report on the MDGs is counterintuitive and unwarranted. If the MDGs were better operationalised, communities could supplement proxy indicators and collect data as feedback.
7. COSUDE Bolivia has made efforts to design empowering and poverty alleviation programmes for the people. Yet neither COSUDE Bolivia nor its partners undertake comprehensive needs assessments within recipient communities. In fact, COSUDE Bolivia has been criticised by peers for not aligning programmes with peoples' problems. COSUDE's and its partners' interventions, though effective and innovative, do not produce significant impact. This is because the programmes do not converge. The interventions in capacity building and empowerment have raised the expectations of the communities but, due to lack of resources, have not been translated into poverty reduction.
8. COSUDE Bolivia has developed enabling and empowering relationships with a variety of partners. It treats its partners as equals and supports them in various ways such that they can further empower the communities they work with and in parallel develop themselves as effective and vibrant organisations. COSUDE Bolivia has taken care to maintain a balance between operational freedom and close monitoring of the partners.
9. COSUDE Bolivia has helped its own staff and partners' programme staff to grow and effectively contribute to the well-being of the community.

10. COSUDE Bolivia works closely with the government in developing and initiating pro-poor policies and programmes based on their own and other donors' field successes. COSUDE's involvement in governance, jointly with other bilateral agencies, has created controversies by being seen as interfering in the country's 'internal' matters. This is also likely to create a dent in the "politically neutral" image of COSUDE Bolivia and SDC as a whole.
11. Some suggestions for strengthening empowerment of the recipient communities in Bolivia are offered as below:
- Focus on people suffering from abject poverty. Modify programmes to prioritise the poorest.
  - Strengthen gender responsiveness by identifying relatively more marginalised women and addressing their strategic needs including control over resources.
  - Carry out comprehensive needs assessments with recipient communities and collaboratively develop relevant indicators for monitoring empowerment.
  - Focus resources in fewer geographical areas and support a range of livelihood-related issues to have more visible impacts.
  - Operationalise MDGs in planning, monitoring, allocating resources, evaluating and documenting outcomes to help align SDC's efforts with international standards and showcase SDC's contributions and become a legitimate leader in achieving the MDGs.
  - Re-examine partnership management practices especially when working with government and popular movements.
  - Formally acknowledge SDC's investment in partner development as an equally important impact of SDC's work and formalise and systematise partnership development strategies and programmes.
  - Disseminate findings of this evaluation with all stakeholders.
-



# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 Background to the Evaluation

SDC commissioned this Independent Evaluation to understand and integrate the perspectives of communities, as well as of those directly engaged in implementing development programmes as an important link between recipient communities and SDC. Therefore the focus of the evaluation was on SDC's institutional responsiveness to the needs and priorities of communities, especially those of the marginalised groups, in recipient countries. The purpose was to assess the processes by which SDC ensures accountability towards recipient communities, in addition to governments in recipient countries, Swiss government and taxpayers.

This Independent Evaluation has been unprecedented in that for the first time, SDC invited a team of development professionals “constructively engaged in causes of the poor” from the South to evaluate the empowerment process of communities. The intention was to control for biases, if any, of Northern or donor-based perspectives and priorities. A team of Indian development consultants was contracted in April 2006. Care was taken to select the team having “sufficient distance” from SDC and national governments. The Evaluation process was designed by the Evaluation Team in consultation with SDC's Evaluation + Controlling Division and the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) in May 2006.

SDC selected Bolivia and Burkina Faso as country case studies illustrative of significant empowerment strategies of SDC. The Evaluation Team met a cross section of all the stakeholders, in the two selected countries, with a focus on collecting the recipient communities' perspectives. This was supplemented by interviews of staff at SDC Head quarters (HQ) in Bern. The data collection took place between June and August 2006.

### Box 1: HDR Indicators

- Ranked 113<sup>th</sup> on the UNDP Human Development Index (among 177 countries)
- 14.4% of the population, lives on > \$1
- Infant Mortality Rate 53 (2003)
- Life expectancy at birth of 64.1 years
- Adult Literacy rate 86.5 % for age 15 and above
- Primary school enrolment rate 95 in 2003
- 21% population undernourished (2000-2)

Source: HDR 2005

## 1.2 The Bolivian Context

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America yet it recovered from its status as a failed state in 1976, and has climbed back from inflation rates in the 1000s. Almost 60 % of its 8.5 million inhabitants live below the poverty line. There are huge development disparities between urban and rural areas. Most rural areas are geographically isolated and difficult to access. There are a range of indigenous groups inhabiting in areas much cut off from the development of the rest of the country and hence in earlier stages of development. Otherwise development challenges are regionalised to the diverse geography of Bolivia. The western Altiplano regions suffer from the effects of high altitudes and poorer soil conditions. The lowlands have more fertile soil but have a history of slave labor on large, foreign-owned plantations. There is degradation of critical resources such as water and forests.

As a result of advocacy efforts by many activists, political leaders, NGOs and development partners the decentralisation process in Bolivia is in very advance stages. The progressive Law of Popular Participation (LPP) came in to order in 1994, and enforced political decentralisation to the municipal level. Allocation of 20% of the national budgets to Municipalities gave scope to development of local leadership. The popular movements of peasants' and indigenous groups have played a major role in organising the masses in recent years. The Bolivian development context at present can be characterised by the recent landmark election of Evo Morales as president. An indigenous leader who campaigned on a platform of nationalisation of natural resources and restoring the balance of power to indigenous peoples, the Morales era has started with high expectations as well as pessimism as to how the first indigenous leader will change the direction of economic and political development.

### 1.3 SDC in Bolivia

SDC's presence in Latin America is four decades old, and some of the SDC pioneering work in participatory development has taken place in this region. COSUDE, the Latin American Unit of SDC, works in four countries. Bolivia has been a priority country since 1969. COSUDE works at macro (national), meso (departmental) as well as micro (village) level in Bolivia. Swiss aid in Bolivia is a joint funding by SDC and SECO. According to the orientations and priorities of governance and local economic development a total of 71 million CHF was planned between 2004 and 2006. Currently COSUDE works with 35 partners in Bolivia.

COSUDE's overall vision is to "obtain a society equitable and democratically, participative internally and integrated, based on principles of a State of right, that allows men and women to make its dreams beyond the basic necessities<sup>3</sup>." COSUDE focuses on poverty reduction with emphasis on two broad areas of activity: a) GODEL: Governance and democratisation and b) PROMEQ: promoting poverty-relevant economic growth.

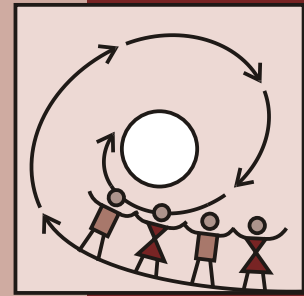
COSUDE's 27 programmes are almost equally divided into the two focal themes; focused on both helping the poor to generate income and on strengthening their participation in political processes. All along COSUDE kept the focus on underdeveloped Andean region, the departments of Oruro, Potosi, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca and La Paz, in addition to national programmes. UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1), that is halving poverty by 2015, gender equality (MDG 3) and securing a sustainable natural environment (MDG 7) are priority areas, with emphasis on MDG 1. COSUDE targets the "underprivileged and discriminated population", specifically production and social organisations in urban and rural areas.



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3. COSUDE Bolivia Website [www.cosude.org.bo](http://www.cosude.org.bo).

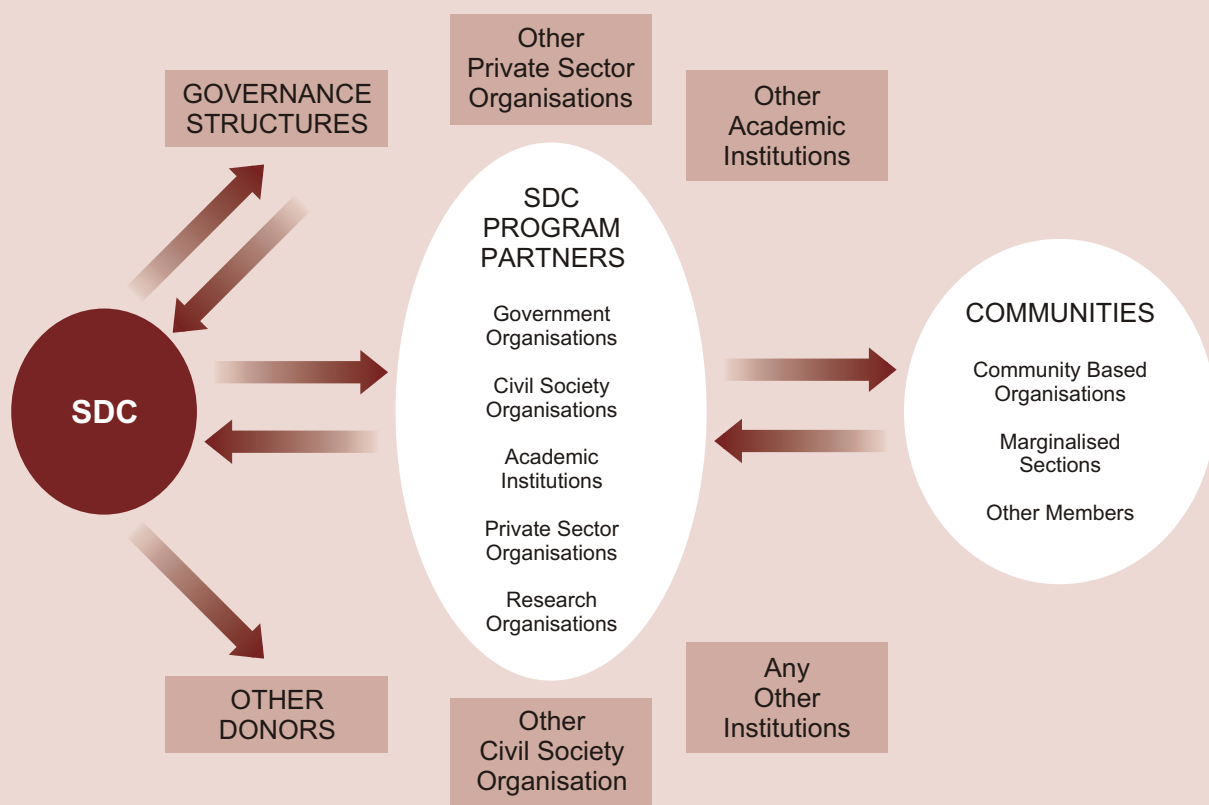
## 2 Methodology and Process of Evaluation



### 2.1 Evaluation Design

The evaluation was designed as an exploration of SDC's institutional ecology and its inter-institutional exchanges. The first step was to understand the views of SDC on issues of poverty, empowerment, participation and development. The next step was to get other stakeholders' perceptions on the same, and finally compare and contrast various viewpoints to arrive at an integrated understanding of the institutional dimension of relationships between the donor agency and its various partners.

#### Box 2 : Scope of the Independent Evaluation to assess SDC's performance



In Bolivia the Evaluation Team reviewed if and how the three stakeholder groups: the recipient communities, partner organisations and COSUDE staff, found various relationships empowering. Box 2 above depicts the relationship links explored.

The evaluation methodology was “appreciative”, “qualitative” and “exploratory”. The team probed into stakeholders' responses questions to reveal deeper meanings. The concepts of “empowerment” and “marginalisation” were central to the evaluation methodology. Instead of following any externally defined indicators of empowerment or marginalisation participatory exercises were facilitated to get the communities' perspectives.

## 2.2 Sample Selection

The team sought the guidance of the COSUDE staff to decide projects and field locations. Not quantity, but quality, stratification and diversity of the sample were more important. The time and logistical constraints also had to be considered. The COSUDE staff identified four programmes but the Evaluation Team chose three, representing mostly the thematic area of governance and human rights as these programmes were considered by COSUDE staff to be more relevant for the subject of the evaluation. The team did not explore programmes in the microfinance and environment themes in great depth. The programmes visited by the team are given in Table 1 and details of the sample covered are presented in Table 2.

The selected regions of Oruro, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz were representative of the major regions and ranging community needs that COSUDE works with.

**Table 1: Locations and programmes selected**

Area	Programme	Theme	Locations visited
Oruro	EMPODER	GODEL	Challapata, Quacachaca
Cochabamba	PADEM	GODEL	Tarata, Tapacari
Santa Cruz	PRONALAG	PROMEQ	University, Chaney



Programme officers at the Country Coordination Office (COOF) were requested to brief the team about the programme and detail the programme management structures. In every location, the team tried to cover all the three stakeholder groups. The team chose interviewees based on their roles in programme management so as to collect a range of perspectives.

Individual interviews were held with COSUDE programme officers, government representatives, senior management and other staff of partner organisations, associated with the programmes visited. Group interviews were held with field staff and focus group discussions with community representatives and members. In each programme area two communities were selected in consultation with partner organisations.

Representatives of partner organisations other than the above three were interviewed in La Paz to validate commonality of the trends observed in the field.

## 2.3 Process of Data collection

For data collection, the Evaluation Team had two days in each programme area and six days at the COSUDE in La Paz. The mission was highly well organised and well communicated to counterparts in project areas. This allowed for a significant amount of data to be collected in a short amount of time.

At the start of the mission, before travelling to the project areas, a meeting with national experts was organized at the initiative of SDC for the Evaluation Team to discuss the key concepts of empowerment and marginalisation in the Bolivian context. Individuals who were either a part of the drafting of the Law of Popular Participation<sup>4</sup>, ex-government staff from central and local levels, indigenous leaders, NGO leaders and local NGO and International NGO representatives participated in semi-structured focus group discussions. This was of considerable value in that it brought forth the historical context and macro-level analysis of the issues relating to empowerment from key individuals who are not employed by COSUDE. Having navigated through the various theories and perspectives on empowerment in Bolivia, the Evaluation Team still gave priority to the perspectives of beneficiaries to inform the analysis of empowerment and marginalisation.

*The law of popular participation was implemented in 1994 to implement the process decentralisation. This extended resources by law to municipal leaders, among other measures.*

As far as possible, the Team made it a point to meet respondents in their own settings. The COSUDE staff decided not to accompany the Team as their role as 'donor representative' could have affected the responses. The mission dates are listed in Annex 1. The tools of data collection are presented in Annex 4 and 5. Salient aspects of the data collection process are given below.

**Table 2 : Sample Covered in Bolivia**

Programme Location / Project	Community				Partner Org. staff	Govt.	SDC	Other	Total
	Men	Women	Men Leaders	Women Leaders					
EMPODER	8	6	46	1	3	0	0	0	56
PADEM	4	14	20	4	9	0	0	1	48
PRONALAG	16	3	0	4	12	0	0	0	19
Workshop	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	9
La Paz	0	0	0	4	1	4	8	13	30
Total	28	23	66	16	25	4	8	20	162

**Orientation of Translators:** The Team depended heavily on translators to communicate with recipient communities. In order to minimise loss of data, reduce biases and ensure sound data collection, they invested considerable time in selecting and training translators. Two translators, one man and one women, spoke Spanish but not indigenous languages. Thus a second translator, often arranged by the local project staff, would translate from the local language, whether Aymara or Quechua, into Spanish, which was then translated into English. The translators participated in the adaptation of data collection tools for the local context, and in noting observation and analysis of community exercises.

**Participatory exercises with the community members:** In every location, the team requested local programme staff to organise community meetings. Typically each group consisted of 10 people or less, making for greater depth of discussion. There were considerably less women participating in field exercises. The team worked simultaneously with small groups divided on the basis of gender or roles in the community. The Team prioritised rapport building with recipient communities and exchanged courtesies in local dialects, shared background information about team members and explained the purpose of the visit, giving time to answer their questions. The team took an appreciative approach to explore progressive changes, allowing discussion on various dimensions of empowerment. Thereafter using a set of 25 picture cards, the team initiated discussions on community perspectives on the different dimensions (see Annex 4). The discussions followed a consistent pattern of four main steps:

- Respondents selected five issues that they considered most important to take charge of their lives, with the freedom to add any missing issues,
- Then ranked selected issues in order of their importance and substantiated the ranking,
- Organised the issues by perceived changes in their condition. For this four cards with visual symbols for negative change, no change, positive change and very positive change were provided, and
- Discussed the factors that contributed to and obstructed the perceived changes.

To aid independent thinking, the team stayed away from the group while they were selecting and ranking the cards. With the help of translators they noted points of debate, disagreement, consensus, and patterns in participation of respondents across different social groups.

**Semi-structured interviews of other stakeholders:** All the other stakeholders, namely COSUDE Staff, partner organisation staff, government officials, Ministers, political and social leaders, were asked direct questions about their understanding of empowerment and marginalisation, and how they thought the perspectives of



marginalised groups were incorporated into respective programme designs. Government representatives and senior staff of partner organisations were further questioned on empowering aspects of partnership dynamics, for beneficiaries, and for addressing power relations in communities. Interviewees were also asked for their opinion about distinguishing features of SDC as a donor.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

**From Triangulation to Findings:** At the end of each field visit, the team organised their interviews into responses to the key questions and subsequently triangulated hypotheses. Findings that could be verified from three independent sources were finally included in the report.

The team also took cognizance of interviewees' choice and priority of issues to discuss, and the ease with which they used examples in their responses. Interviews with the COSUDE Country Director were given additional weight. Preliminary findings and observations were shared with the Deputy Directors before presenting them in the End of Mission workshop (EOM) workshop.

**The End of Mission workshop:** The EOM workshop was conducted to present and discuss preliminary findings with the COSUDE staff, heads of partner organizations among other respondents of the evaluation. The team also used the EOM as an opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies and misinterpretations due to language barriers.

## 2.5 Challenges in capturing beneficiary perspectives

The team had the distinct advantage of being development practitioners from the global South. Both community members and partner organisation staff alike were curious about the conditions in rural India. Respondents were particularly interested in innovative agricultural techniques applied in India and looked to the interaction with Indians as an important learning opportunity.

All field visits were scheduled in consultation with the team and concerned programme staff. The team felt that if they had taken the community's opinion regarding place, time and discussion topics it could have helped to bring out more qualitative data. There were also times when people chose to stay on beyond the agreed time as they were energised by the exercises, and were interested in the team's experiences as development practitioners.

Two issues posed major challenges. One was the selection of programmes. COSUDE staff selected programmes, which were more in the GODEL area than in the PROMEQ area. Thus COSUDE's approach to economic empowerment could not get highlighted.

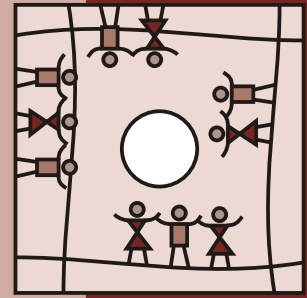
Two, the team could not get adequate opportunity to meet the community members. The sample was distorted in favor of leaders at various levels. The team tried to reach out to remote areas but gathering community at a short notice was not feasible. There was no reluctance on the part of COSUDE or its partners to let the evaluation team meet the community but the difficult logistics, shortage of time and overwhelming presence of leaders made it difficult to get the perspective of the community to the extent desired by the evaluation team. On one hand these could be seen as shortcoming in communication or planning but on the other hand it also was indicative of the connotations of empowerment in the minds of COSUDE and partner staff.

## 2.6 Empowering aspects of the evaluation

Right from the start, the team insisted that the methodology should be in line with the subject matter and endeavoured to make the process empowering for all involved. Having reviewed the SDC frameworks on empowerment and marginalisation, they decided not to force these definitions on respondents. The team chose to explore their meaning-making processes to understand how they applied the concepts to their daily lives. The team strove to make the evaluation substantively based on community perspectives by investing ample time and effort in preparing and carrying out the community exercises.



## 3 Community Perspectives and Experiences of Empowerment



### 3.1 Empowerment in Bolivia

In Bolivia, empowerment is largely understood as marginalised sections in the community having human and political rights and being able to exercise those. COSUDE has supported empowerment at two levels: a) at the governmental level through people-centered legal and structural changes, and b) at the community level by creating awareness, facilitating organised action and capacities for democratic governance. SDC has invested financial and human resources for over two decades in influencing constitutional and legal reforms. Prominent among these efforts were facilitating brain storming sessions, sector wide consultative processes and supporting the committee that drafted the Law of Popular Participation (LPP). LPP gave rise to the decentralisation of political power largely through budgetary decentralisation distributing 20% of the central budget to the municipalities.

Empowerment is a transversal theme while poverty reduction is the overarching goal of all programmes in Bolivia. COSUDE's approach to poverty alleviation focuses mainly on human rights and access to public resources. Its programmes link communities claiming rights as citizens and participation in local governance. Historically indigenous people have been marginalised from political decision-making processes and so the COSUDE strategy has been to focus on their needs and priorities. Its programmes work on human rights training with local indigenous leaders along with other contextual issues, such as resolving territorial conflicts and participatory planning from the community level upwards. 'Capacitating' programmes have been designed to enable those who never made plans and budgets before and help institutionalise democratic decision-making processes. Therefore other stakeholders perceive COSUDE as being "pro-indigenous".

### 3.2 Evaluation Team's understanding of "empowerment"

Empowerment is an experiential process; what is empowering or disempowering is context- specific. Therefore definitions of empowerment not originating from the individual or group in question may not be relevant for analysing their transformation process. The first signs of empowering processes are an experience of what is 'empowering', recognizing it, and being able to articulate it. For individuals in underdeveloped communities there will always be several dimensions that can lead to empowerment. Being able to prioritise what is most desirable is the next stage on the path of empowerment.

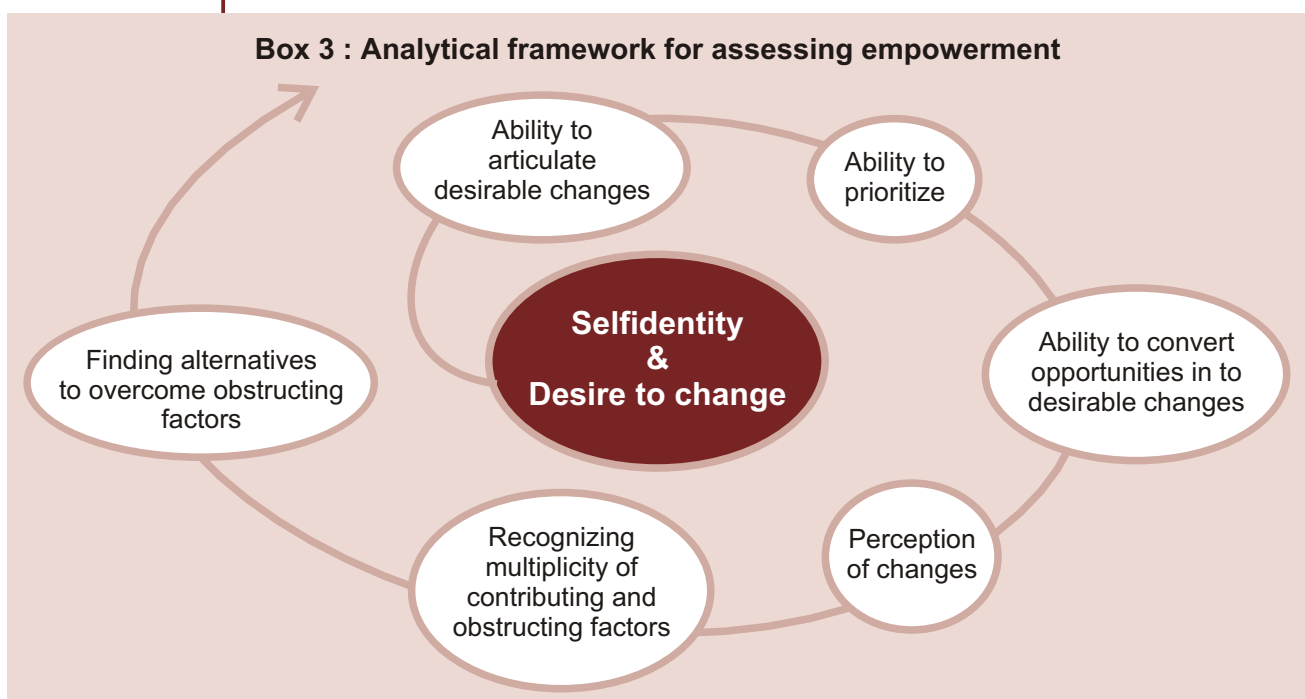
The Evaluation Team worked with the assumption that 'empowerment' will manifest in its deployment, that is an empowered individual will use and convert opportunities to progress towards a desired state or situation. Hence it was important to find out if there was any movement in the desirable direction, and whether the individual concerned had experienced the movement and knew if the changes were on track or not. These individuals would also be able to identify factors that contributed to or inhibited their progress towards the desirable changes.

The team also acknowledged that empowerment does not mean fulfilment of all desires, but it refers to the consistent engagement with finding alternatives, refining one's abilities and moving ahead. An active pursuit to move in desirable direction would be ridden with challenges and periodically might give a sense of

disempowerment. For the empowered, dealing with those challenges and finding alternatives would help individuals regain control over the process. Empowerment is not static. Both disempowering and empowering forces and outcomes are an integral part of the process, and being aware/conscious of this dynamism is another sign of empowerment. Calibrating oneself and deploying one's abilities according to changing/evolving needs and priorities, and negotiating changes with other actors, who influence the changes, is yet another indicator of empowerment. Many assumptions about what is a good life decide the direction and destination of the empowerment journey. Life experiences and changes in the environment can dramatically alter the meaning, process and destination of empowerment.

The evaluation team studied whether the phenomena of empowerment are evident at both individual and community levels and are complimentary to one another. Whether the marginalised sections in the recipient communities have their own agenda of empowerment, and the whether there is a shared agenda across the community based on the common needs.

This conceptual understanding used by the evaluation team while assessing 'empowerment' is captured in Box 3.



The Evaluation Team used participatory community exercises, home visits and informal interactions as windows to observe the following indicators of empowerment, based on the framework.

- Sense of self identity (reflected in self-confidence),
- Desire to change (reflected in articulation of what is desirable),
- Ability to prioritise (reflected in reasons given)
- Perception of change on issues
- Recognition of contributing and obstructing factors
- Process of identifying alternatives to overcome obstructing factors, and
- Continuity of process of redefining desirable changes and role for themselves.

The Evaluation Team avoided direct questioning on whether SDC programmes were empowering. Instead it was left to participants to list contributing factors to issues in their lives. Whether reference was made to development programmes or not was observed.

### 3.3 Evidence of empowering processes

The Evaluation Team, though keen to meet the common community members, mostly met community leaders who were highly motivated and aware of the political scenario in the country. They gave elaborate welcome speeches, often starting with historical references to their struggles as indigenous people, shared success stories of their movement and stated upfront their expectations from the government. Their consistent references to the ongoing Constitution Assembly, municipal budgets, and even the impact of international relations on the funding scenario reflected their engagement in contemporary issues. They were particular about following protocols of leadership, from the community to municipal to provincial level and adhered to all formalities when meeting and dining with the evaluation team. Some wore visible symbols of status such as woven caps and embroidered jackets. The bigger the leader the more applause he got for his speech.

Most of the leaders were male. They greeted the team in Aymara or Quechua, and then switched over to Spanish. Except for Cochabamba, very few women attended the meetings. Women's speeches were shorter and in local languages. Almost all the elected leaders were participants or alumni of the 'capacitating' inputs given through COSUDE supported programmes.

The community members were also articulate and willing to talk. They could relate to each other well and wanted to know about experiences from other regions. If leaders made a point contrary to a member, there was not much debate. They did not express their dissatisfaction directly. There was hesitation in pointing out drawbacks in the programmes; this could be because of the presence of partner programme staff in the meetings. Most of the discussions amongst themselves took place in local languages. In mixed groups, women rarely spoke and if they did, they were very brief; on the other hand 'all women's groups' were very vocal and brought about debate on many issues.

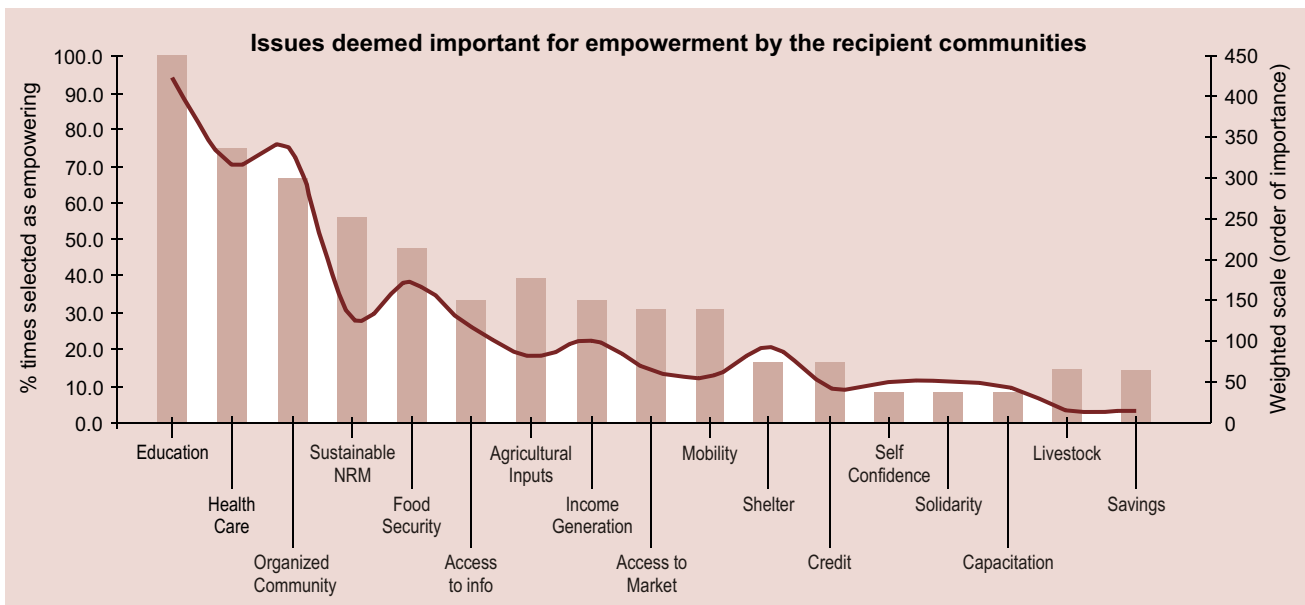
### 3.4 What do recipient communities find empowering?

The issues deemed important for empowerment by the recipient communities' were education, health care, organised community action, sustainable natural resources management and food security in that order. All of these are related to livelihoods and civic services. (Annex 6).

**Education** was seen as the highest priority in all the communities, an overwhelming 100% as it is seen as a means to livelihood. People expressed a desire for education, which could allow persons to have opportunities as leaders, as traders, and jobs in the cities. 'Good' life or 'development' is equated with city life not village life, as cities have much better civic amenities. Education is correlated with upward mobility. Not being able to speak, read and write Spanish is considered disempowering. The communities were keener that their children get education than for themselves, their hopes for poverty alleviation now resting with the next generation.

The second priority was **accessible health care services**. Not having reliable health services within walking distance has led to loss of life and suffering. According to the beneficiaries, poor nutrition, harsh weather conditions, loss of traditional health knowledge and practices and arrival of new diseases jeopardise the 'health' of the rural poor. To be able to take charge of one's life, one has to be assured of basic needs and survival. As the roads are bad and there is no transportation, most have to travel half-a-day to reach a hospital or health post. A rapid analysis of the 'last five deaths' in the villages indicated that many die without taking any treatment. Very few can complete their medical prescriptions. In fact in most cases symptoms are not severe at the start of illness, and many deaths could have been avoided. For the survivors of such unnecessary deaths, this can be a very disempowering context.

Though **organised community action** was ranked as the third priority, in almost all groups this was picked as an undisputed foundation of empowerment. The substantiation that resonated across all the groups was "anything is possible if we



are organised and nothing is possible if we are not<sup>5</sup>. Some examples illustrated how being organised helped in taking individual and community- level actions for positive change. These included conflict resolution, construction of schools, building roads, and using the market system for selling beans.



The other issues identified as important for 'taking charge of their lives' were related to **agriculture production and food security**. The communities expressed that unviable agriculture; drudgery and food shortage were leading to forced migration. The inability to feed children is the most disempowering experience. There are no fixed places to go for work, so one has to search for employment. The young wives left behind at home have feelings of insecurity. Women linked alcoholism and domestic violence to the lack of secured livelihoods. Such uncertainty among poorer families results in apathy towards participation in municipality level meetings.

Most of the questions asked by the community members to the Evaluation Team were about crops, breeds, yields, wages, market rates of cattle, and related to sources of livelihood in India.

The issues that community did not mention at all as relevant in their current context related to their political rights, such as voting and solidarity to claim rights. This was remarkable considering that COSUDE bestows prime importance to political rights. It is possible that voting and solidarity are no longer priority needs, as communities in the new political context consider it to be assured and accessible.

### Box 3: Cultural identity is an empowering factor but...

Cultural identity was a major discussion issue in various places in Bolivia. In one of the community discussion sessions, the members wanted to add a new card on 'preserving cultural identity' as one of the issues leading to empowerment. However when it came to the ranking top five issues, cultural identity was not one of them. On enquiry, the group mentioned that while cultural identity issues are unique to each cultural group, issues like education and health care services were common to all.

### 3.5 Perception of changes on desirable issues

While community leaders perceived positive changes on all issues they consider important for their empowerment, the views of non-leaders were different. In their view, though the process of change had begun, it was inadequate and fraught with challenges. For example, the leaders felt that access to information has improved, but communities felt that they did not have access to the

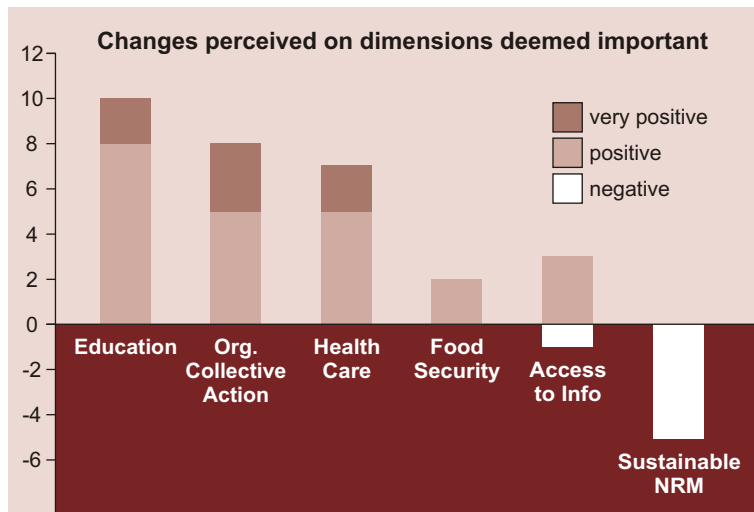
5. Later on it was learnt that it was a slogan of human rights movement.

same information that their leaders had. There were leakages and delays in receiving information. They pointed out information gaps on issues related to agricultural implements, tools for shearing llamas, of fodder varieties suitable for lands with low soil depth, and proper feeding of animals; all critical topics on which they wanted further information.



**Box 4: We need enabling education not disabling**

The communities strongly desire education for children, but would like content and delivery of education to be more need-based and related to real-life issues. “Currently education is only making our children useless to do what we do” said a farmer.



The recipient communities noted declining sources of livelihoods as a major concern. While community leaders did not mention degradation of soil, water and vegetation as issues, the community members observed deterioration in the condition of natural resources as the reason for all the other problems, particularly food insecurity and poverty. It was very interesting to note that the community was willing to apportion the blame for deteriorating natural resources to their own practices like excessive use of fertilisers, insecticides. When asked how you would spend the municipal budgets if it were in your hands, farmer women gave priority to land development. Each village should have enough cultivable land to feed its population.

Better roads and more schools have resulted in increased school enrolment. Distance between school and home has reduced, but the education is expected to be more vocational.

Though the Team could not delve deeper into negative aspects raised or verify the extent of positive changes, the community responses were indicative of their interests and their ability to articulate those. It was evident that they wished to utilise new political opportunities to create a favourable environment for themselves. They

**Box 5: “then why go to school?”**

What prospects does an illiterate young migrant woman have in the city?

- She can either be a domestic worker - a maid, or sell vegetables?
- There are many here like that!

What prospects does a IV<sup>th</sup> standard pass young migrant woman have in the city?

- She can either be a domestic worker - a maid, or sell vegetables?
- There are many here like that!!

What prospects does a VIII<sup>th</sup> standard pass young migrant woman have in the city?

- She can either be a domestic worker - a maid, or sell vegetables?
- There are many here like that!!

What prospects does a matriculate young migrant woman have in the city?

- She can either be a domestic worker - a maid, or sell vegetables?
- There are many here like that!!

Then why study??? One can be a maid or vegetable vender right from the beginning!!!!

regarded 'having an indigenous President' as the biggest opportunity for them, and had many expectations of the new leader. With better mobility they are now more aware of the differences between urban and rural areas, being educated and uneducated and having political power as against not having it. They know that getting a fair share of available resources is their right; having spent a lot of time discussing 'human rights' they are now anxious and eager to acquire them.

### 3.6 Factors contributing to change

Recipient communities acknowledged multiple factors contributing to their empowerment. They consider themselves and their national leaders key players in the change process, which is an important indicator of their empowerment. Some contributing factors are presented in table 3.1 below. The first row groups the responses according to attribution of the positive change, that is, to themselves (to the community), to COSUDE programmes and to the larger environmental context. Only the top four empowerment issues are included in this table.

**Table 3: Factors contributing to positive change according to the recipient communities**

Issues	Community (themselves)	Development Programmes (COSUDE)	Environment (Socio-political context)
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Motivated to educate children due to visible benefits</li> <li>● Peasant children becoming professionals/ leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Due to PPL funds become available directly to Municipalities</li> <li>● Municipality budgets used for building schools, roads, bridges etc</li> <li>● Sensitisation of parents - more girl children going to school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Foreign aid (Cuba, Venezuela) for adult literacy</li> <li>● facilities created by National authorities</li> <li>● Education reform in 1996 -Reduction of school hours, State support to school Education in local languages making education more accessible for peasants</li> </ul>
Organised Community Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Access to resources and political power</li> <li>● Greater awareness of government structures and rights</li> <li>● Supportive Traditional leaders (Syndicate)</li> <li>● Youth elected to municipality</li> <li>● Leaders are controlled by communities</li> <li>● Greater self confidence</li> <li>● Experience of change</li> <li>● Unity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Systematic and continuous capacity building inputs on human rights, laws, leadership qualities</li> <li>● Selection of leaders left to communities (local language)</li> <li>● First trained a cadre of new leaders who in turn trained others</li> <li>● People trained to observe leaders behaviour/ performance, informing dissemination processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Favourable structural and legal changes Popular participation law - budget for municipalities,</li> <li>● Indigenous in power positions the President, Chairperson of Constituent assembly</li> </ul>

Issues	Community (themselves)	Development Programmes (COSUDE)	Environment (Socio-political context)
Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of both modern and indigenous healing practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipality budgets used for building health posts, roads, bridges etc making access easier</li> <li>• Effective Radio programmes for health education and announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of govt resources for "SUMI"- better coverage, but with user fees, free medical care for &lt;5 yrs &amp; &gt;60 yrs, free hospitals,</li> <li>• health insurance schemes</li> <li>• New hospital in San Julian (Cuba) reducing distance to treatment posts.</li> </ul>
Food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of new / supplementary livelihood options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of new seed variety</li> <li>• Timely seed availability Better germination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to market due to roads and transport</li> <li>• Storage and cleaning Frijoles</li> </ul>

Community leaders stated that the Law of Popular Participation (LPP) and autonomy to municipalities as the two most important factors contributing to the change process in the country. The leaders also cited *capacitation as another factor that helped them build new social relations with other indigenous groups.*

The community emphasised mobility, opportunity to interact with other ethnic groups and access to urban areas as more important factors for empowerment. Decentralisation raised the profile of territorial planning and ownership. Access to land also increased, all of which has made a difference in the status of indigenous peoples.

The formation of vigilance committees to oversee the functions of municipal leaders is a noteworthy mechanism for developing transparency in decision making and ensuring accountability of leaders to the community. In some places these have been effective forums, and communities found them empowering. However in some places these have become a "score settling" tool, and operate more like 'opposition parties'. The membership of vigilance committees is a political decision, and often those who are thrown out of power occupy these positions and bring pressure on rivals, even within same ethnic groups. Marginalised groups try to keep away from participation, with the fear of being caught between two factions, which can adversely affect their livelihoods and benefits. These are unavoidable processes in any political decision making, but in a planned decentralisation process greater care could have been taken for developing shared leadership and responding to the needs of the marginalised rather than their alienation.

Though the Evaluation Team could visit only one PROMEQ programme, PRONALAG<sup>6</sup>, the concrete outcomes of increased production, access to market and agricultural services (technical backstopping) were also seen by farmers as helping them the most<sup>7</sup>. Increased crop intensity has led to more employment and more options. Partnering with ASOPROF<sup>8</sup> a bean producer association has given space for farmer control over decisions. In fact, functioning of such farmer unions seemed quite democratic, even though they were not given as exhaustive training in institution building.

6. National Leguminous Grain Project directed towards the development and exchange of technology for nutritious leguminous grains, as a source of food and prosperity, as competitive crops capable of feeding a population of lesser resources and as crops of ideal rotation.

7. PRONALAG has successfully involved all the key stakeholders in the value chain of one crop and demonstrated how a comprehensive approach can make a difference to community status.

8. ASOPROF



### 3.7 Obstructing factors perceived by the community

Recipient communities identified many factors obstructing their empowerment. This in itself is indicative of their involvement in the change process.

**Table 4: Obstructing factors: attributing negative change**

To	Community	Programmes	Environment
Sustainable Natural Resource Management (NRM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not capable of managing soil quality, earth washes away.</li> <li>• Producing too much, family size increases????</li> <li>• Increase in use of chemicals- fertiliser and insecticides</li> <li>• No equipments, tractors</li> <li>• Preference to migration neglecting land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No technical trainings</li> <li>• No emphasis on technology transfer</li> <li>• No inputs for soil and water conservation and family level asset development land livestock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarce water resources, poor soil quality</li> <li>• Mining causing pollution of water and soil</li> <li>• Harsh climatic conditions</li> <li>• Chain of problems: no transportation = no market = no interest in increasing production and therefore no taking care of land</li> <li>• Infighting border issues</li> </ul>
Access to Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are watching the TV and radio for soap opera and not education</li> <li>• Spanish Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No direct communication with communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only big enterprises own communication businesses therefore rise in user costs.</li> </ul>

The main obstacles to empowerment were perceived as social, cultural, economical and political barriers to assured livelihoods. Communities stated that this was due to degrading natural resources. The context of an uncertain future and not knowing what is going to happen next is disempowering.

The communities across all programmes accepted that they themselves could play the role of change agents, but expressed the need for help in identifying strategies to overcome obstacles to this and for maintaining the continuity of this process of redefining desirable changes and newer roles for themselves.

Communities have access but do not have a sense of control over decision-making at the community level or municipal level. They want livelihood issues to be addressed; however, the municipal leaders take up short-term infrastructure development projects. The community is consulted but not responded to. There are elaborate planning processes, but what happens to the suggestions given remains unknown, according to the average community member. "We do not come to know whether the planned activity is delayed or cancelled. All planning documents are in Spanish and we do not get copies". Political power is given but cannot be utilised. This is likely to affect participation in the future.

### 3.8 Factors requiring more attention for sustaining empowerment:

By and large beneficiaries perceive a phase of transition in their lives but is keeping their aspirations in abeyance until the outcomes of the Constitution Assembly are seen. Therefore a major need of the day is to make the new reforms as pro-poor as possible. This can happen only if the leaders promoted through LPP remain engaged in the process and raise the needs of their constituencies in appropriate forums. At present it is very much a leader-centric process.

**Gaps between leaders and communities:** The three regions visited by the Team had three different sets of issues but everywhere there was a difference in the way leaders and the community perceived empowerment issues. By and large the leaders talked about infrastructure development, human rights issues, information dissemination. These were mostly related to the programmes they were involved in;

while the community emphasised children's education, productivity of land, livestock and health care services. Food shortages were also an area of concern for the community. The leaders did share these views.

The following table lists priorities stated by the leaders and the community in the same location as an illustration of the differences in their perceptions.

**Table 5: Difference in the leaders and communities perceptions**

	Leaders	Community	Evaluation Team 's comment
Rank1	Self Confidence	Organized Collective Action	Community has crossed the first levels of empowerment, having self-confidence; leaders think it is still an issue for the community. Communities want the entire community to be involved in action
Rank2	Organized Collective Action	Sustainable NRM	Community saw the need for sustainable use of natural resources as a priority, while the leaders did not express it at all. Community sees degradation of soil and water as a cause of decreasing productivity
Rank3	Access to Information	Educational Opportunities	Dissemination of information is a leaders' responsibility and feel it is one of the most important issues, the community did count it in the first five.
Rank4	Educational Opportunities	Health Care	These are high priority for both, are perceived but still not accessible
Rank5	Health Care	Mobility	Leaders are mobile, and do not think that it is a priority for others, for the community it is still one of the most important issues
Rank6	Agricultural inputs	Access to Market	Storage, transport and being able to sell at a good price was seen as the main reason for the under development of farmers.

Issues marked with green were mentioned both by community and leaders, those in blue only by the community and those in orange only by the Leaders).

COSUDE's programmes might possibly result in increasing the gaps between leaders and their communities. One reason could be that the time leaders spend representing their communities in central level governance keeps them physically away from their villages and its problems. Leaders have access to opportunities and programme benefits, but there is no mechanism of ensuring that the benefits such as information and opportunities are shared among community members. With national leaders as their role models, most community leaders have aspirations of gaining more political stature in the national arena. The Evaluation Team observed that the communities could not communicate freely and frankly in the presence of their leaders. For outsiders, the community is still a black box, with NGOs preferring to work with leaders.

On the other hand, some leaders consider themselves the most disempowered today, as the expectations of communities have increased. The municipal leaders feel that their hands are tied due to the size of municipal budgets. "We can neither complain nor can we adequately resolve local problems". "We are questioned all the time about the pending plans, but budgets are not enough to incorporate all demands."

**Box 6: Capacitation as an important contributing factor**

- Participants were elected by community
- Traditional leaders blessed the selection
- Due to literacy as a criterionewer, younger leadership emerged
- Ability and willingness to sharing information imparted through trainings is given importance
- Training is modular and continuous
- Content is comprehensive, with real-life case analysis
- Experience sharing by peers on how conflict resolution process progressed gave practical tips

**Women left behind:** COSUDE recognises gender inequality as an axis of marginalisation and have incorporated gender analysis, gender sensitisation of staff and leaders, and promotion of women's leadership as gender mainstreaming strategies. However the Evaluation Team did not observe equally effective results in the programme outcomes. Strategic gender issues, for example gender-based division of work, unequal wages, and not being included in land titles, are still not addressed. There are few women in leadership positions, that too mostly in subordinate roles. The Evaluation Team observed that in the presence of men and higher-level leaders women leaders did not assert themselves. Some women leaders were from urban areas and were educated, having little in common with the women they were representing. Not knowing Spanish was a major draw back for the women to occupy leadership positions.

### 3.9 Empowerment of other stakeholders

NGOs, research institutions, human rights activists and municipal leaders perceive the COSUDE stakeholder relationship as empowering. However the current political leadership is sceptical of COSUDE's influence in development, as it is of all foreign presence in the country. The government empowerment strategy is to directly empower the communities without going through any intermediate structure. Thus, government officials are uncomfortable with COSUDE's support for municipal and state level leaders.

Further issues related to stakeholders other than communities are elaborated further in the section on partnership management practices.

### 3.10 Summary

COSUDE's approach to empowerment focuses largely on political and leadership development of local indigenous leaders and beneficiaries being able to claim their rights. Poverty alleviation is focused largely on human rights and access to public resources.

The Evaluation Team observed political empowerment among the community leaders, largely owing to the recent political reforms in Bolivia. The issues deemed important for empowerment by the recipient communities' were livelihood-related education, health care, organised community action, sustainable natural resources management and food security, in that order.

Communities and leaders differ on what dimensions are most important for empowerment and how these dimensions have changed. Leaders preferred infrastructure, political changes and access to information, and communities talked more about livelihoods, health care and natural resources. Community members were also less positive about changes in the status of these things.

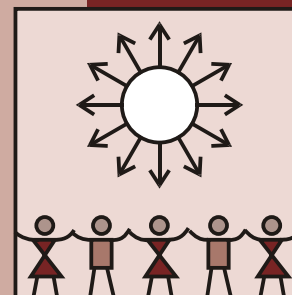
There is effective incorporation of gender mainstreaming into programme designs however impacts do not reflect COSUDE's priority on gender. While there were notable indigenous women leaders who were confident and educated, such cases were not common.

Communities could identify their own influence, that of the programme and the larger environment over the various changes taking place in their lives. The ability to distinguish between these three is a sign of empowerment.

COSUDE has played a role in helping and influencing the government to enact decentralisation laws and also educating community leaders to exercise their newly acquired rights and roles. The team however felt that the whole empowerment effort was leader and malecentric. The members of the community have experienced empowering changes; however their priorities for further progress are different from their leaders in some cases. For sustaining momentum of empowering work, the development programmes and decentralisation processes will have to be responsive to the perspectives of community members as well.



## 4 SDC's Responsiveness to the Needs and Priorities of the Marginalized



The Swiss Law of 1976 states that SDC's mandate is to support the efforts of developing countries to reduce poverty especially of the most underprivileged areas and people in those areas. Subsequently in their last Annual Report (2004-05) SDC has also reaffirmed its mandate on poverty reduction in line with the UN Millennium Declaration and the MDGs.

SDC is inclined to believe that 'democratic decentralisation' can contribute to poverty reduction where the poor a) make up a large majority of the population, b) live in spatially distinct pockets, and c) are substantially mobilised and well organized. It believes that in such situations poverty arises mainly out of inequality between regions or locations, and not from inequality within them. Therefore SDC has been supporting decentralisation processes in various countries and consequently COSUDE has been supported the same in the highlands.

### 4.1 Defining and identifying the marginalised

SDC acknowledges marginalisation as a cause and an effect of poverty, and thus considers empowerment of the marginalised as a means to reduce poverty. There is a shared understanding within SDC that poverty in Bolivia is multidimensional and relative. Bolivia faces high levels of persistent poverty and inequality transcending through rural, urban and regional boundaries. Poverty is concentrated in the central highlands and valleys; the lowlands have lower poverty rates but due to large populations, the number of poor people is also large. There are severe disparities in household size, land holdings, education, and skills across regions. However the fact remains that any conventional mandate of reducing poverty in a geographical area could be more successful if it were to identify sub-groups of the poorest more clearly and target them more effectively.

Bolivian perceptions of poverty is that it is influenced by employment, education, and access to assets such as land, basic services, ethnicity and location. SDC's primary focus has been on the last two criteria and has therefore has chosen to work primarily in five



#### Box 7: Indicators of socio-economically marginalised

- Remotely located / difficult terrain with no means of communication
- Difficulty in accessing schools, health services, markets
- Do not speak Spanish
- Have no/ small / infertile lands for cultivation
- No means to cultivate (bullock, plough), no fodder
- Food insecurity for = 6 months/ year
- Inadequate clothing for winter
- Not able to treat sickness in family due to lack of means
- Do not participate in community meetings

9. Based on UDAPE Household Surveys 1993-2002, 40% of the population in Santa Cruz department is poor although the poverty rate is only 20%.

departments in the central highlands and valleys with the largest population of indigenous people, lowest score on human development indicators, high incidence of migration, poor natural resources and underdeveloped civic amenities. Most SDC country offices focus on groups that suffer from specific discrimination, choose entry point activities that are relevant to the poor, address specific livelihood needs of subsistence farmers, and consider specific gender concerns within the country context.

Keeping in line with this, COSUDE Bolivia uses vulnerability as a defining dimension of poverty and works with people owning marginal or poor quality assets and with limited skills to manage scarce natural resources. In PROMEQ projects, the poor are either perceived as producers or there is little systematic consideration of differences between those who were willing to/ motivated enough to participate and those unable owing to illness, high dependency ratios or old age. Other dimensions of marginalisation among the poor, such as gender and ethnicity, has been treated in principle in all projects but in practice gender mainstreaming is found to be weak.

In the Bolivian context people affected by territorial conflicts is another unique dimension of marginalisation. The project EMPODER has demonstrated an exemplary impact in bringing about peace and initiating development in traditionally warring communities. Thus COSUDE has been sensitive to contextual reasons of marginalisation.

In more general terms, although many programme staff were aware of the finer distinctions among the poor, there is scope for more detailed planning based on comprehensive needs assessment.

#### 4.2 Responding to the MDGs

Since the year 2000, as per the SDC guidelines for Elaborating Cooperation Strategies for priority countries, all country documents are expected to refer to multilateral agreements, particularly the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs as a

basis for planning development programmes. In practice many SDC programmes were designed and initiated long before the MDGs were written, and hence are not geared to report on MDG-related achievements. In fact the evaluation team felt that there was aversion to mainstream the MDGs in the day-to-day operation of the programmes. Concepts like 'marginalised' can be defined in many ways but the acceptance of the MDGs would require that the definition of the 'marginalised' be aligned with the MDG definition of abject poverty.

UNDP documents state

#### Box 8: Glimpses from interactions with residents of Quacachaca where the Evaluation Team gave a surprise / unplanned visit

- When asked to a group - What would change the life in their village? - Head teacher of the local school was the first to respond "- a virtual library! Ours is such a remote village, it is difficult to transport books all the way. Instead, we should be able to access any information round the world. Its children in villages like ours, who need such information the most, as it is physically difficult for them to visit so many places. We need access to such information.
- Not knowing who we were, the first woman we met on the road asked "would you like to buy eggs". She was interested in buyers, not in visitors.
- Another woman wanted to show her handloom but the room was locked, and the key had gone with the leader, as it was his house in which some women do weaving one day in a week. She looked at the weaving patterns of the Indian dresses the Evaluation Team was wearing
- Young boys were curious about foreigners, what language they speak. A 10-year-old boy wanted the Team to visit his family and meet his mother. He was proud that his mother runs a shop.
- Not many young girls were out on the road. Did not interact and only observed the strangers from behind a wall.
- Three villagers were engrossed in filling up some application form for a government scheme.
- There were at least three old women who were almost blind or had cataract. But they had not heard of eye surgery.

*10. A COSUDE programme working in Oruro is a unit of the Vice-ministry of Justice that promotes respect for the Human Rights of the indigenous and rural population in particular; seeking the legal equilibrium socially and politically between this population and the State. It seeks to strengthen the mechanisms for citizen participation*

that Bolivia is one of the eight pilot countries of Capacity 2015 and is committed to take the MDGs to the local level. The fulfilment of the MDGs will be measured in 30 selected municipalities and this will make the achievements more tangible and reachable for the people. Neither COSUDE nor its partners mentioned this in the interviews. Secondly, the Bolivia government has taken the decision to align its social policy with the MDGs in health and education. It has created two national public programmes to achieve the fulfilment of these goals: the SUMI (Universal Maternal and Child Health Insurance) and the EFA (Education for All). However data on the progress on these indicators in the COSUDE programme areas was not available. Moreover SDC's reluctance to use economic indicators for the selection of beneficiaries comes in the way of aligning with MDG one which aims to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than one dollar per day.



**Box 9: Programmes 'For' the people or "By' the people?**

The evaluation team has ample evidence to surmise that COSUDE is working for the people but correspondingly there was no evidence of peoples' involvement in defining the programmes. This was also evident from the configuration of the sample for this evaluation. The sample was heavily loaded in terms of eminent intellectuals, politicians and civil society organization leaders but the Evaluation Team did not get adequate opportunity to meet the common man, much less the common woman.

Programme officers were of the view that as SDC did not work directly with communities it was difficult to attribute SDC's contribution to specific MDGs. This is because a) most SDC-supported programmes are designed to benefit communities as a whole with no explicit focus on individuals or households, and b) SDC leaves the selection of groups to its partners. Some partners like PADEM are trying to build bridges between the departments and the municipalities in order to access UN funds available for addressing the MDGs at the department level. They also claim that the MDGs pertaining to improved quality of services and gender equity are being addressed as an outcome of their *capacitation programme*, but do not have data to substantiate their claims.

**4.3 Working with the 'poor with potential'**

The beneficiaries of the PRONALAG programme are "small" farmers in Santa Cruz, who own 10 to 40 hectares of land. The main critique of PADER, a direct programme of COSUDE developed in consultation with all stakeholders, is that it was meant for 'poor people with poor resources'. Though the programme claims to have been the first to address economic issues and designed on the basis of a grassroots-level survey, it has been accused of 'directing public resources to private, profit-making enterprises' instead of the poorest of the poor. Those who have access to such resources and enterprise development skills will already have the means to convert inputs into visible results, however those living in abject poverty will require more time, training, and resources to be able to convert inputs into visible changes. Working with the poor with potential is easier than working with the poorest of the poor.

11. *A Synthesis programme promoting local municipal leadership development and participation of citizens in governance*  
 12. *Promotion for Rural Economic Development*

#### 4.4 Needs assessments

The Cooperation Strategy (CS) and a programme-level 'business plan' is prepared at the country level using available secondary information, national consultants and consultations with existing and prospective partners. The process of deciding thematic priorities seems to have little involvement with ground-level realities of beneficiaries. There was no evidence of community needs assessments factoring into the definition and selection of GODEL and PROMEQ. Yet strategy formulation meetings are a strong point insofar as they produce promising and innovative ideas, which are sometimes taken on by partners.

In PRONALAG the idea of promoting 'frejole' came from Agricultural University of Santa Cruz. Scientists were concerned about improving the well-being of small farmers forced to migrate for want of a second crop and thus improved the programme greatly by developing strategies to address this need. On the other hand, there was a criticism that some of the SDC programmes were oriented more to the implementing partners like universities and NGOs rather than to people. For example, one key success factor for PRONALAG has been the formation of ASOPROF, a farmers' organization which has taken up market linkages. This facet of the programme was not initially developed by COSUDE.

Some government representatives voiced a strong critique that COSUDE is "sitting in a bubble along with middle class intellectuals" and is not aligned to the needs and expectations of the people. Even after discounting the compulsions of political rhetoric it is necessary for the COSUDE to reflect on this aspect. Another government official while going through each of the PROMEQ programmes commented that all of them were relevant programmes that needed to be continued albeit with a reorientation to help the common people.



#### Box 10: Communities' needs are changing ...

In Oruro in addition to the very basic needs of water and education, communities now have the need 'to be organised', to be part of the governance structure and the need for skills to negotiate with the authorities. They require skills to build alliances with other donors. Some have also written proposals to projects addressing their need to market potatoes. Sometimes it appears that there is a theory in SDC that if people are organised, their capacities are built and they are helped to articulate and fight for their legitimate demands. Nevertheless these are necessary but not sufficient conditions for poverty reduction.

After finalising the programme areas and the partners, a needs assessment is carried out at the programme level. This feeds into specific elements of programme design. For example in PADEM people are consulted on where the classes may be conducted, for how long, the language of instruction, other preferred means of imparting knowledge like the radio, and livelihood topics of immediate interest and applicability. Dialogue 2000 was mentioned as a major multi-stakeholder attempt supported by COSUDE, for needs assessment of all the municipalities.

**Addressing changing needs:** Community needs and priorities evolve and change over time. Access to information about their entitlements and participation in planning processes has raised peoples' expectations of the government. For example, government had promised to give 45 million dollars for Oruro-Potosi area development as a part of the peace process agreement, but, the government has not yet disbursed the money to the municipality, leading to frustration among local people. The peace process has released much energy and has generated possibilities of better use of human and social capital for deployment in development. However this empowerment is

*13. The Cooperation Strategy (CS) for a given country or region guides SDC's collaboration with the government and civil society in recipient countries, with other bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, and with Swiss and other international NGOs. It delineates SDC's strategic orientation with reference to choice of geographic and thematic thrust areas, transversal themes, aid modalities of cooperation, partnership arrangements and resource management.*

unable to find expression due to a lack of resources. Secondly having organized themselves and becoming aware of their capacities, communities now need interventions that will promote local economic and production development. COSUDE's many PROMEQ programmes are not being implemented in these same locations. In spite of recent attempts to build synergies between themes, in many cases the programmes are addressing one small aspect of the communities' life and hence do not have a visible impact in terms of changing the lives of people.

#### 4.5 The communities' role in shaping the change agenda

Partners enjoy full freedom in designing operational structures and procedures. They also benefit from lessons learned by other COSUDE partners. Wherever possible, COSUDE programmes have facilitated creation of or partnered with existing Community Based Organizations (CBOs), like the Council of Ayllus in Peace, to review results and negotiate with government and others strategies for addressing community needs. The community promoters also facilitate participatory processes for making plans and budgets at the state and municipal level.

The process described in the box below only confirms the fact that though decentralisation implies changing the distribution and connotation of power, no persons or groups are prepared to relinquish any power which may ensure them immediate advantages. PADEM programme have tried to bring about transparency in such situations.

All programme directors meet twice a year to collectively improve the effectiveness of their activities through joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. Programme participants are also invited to provide specific feedback on various aspects of the programme evaluation. In some cases, external evaluations carried out with the help of consultants have led to a change in programme focus within mutually agreed frameworks. *Capacitation* programmes are constantly improved based on the feedback received from participants. At the programme level, there are committees at various levels to design and shape the programme. In PADEM, local women promoters are trained to respond specifically to women's needs. As a matter of routine, there are periodic internal reviews and field visits by COSUDE programme staff. COSUDE also engages local and international consultants to carry out external evaluations. Beneficiary representatives are also invited to be a part of project management structures. COSUDE has initiated the process of peer review, wherein the staff and community leaders in one programme area like EMPODER visit other areas for learning and evaluation. However the team could not find much evidence wherein the common people in the beneficiary community had a role in evaluating the programmes. In spite of all these activities, the community felt 'left out' and with a sense of uncertainty about the future of projects and complained that they were not consulted on the efficient use of the COSUDE budget. They were unhappy that the municipality development plans (PDMs) were in Spanish and hence they could not identify gaps in fund utilisation, if any.

#### 4.6 Reaching out and benefiting communities

There are several initiatives that indicate COSUDE and its partners' consistent efforts to make sure that benefits reach the intended target groups. These include: a)



#### Box 11: Participatory planning

Planning processes start at the community level with community leaders meeting with all households in a particular community. The needs are conveyed upwards, first to the Canton, where all community leaders prioritise them as per the financial 'guidelines' provided by the Municipality. This is further discussed and the budget allocation is finalised at the Municipality level. There is no formal system to provide feedback to the communities. The Municipal plan PDM - is compiled and only four copies in the Spanish language are kept in the municipality for reference. It is worth noting that few indigenous people, mostly men, are able to read and speak Spanish. It was mentioned that many community leaders, in their quest for visibility and popularity, tend to use the money for infrastructure development rather than address basic needs and services for their communities.



support and constant focus on human and political rights, leading to several pro marginalised policies; b) periodic review of direct funding to municipalities by tripartite committees consisting of government and COSUDE representatives along with indigenous community leaders. The latter ensures that benefits reach the intended individuals and groups; c) encouraging peer reviews at all levels, d) effectively using mass media such as local radio for information dissemination and as a platform for sharing success stories and grievances of beneficiaries.

COSUDE has been engaged in gender sensitisation of community leaders in an attempt to pay attention to women's issues; they have insisted on having one woman and one man promote in all decentralised governance programmes. However the question still remains if the content and skills are being transferred further to common men and women.

COSUDE has made efforts not to get entangled in the internal differences within the communities or its partner organisations. When such a situation arose, COSUDE temporarily held its support in abeyance or chose to work with other sections of the partner organisation at the department or section level.

**Encouraging experimentation:** SDC is a small donor with limited funds, and hence prefers to invest in experimentation in relatively small areas at the grassroots level, over long periods of time. This has been further restricted by a policy to engage with a fixed number of sectors and themes per priority country. This is akin to operating in an action research mode with the intention of creating models, often critiqued as 'islands of excellence' rather than aiming for up scaling and having wider impacts.

**Facilitating peace process:** The EMPODER project in Challapata is an example where COSUDE has responded to a chronic conflict situation. The first phase of the project brought about a legal equilibrium between indigenous groups and the State by strengthening indigenous peoples' organisations and mechanisms for enhanced participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. However the project seems to have paid insufficient attention to the impact of the conflict situation on people's livelihoods, in particular to the link between short-term humanitarian objectives and long-term development objectives, and the interrelation between political processes and economic processes. As a result people, more specifically community leaders are aware of their rights and entitlements vis-à-vis the state but not visibly mindful of their roles and responsibilities as local leaders. Though it was reported that improvement in the quality of health services and education, and access to information and markets were needs of the area, there was no evidence of any efforts to mobilise people and resources to address those issues. Community leaders asserted that if the municipalities did not provide solutions, they would approach the central government for fulfilling those needs. On the other hand it was observed that municipalities were primarily taking up infrastructure development rather than focusing on specific livelihood needs of the communities. One can question the value of civil and political rights in the absence of access to vital rights such as land rights, food security, health services and education.

**Scattering of programmes:** The primary focus of COSUDE's GODEL programmes is the link between public institutions and the people, and how to increase the accountability of these institutions to all citizens. They are not addressing the practical and concrete constraints that prevent realisation of people's rights, which is a prerequisite for promoting livelihoods. While PROMEQ programmes are addressing the latter, they are not supplementing these gaps arising out of GODEL programmes, hindering overall impact.

**Addressing gender issues:** SDC acknowledges that unequal power relations and participation in decision-making between women and men are amongst the structural causes of social and political instability that generate poverty. Therefore all programmes have well-developed strategies to increase gender sensitivity among its partners and beneficiary communities. In order to make capacity building programmes accessible to rural indigenous women, GODEL programmes in Bolivia have modules developed and delivered in the local Aymara and Quechua languages.



**Box 12: Women leaders share.....**

“our grandmothers taught us to be demure and restrained, but now we know that being so does not help us”

“Our municipalities have money but it will be never be enough....”our houses are scattered and hence we will require lots of money to build roads... and because we do not have roads, we cannot bring any good construction material to build our houses, so we have to use mud and grasses....”

“We would like to use tractors, but our farms are on hill-slopes...”

“We have organised ourselves into a weaver’s association but still we do not have markets for our products... we thought the municipalities will help us here, but they do not have enough resources for this purpose.”

“Though we are entitled to vote now, many of us cannot because we do not have the right documents”

“We are afraid of taking credit...last time some of us could not repay”

There are now a substantial number of women leaders who work side by side with their husbands and other men in the local government arena.

In order to reach out to women, COSUDE programmes have created a cadre of trained women and men promoters who communicate with both genders independently and together. But the impact of these activities was not visible to the evaluation team. Most of the women met were community leaders, who either had helped other women as domestic labourers, or held positions by virtue of their husbands being elected members of municipalities or vigilance committees.

Discussions with PRONALAG staff also indicated that their extension efforts were inadequate as far as reaching out to women. Most of the material and classroom sessions were conducted in Spanish and not in local languages. Most of the women do not understand Spanish. Secondly, most sessions were held in the university campus or research stations which made it difficult for women to attend. These are classic limitations of any conventional agricultural extension system and could be improved with due orientation to participatory processes.

#### 4.7 Summary

COSUDE identifies marginalised groups as those living in underdeveloped regions, rural people, indigenous communities and women within all of these groups. However their needs are not considered at the time of formulating thematic priorities.

As a donor it has demonstrated contextual sensitivity by identifying communities who have remained underdeveloped due to chronic conflict situations. However, COSUDE has not used “people suffering from abject poverty as defined in MDGs” as explicit criteria for marginalisation and has shown weakness in reaching out to the poorest of the poor. In spite of UN and the government of Bolivia's committed to achieving the MDGs, COSUDE could do more to use the MDGs as a basis for planning, designing, monitoring and evaluating its programmes.

COSUDE has developed effective interventions and participatory monitoring techniques for the development of leaders of communities with the assumption that benefits will reach community members. However there was little evidence in the field that this trickle down effect was taking place, and in fact there is evidence that there is a growing difference in views of community needs between leaders and community members.

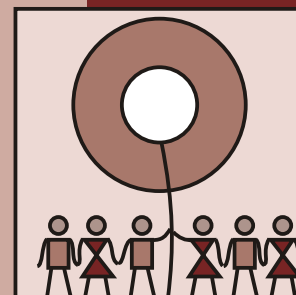
It extends full operational freedom to partners and facilitates learning and exposure with other COSUDE partners and beyond. Often the strongest features of COSUDE programmes develop from the partners after the programme is designed, and not from COSUDE.

COSUDE has made efforts to design empowering and poverty alleviating programmes for beneficiaries. Yet neither COSUDE nor its partners undertake comprehensive needs assessments with recipient communities. In fact COSUDE has been criticised by peers for not aligning programmes with peoples' problems.

Though effective and innovative, COSUDE interventions could produce more significant impacts on poverty alleviation if programmes converged. The interventions in capacity building and empowerment have raised the expectations of the communities but due to a lack of resources, have not been translated into poverty reduction.



## 5 SDC's Partnership Practices



The Swiss Strategy 2010 emphasises that SDC seeks holistic collaboration with like-minded implementing partners, within the government and civil society arenas. The development of capacities and competencies of SDC's partners is perceived as a central challenge for empowerment, attaining the MDGs and for donor harmonisation and alignment.

Although SDC aims to work in cooperation with governments as their principal partner for development work, with due attention to effectiveness of development aid it has been providing support for the establishment and strengthening of institutional capacities of civil society organisations along with those of the governments. In general terms, SDC enters into partnerships with governmental, civil society and multilateral organisations which meet criteria of effectiveness, credibility and plurality.

### 5.1 Partnership development processes

In Bolivia, projects and programmes at the national level are being executed more and more in cooperation with the central government, municipalities, Swiss and national NGOs, Universities among others. Instead of working directly with beneficiaries, COSUDE works with CBOs through project partners. The majority of projects fall under three broad categories, a) local projects or programmes co-financed with other donors, b) existing projects of partners by supplementing funds, and c) collaborative projects or programmes with government, local NGOs or Swiss NGOs, CBOs or municipalities.

The evaluation team visited three projects characterised by three different partnership arrangements. For instance, the project implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice not only earned legitimacy to the process of democratising municipalities in an area ridden by chronic conflict situation, but also had the unique advantage of having access to resources such as the Bolivian army being deployed during the peace process; something that no other civil society organisation could ever get. This partnership with the government has given the project due recognition as a reliable 'human rights office' in the eyes of the community.

Another interesting arrangement is a multi-partner project of COSUDE, a Swiss NGO AOS, Ayunda Obrera Suisa and one of the largest peasant organisations in Bolivia, CSUTCB, *Confederacion Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*. The mainstay of the project is capacity building of elected and traditional community leaders for good governance at the municipal level. CSUTCB is a multi-tiered, membership organisation with representation at the national, departmental and municipal level. The project benefited by this partnership in terms of accelerating the pace of outreach. However there are still problems of reaching out to the non-farmer community in project areas. COSUDE does not work directly with the municipalities, nor does it fund technical activities of the municipalities. It primarily influences the working systems and participatory decision-making processes through the capacitating programmes conducted by PADEM.

The third project, PRONALAG, illustrated another unusual form of partnership with the Agricultural University of Gabriel Rene Moreno (UAGRM). COSUDE was initially



### Box 13: Partnership as an output / as a key result area

It was apparent that SDC's involvement in partner organizations goes beyond viewing them just as instruments of executing specific project or programme objectives. SDC seems to invest in institution strengthening, diversification of donor relationships and other such aspects, which help the partner organization to become a strong development actor. Thus spotting, nurturing and strengthening development actors are a distinct core competence and an output of SDC's involvement in the respective country. Though SDC invests lots of resources in partnership development, it has not formally recognised it as one of the goals in the country strategy and one of its distinct contributions to the development of the country.

### Box 14: Making reading a habit!

COSUDE is probably the only donor of its kind, who encourages all partner staff to read. It circulates publishers' catalogues among partner organisations and gets their staff to select books on development topics of their choice. These are then procured by COSUDE and handed over to the staff as additions to their personal libraries, free of cost!

contributing to an international research project in the Andean region, but then due to administrative problems it decided to continue funding the research as a bilateral project with the Government of Bolivia-Ministry of Agriculture, represented by UAGRM. Before funding from COSUDE, the university was already working on beans and therefore their interest and capability was assured. UAGRM later decided to involve ASOPROF, a bean farmers association, for export and market linkages. Thus the project shifted focus from conventional research for development and transfer of technology to a more people-centred project with the dual objective of improving livelihoods of poor farmers in the area with consideration for inputs for the entire value chain, and introducing 'frejole' as a valuable source of protein in the local diet pattern.

## 5.2 Partnership management practices

**Partnership management as a distinct focus in every programme:** In strategy documents, though not mentioned explicitly, partnership development is expressed as "CapDev support" and commands attention in all of SDC's

policies, programmes and projects. Cap Dev support assumes a common value base, mutually agreed roles and tasks and a commitment to a common vision with context-specific knowledge and an in-depth understanding of all actors' competencies and knowledge levels. It is closely linked to the principles of partnership and knowledge

COSUDE gives special attention to partnership development as a means to strengthen and empower communities. The partner organisations acknowledged inputs for capacity building and improving internal governance systems as key contributions of COSUDE. This has helped in responding to communities.

**Fostering a culture of self-evaluation and learning:** Programme proposals are discussed with programme officers who provide general guidelines or a broad framework within which the partner is expected to fit the proposal. Partners have full freedom to define their goals and objectives and to select their operational areas. Until recently there were no restrictions on taking up programmes in particular sectors. Wherever possible, COSUDE programmes invite local partners including community representatives to set goals and agendas for programmes. Once in 2 months there are meetings with all programme directors. These meetings are generally held in Cochabamba as a central location and convenient for all to attend. During each meeting one training input is planned in response to current needs of the programmes. Programme directors from partner organisations are also invited to join the process of COSUDE's cooperation strategy formulation as well as to

14. The Bolivian Ministry of Agriculture delegated the responsibility of managing the project to the *Universitite Anotmonia Gabriel Rene Moreno (UAGRM)*, an agricultural university in Santa Cruz.

redefine programmes by assessing their relevance in emerging national contexts. Research papers and experiences documented by the partner also feed in into the country strategy.

Once there is a general agreement with the expected outcomes; the partners follow their own monitoring systems instead of using a prescribed set of predetermined indicators and formats. SDC is keen on building a culture of self-evaluation and this is complemented by external evaluations. Peer reviews are encouraged rather than COSUDE NPOs taking an expert role and pointing out lacunae in programmes. External evaluations are delegated to Swiss NGOs not only to share workloads but also to make the process more transparent. Partner organisations, such as AOS who have developed expertise in empowerment aspects, are involved as resource agencies for other partners and projects. In multi-location programmes, staff from one location visits other project locations to compare experiences and learn from one another.

However, some partner staff expressed that lack of specific budgets for staff development as in for attending training programmes, leaves it to the discretion of the senior management. The evaluation team noted that the partner organisation staff had in fact received several opportunities to present their experiences in national and international conferences.

**View on partners diversifying programmes:** COSUDE is generally cautious while funding activities beyond their own and the partners' proven areas of core competence. However it has a holistic view on projects irrespective of their sectoral foci, therefore some programmes might have activities beyond their sectoral area. For instance, in the case of PROBONA they had no qualms about the project integrating livelihood activities in a 'forestry conservation project' as the implementing partner, in this case Inter Cooperation (IC), had proven expertise and experience in this area. COSUDE made earmarked funds available for the project to address short-term needs of the people by taking up agricultural intensification activities or micro-enterprise development for minor forest produce. They also encouraged PROBONA to forge alliances with municipalities, civil society organisations and other donors working in the same location.

**Facilitating synergies between programmes:** Lately COSUDE has been concerned about maximising impact by facilitating synergies between different programmes, especially GODEL and PROMEQ. Many partners were of the view that COSUDE's intervention is necessary if this is to be achieved. The PRONALAG programme has demonstrated substantial impact because it addresses issues related to the entire value chain of 'frejole' right from variety of selection to exports, all for the same farmers. However partners have not invested the resources so far to develop synergies with those developed in governance programmes.

**Experimentation with Phasing out:** As stated above, most of SDC partnerships are long standing. There are several instances where SDC has continued its association for over 10-12 years. Many partners are mature and competent enough to mobilise funds and resources, yet they believe that SDC should continue to support them, almost permanently. In Bolivia COSUDE has tried to implement a withdrawal strategy where it was supporting a seed production project in collaboration with a university and a CBO of local seed producer-farmers. As the activity became capable of generating reasonable revenue, COSUDE decided to phase itself out. The team was told that, to this effect, it had also transferred all

#### **Box 15: GODEL & PROMEQ for breakfast?**

A good initiative for synergy between GODEL and PROMEQ is the school breakfast programme. COSUDE and other development actors are trying to influence the government to come up with a scheme of providing meals to school going children a GODEL-related initiative. This is likely to encourage consumption of locally grown items like bananas which in turn will lead to enhanced livelihood opportunities for farmers in those areas a PROMEQ-related outcome.

15. Native Forests and Andean Agri Systems programme

16. However this can be problematic. In Coloni COSUDE had to mediate between two of its own projects due to conflicting interests between the two projects. PROINPA is a project promoting 'locoto' cultivation that requires good soil but has led to deforestation in the same area where PROBONA is implementing a forest conservation programme.

### Box 16: World Bank values SDC contribution

- Credit of convincing all the partners to take up PDCR in the remotest districts goes to SDC.
- SDC positively influenced a number of operational decisions in PDCR like selection of livelihood activities, criteria for selection of beneficiaries
- The most significant characteristic of SDC is their appreciative monitoring inputs. Every time SDC official goes to the field, gets useful feedback and these have made significant changes in the operationalisation.
- SDC is very regularly in touch with the field and guides the field staff with practical suggestions, which are found useful.
- When some additional budget became available due to currency change, SDC suggested developing a micro enterprise product / module. Later it was adopted in 27 small enterprise projects.
- Though small, SDC places its money on crucial account heads. In PDCR, SDC contributed one full time person's salary for monitoring, and that is why the project is successful today.

its shares to the CBO.

Nevertheless programme interventions dealing with “soft” skills such as education, capacity building and community mobilisation require continued support. COSUDE feels that it should withdraw but it has not been able to do so. The Evaluation Team feels that as long as the theme is relevant to COSUDE, there is no need to pull out of such partnerships. Where income generation is not possible, some donor or national government has to keep providing financial resources for the same.

### 5.3 Partnership with the government

SDC and consequently COSUDE believe that they can capitalize on their longstanding presence and their profound knowledge of the socio-political situation in Bolivia to foster the decentralisation processes in the country. They see their role as that of a catalyst and focus their work on capacity building. This is with the aim of improving the effectiveness of local government structures like municipalities in extending

development benefits to people at the grassroots level. The LPP empowered the municipalities by making them responsible for local-level planning and in part also for the financing of infrastructure and services development.

### 5.4 Supporting the decentralisation process

SDC's activities in the area of decentralisation are generally focused on training local elected officials, setting up popular consultation mechanisms to formulate local development plans that are adapted to the needs of the population, and political dialogue with the central government in order to improve the framework conditions for decentralisation. COSUDE has been in dialogue with the government on systematic decentralisation from the central to departmental to regional governance structures. However the government is keen on direct decentralisation from the centre to the municipalities, bypassing development at the department-level.

In 1994, Bolivia instituted an ambitious decentralisation programme that not only transferred funds and new responsibilities to municipal governments but also mandated participatory budgeting and supervision by local organisations. Capitalizing on their own experiences as well as on German-funded projects in local participatory governance, COSUDE came forward to support the drafting of the LPP. This law is said to have made a range of impacts in decentralised and participatory governance. It has created opportunities for the development of local and indigenous leadership and in some views gave rise to the election of the present indigenous president.

COSUDE has been contributing to municipal democracy through one of its major programmes, PADEM, started in 1996. PADEM works on a) capacity building of newly elected municipal leaders and members of vigilance committees of select municipalities in the highlands, b) creating a cadre of men and women promoters who assist participatory planning processes in those municipalities, c) human rights education to indigenous and rural leaders in order to improve their capabilities of relating to the State, d) legal protection in cases of human rights violations, and e) using local radio for dissemination of information such as developmental schemes, municipal budgets, plans and priorities. External evaluations have confirmed the efficiency and effectiveness of PADEM in achieving its goals.

*17. Little Society for Beans Brotherhood*

In order to scale up capacity building efforts, COSUDE has strengthened the Municipal Associative System (SAM) headed by Federation of Municipal Associations in Bolivia (FAM) and the Bolivian Association of Women Councillors (ACOBOL) and the Association of Mayors (AMDECO). With the recent change in government, COSUDE has decided to go slow on the policy dialogue till they are sure of the government's stand on decentralisation. It has however conducted workshops to check alignment of its programmes with policies of the newly elected president

Most of these efforts have been at the municipal level, and with community leaders, elected or traditional. As a result, only those who come forward get opportunities for development. Traditional hierarchies within indigenous communities are largely hidden from outsiders and COSUDE operates with the faith that the men and women leaders undergoing training will transfer knowledge and skills to the communities. It is likely that marginalised groups are left out of these processes but there are no mechanisms to verify and monitor this.

**Influencing government policies:** There have been several instances where COSUDE has helped the government in formulating policies and programmes. Sometimes COSUDE staff or programme partner staff have been joined government departments to help initiate national programmes based on field successes of COSUDE programmes in watershed development and micro-credit. Sometimes COSUDE has been involved in coordinating national-level policy debates, for example Mr Carlos Carafa was invited to coordinate Dialogue 2000. SDC has funded partners who have helped in drafting empowering laws like LPP. In another instance, COSUDE has been helping the Ministry of Agriculture to develop an agriculture policy that would promote the interests of small farmers producing items with export potential such as llama meat and *quinua*. Thus, COSUDE has an impressive track record in influencing the government to develop and initiate pro-poor programmes and policies.

On the other hand becoming too involved in state development could bring about negative perceptions in the present political climate. By helping people to acknowledge and negotiate traditional Ayllu boundaries, COSUDE might be getting into deeper issues of redrawing the department boundaries on the basis of language and culture. Such issues are likely to create controversies of sorts and COSUDE may be seen as wrongly influencing sovereign issues of state development.

### 5.5 Enabling SDC staff to sustain mutually empowering relationships

In the COSUDE office, most programme staff are Bolivian and are primarily responsible for operational aspects of the programmes. They also provide relevant information and feedback to the expatriate staff for policy dialogue. Swiss and expatriate staff have strategic roles pertaining to area and theme selection. Partner selection is done by expatriate staff but hinges largely on the judgment of the national programme staff.

**Operational freedom:** All staff enjoy operational freedom and are expected to handle their respective partners independently. Programme responsibility is periodically rotated and hence each programme staff member is eventually exposed to and informed about every programme. There are several



#### Box 17: SDC walking on thin ice!

COSUDE's efforts to influence the government are not restricted only to its field programmes but it has also entered into the core issues of governance like decentralisation. The LPP is seen as an instrument of granting power to the people. There is another school of thought that criticises LPP as an attempt to distract the communities from their efforts to empower themselves by providing relatively insignificant freedom and power. COSUDE's involvement in such areas has led some to believe that it has its own political agenda. Such an image is quite contrary to SDC's carefully crafted "neutral" image. All these controversies reiterate the fact that empowerment remains limited to a section of community leaders with insufficient empowerment of the common men and women.



### Box 18: Partnership complementing strengths of each other

COSUDE's facilitation of peace process with due respect to traditional territorial boundaries of the Ayllus has been instrumental in putting an end to a state of chronic conflict. The people there can now think about their own development along with improving prospects of their future generations. Starting with humanitarian aid to the wounded, COSUDE moved on to form a Union of Councils of Ayllus in Peace. This enabled the affected people to negotiate development issues such as water, education, roads, schools and electricity, directly with the government as it was necessary to improve the living conditions in order to maintain peace. COSUDE humbly acknowledges that it would not have been achieved without the able partnership of the Ministry of Justice. It is a good example of partnership where one partner complements and enhances the strengths of the other. COSUDE has acquired the legitimacy and resources of the government, while the government utilised the funds and strategic guidance of COSUDE.

scheduled meetings and opportunities for interaction between the staff. All staff have adequate opportunities for self-development not only in domain knowledge and skills, but in crosscutting strategic areas such as gender and decentralisation among others.

COSUDE staff is encouraged to work with local intellectuals, former bureaucrats and ministers, university teachers, civil society leaders and international consultants wherever complementarities of expertise is required. Not only

the NPOs but office staff of COSUDE feel involved and motivated. They have the freedom and space to express their feelings and opinions.

### 5.6 Summary

COSUDE has developed enabling and empowering relationships with a variety of partners. It treats its partners as equals and supports them in various ways such that they can further empower the communities they work while themselves developing into effective and creative organisations. COSUDE is careful to maintain a balance between operational freedom and close monitoring of the partners.

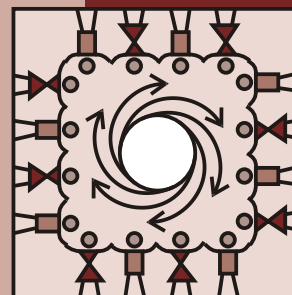
Promoting sharing of learning and synergy between programmes and projects could increase impacts on empowerment and poverty alleviation, however many believe that COSUDE will have to step in and facilitate this process.

There is effective development of decentralisation processes up to the level of local leaders, greatly advancing development to state structures. However democratic development is not followed up at the level of community members or marginalised groups to ensure that democratic practices and benefits are reaching them.

COSUDE works closely with the government in developing and initiating pro-poor policies and programmes based on their own and other donors' field successes. COSUDE's involvement in governance, jointly with other bilateral agencies, has created controversies by being seen as interfering in the country's 'internal' matters. This is also likely to create a dent in the "politically neutral" image of COSUDE and SDC as a whole.



## 6 Conclusion



The Evaluation Team observed political empowerment among the community leaders, largely owing to the recent political reforms in Bolivia. The issues deemed important for empowerment by the recipient communities' were livelihood-related education, health care, organised community action, sustainable natural resources management and food security, in that order.

COSUDE has played a role in helping and influencing the government to enact decentralisation laws and also educating community leaders to exercise their newly acquired rights and roles. The team however felt that the whole empowerment effort was leader and male-centric. The members of the community have experienced empowering changes, however their priorities for further progress are different from their leaders in some cases. For sustaining momentum of empowering work, the development programmes and decentralisation processes will have to be responsive to the perspectives of community members as well.

There is effective incorporation of gender mainstreaming into programme designs however impacts do not reflect COSUDE's priority on gender. While there were notable indigenous women leaders who were confident and educated, such cases were not common.

COSUDE identifies marginalised groups as those living in underdeveloped regions, rural people, indigenous communities and women within all of these groups. However their needs are not considered at the time of formulating thematic priorities.

As a donor it has demonstrated contextual sensitivity by identifying communities who have remained underdeveloped due to chronic conflict situations. However, it has not used "people suffering from abject poverty as defined in MDGs" as explicit criteria for marginalisation and has shown weakness in reaching out to the poorest of the poor. COSUDE could do more to use the MDGs as a basis for planning, designing, monitoring and evaluating its programmes.

COSUDE has developed effective interventions and participatory monitoring techniques for the development of leaders of communities with the assumption that benefits will reach community members. Yet there was little evidence in the field that this trickle down effect was taking place, and in fact there is evidence that there is a growing difference in views of community needs between leaders and community members.

COSUDE has made efforts to design empowering and poverty alleviating programmes for beneficiaries. Yet neither COSUDE nor its partners undertake comprehensive needs assessments with recipient communities. In fact COSUDE has been criticised by peers for not aligning programmes with peoples' problems.

Though effective and innovative, COSUDE's interventions could produce more significant impacts on poverty alleviation if programmes converge. The interventions in capacity building and empowerment have raised the expectations of the communities but due to a lack of resources, have not been translated into poverty reduction.

Discussions with COSUDE staff and partners were indicative of the fact that developing and nurturing partnerships is a high priority in SDC. Though there are no explicit or written partner selection criteria, COSUDE prefers to engage with smaller

organisations with a potential to be groomed rather than established civil society organisations with strong ideological positions. In a country like Bolivia there are a large number of NGOs involved in development work.

COSUDE has developed enabling and empowering relationships with a variety of partners. It facilitates partner development by giving them operational freedom to facilitate learning and exposure with other COSUDE partners and beyond, and has taken care to balance this with close supportive monitoring of partners. It treats its partners as equals and supports them in various ways such that they can further empower the communities they work with and simultaneously develop themselves as effective and creative organisations.

COSUDE works closely with the government in developing and initiating pro-poor policies and programmes based on their own and other donors' field successes. COSUDE's involvement in governance, jointly with other bilateral agencies, has also created controversies by being seen as interfering in the country's 'internal' matters. This is also likely to create a dent in the "politically neutral" image of COSUDE and SDC as a whole.

COSUDE will have to be cautious as to which areas it gets involved in given the current political context and suspicion of foreign influences on state development.





# Part 4

## Annexes

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# **1. Annexes to the Synthesis Report**





## Approach Paper

# Independent Evaluation of SDC's Performance towards Empowerment of Stakeholders from the Recipients' Perspective

May 25th 2006

### 1. Preface

As will become clear below, with this independent evaluation, SDC intends to achieve a significant shift in perspective and in accountability by mandating a team of evaluators exclusively from the South to conduct an evaluation that will access the recipients' perspective. This Approach Paper is a collaborative endeavour between SDC's Evaluation + Controlling Division, the Evaluation Team and the Core Learning Partnership (see Chap. 5). The key questions have been finalized following the consultation with the Core Learning Partnership on May 24 and the methodology will be finalized in the work plan submitted by the Evaluation Team by June 1.

### 2. Background and Rationale

To SDC, empowerment is both a goal and an approach. It is a process to enable the most disempowered and marginalized sections of communities to participate and influence decision-making structures and processes in order for them to access resources, bolster their self-esteem, self-confidence and identity, and create capacities for them to analyse and seek solutions to their problems independently. SDC's Strategy 2010 clearly emphasises SDC's commitment to responding to the priorities of recipient communities and to empowering them to help themselves. This commitment is set down in the Swiss development law and is one of the five objectives of Swiss foreign policy.

International consensus on development cooperation emphasizes the necessity of systematically integrating partners and beneficiaries in planning and evaluation processes. This is to reduce the disparity between donors' preconceptions and the recipients' reality on the ground. In the era of declining budgets for development, it has become increasingly essential that the recipient communities feel empowered to take over the development processes and become self-reliant. SDC envisions fostering mutually beneficial partnerships and continuously strives to better develop an understanding of priorities, strengths, and constraints of recipient communities and stakeholders actively engaged in empowering communities. SDC is mindful that such a partnership presupposes respecting the sovereignty of local communities and operating in a responsive mode.

SDC places much importance on genuine partnership and demonstrates a long-term commitment to empowerment of recipient communities engaged in the development process. While SDC unequivocally considers itself accountable to recipient communities targeted by its activities, it has yet to formally assess its progress from the recipient's perspective.

Subsequently, SDC has given impetus to the idea of this independent evaluation.

This evaluation represents a step forward in SDC's commitment to empowering approaches. SDC seeks to understand and integrate perspectives of communities as well as those directly engaged in implementing development programs (as an important link between recipient communities and SDC) by evaluating appropriateness and effectiveness of empowering approaches adopted / employed by SDC. Though SDC scrutinizes its performance through regular peer reviews (e.g. DAC Peer Review<sup>1</sup>), and evaluations

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent has been completed in 2005 (OECD, *DAC Peer Review, Switzerland*, Pre-print of the DAC Journal 2005, Vol. 6, No. 3)

commissioned within and outside of line management, those designing the evaluations and assessing SDC's performance have had world-views rooted in Northern philosophies or have worked with Terms of Reference that principally reflect SDC's or the donor community's own questions, preoccupations and interests. SDC is, therefore, keen that this concern is addressed by specifically involving evaluators from Southern countries, especially those with "sufficient distance" from the SDC and/or national governments, and who are "constructively engaged in causes of the poor".

### **3. Purpose, Objectives, Focus and Scope**

#### **3.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the process of ensuring SDC's accountability towards recipient communities and government (in addition to Swiss government and tax payers) and to enable SDC to improve its future performance by further integrating community perspectives in order to enhance empowering processes.

With this evaluation, the E+C Division also aims to promote learning and reflection within SDC regarding institutional processes for recognizing and responding to community perspectives. The evaluation will pilot innovative methods of accessing the perspectives of stakeholders, which will be reviewed for their appropriateness for mainstreaming into SDC activities.

#### **3.2 Objectives of the Evaluation**

- (a) Assessing SDC's performance in focusing on community priorities by examining the extent to which SDC has considered and integrated them in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.
- (b) Assessing SDC's performance in empowerment of communities by examining SDC's interactions with implementation partners and, in turn, their interactions with the communities.
- (c) Appraising SDC's approaches to building on capacities and sensibilities of implementation partners' organisations to be responsive to community needs and priorities.
- (d) Strengthening evolution of a valid methodology for ensuring accountability to communities, partner organisations and governments in recipient countries in addition to the accountability conventionally rooted in Northern philosophies or perspectives and focused on the international donor community.
- (e) Initiating an institutional learning process within SDC on how to consistently include the stakeholder perspective in its activities. It is envisaged that this learning process will be led by the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) of the evaluation.

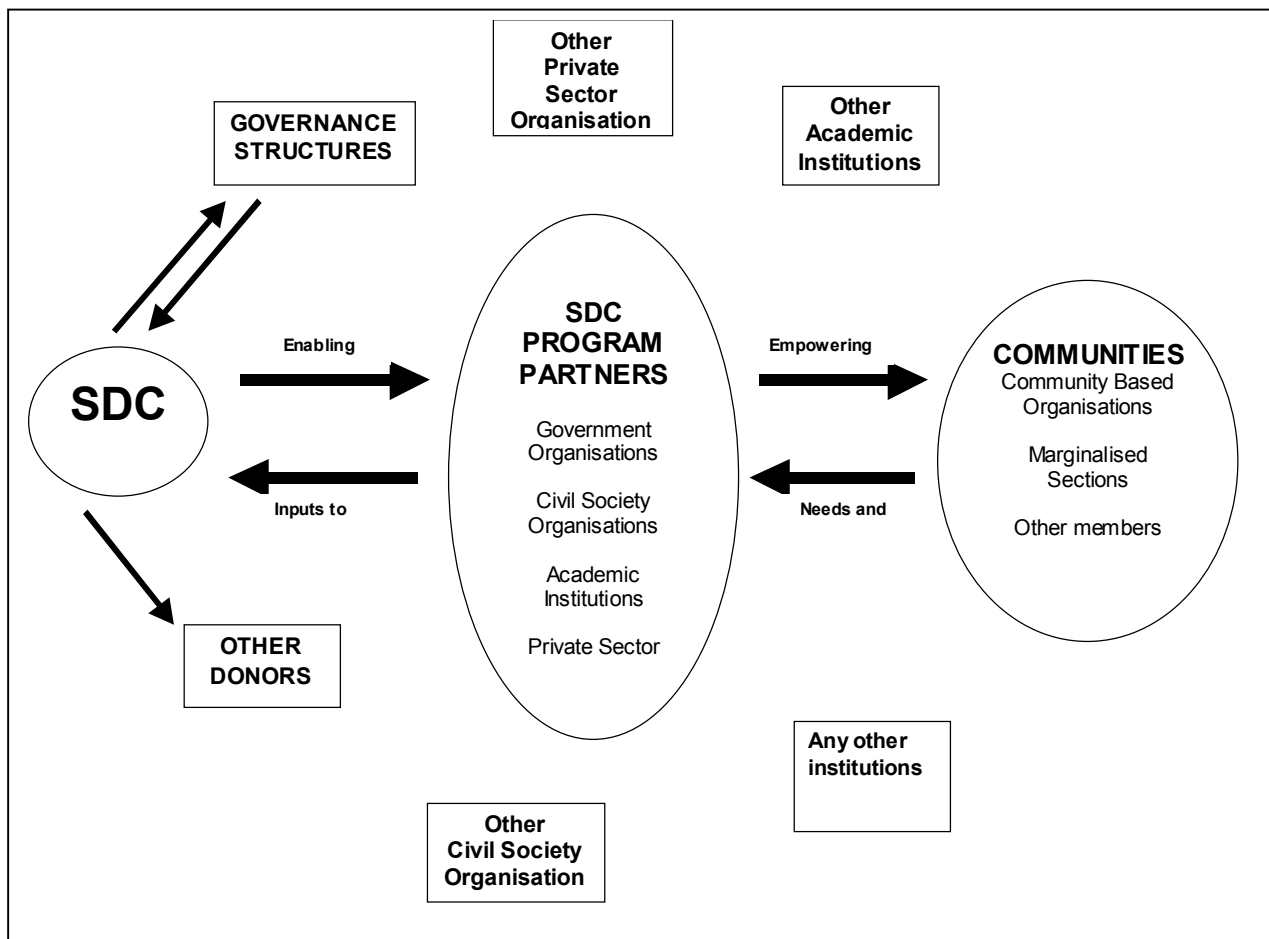
#### **3.3 Focus and Scope**

The focus of the evaluation will be on SDC's institutional responsiveness to community needs and priorities to ensure that SDC interventions are empowering the communities. Therefore the evaluation will study SDC's way of relating to the three stakeholder groups mentioned below.

- Marginalized sections of the communities to claim their rights and to obtain public respect and inclusion in decision-making in the context of development processes. Empowerment will be evident in their availing of opportunities for reducing their own inequality and redressing the power balance in their own favour and thereby increasing their participation for progress in the social, economic and political arena.
- SDC implementation partners in civil society, in the private sector and in the government sector to advocate for the agenda of marginalized communities. Empowerment will be evident in their support for services, programs and policies that favourably impact on social justice and on the well-being of marginalized communities. The roles government's play in policy making will also be explored.

- SDC staff to recognize and respond to the needs of marginalized communities by consistently aligning SDC's initiatives and processes. Empowerment will be evident in their capacity to act as credible stewards of empowerment in policy dialogue and in field interventions alike.

**What will be evaluated?**  
Interactive processes indicated by Arrows



The scope of the evaluation will encompass SDC activities in two country case studies (Burkina Faso and Bolivia) and interviews at SDC headquarters. The Evaluation Team will examine a cross-section of

- SDC partners and activities that reflect a variety of themes and aid modalities (projects, sector programmes, and general budget support),
- SDC's choice of partnerships and alliances,
- SDC's role and positions in integrating community perspectives in the national policy making dialogue between donors and governments,
- Managerial and institutional processes deployed by SDC staff vis-à-vis its partners and governments to initiate and sustain a climate of empowerment.

Through interviews at Headquarters the Evaluation Team will assess to what extent the findings and conclusions of the case studies can be deemed representative of SDC as a whole and, thereby, provide an indication of SDC's institutional effectiveness towards empowering stakeholders.

**3.4 Key Questions**

There are two key questions

**(1) How does SDC ensure that its interventions (direct or indirect) are in line with the needs and priorities of the marginalized sections of the recipient communities?**

- a. To what extent do SDC priorities and approaches in empowerment reflect the overarching goal of Swiss cooperation to reduce poverty?
- b. What processes are deployed to identify marginalized groups in the recipient communities?
- c. What methods and fora are used to help the marginalized groups to articulate their needs and priorities?
- d. To what extent does SDC ensure that all its interventions reach and benefit the marginalized sections of society, directly or indirectly?
- e. To what extent does SDC ensure that its interventions do not have detrimental effects on the livelihoods of the poor, and that they do not contribute to increasing inequality?
- f. What roles do the local partners, in particular marginalized sections of the society, play in shaping the change agenda at planning, decision-making and monitoring level?
- g. What mechanisms does SDC have to periodically capture the changing needs and priorities of marginalized sections of the recipient communities?
- h. What processes are in place to translate the response from the community into changes in strategic focus, program / intervention design, monitoring, controlling and evaluation?
- i. What efforts are made to assess the results from the beneficiaries' perspective and are those efforts adequate?

**(2) How does SDC facilitate implementation partners to initiate and sustain empowering processes, especially for the marginalized sections of the recipient communities?**

- a. What are the main strengths and weaknesses / limitations of SDC's partner selection and partnership management practices?
- b. How effective is SDC in helping implementation partners (including governments) to get empowered to empower recipient communities?
- c. How do SDC's practices compare with its documented partnership principles, such as to support locally based programmes and initiatives, in a spirit of building on existing capacities and playing a subsidiary role?
- d. Are SDC's practices in line with SDC's self-understanding of empowerment and its chosen role?
- e. How effective is SDC in enabling its staff to create and to sustain mutually empowering relationships?
- f. Are there any variations in SDC's ability to influence the empowerment orientation across a variety of engagement patterns/ aid modalities like directly funded projects, sector support, contributions to multilateral institutions, projects undertaken in association with other donors, policy dialogue etc. If so, how are they different?
- g. How does SDC account for the power relations between different stakeholders in recipient communities and countries? What are SDC's approaches and strategies to help partners deal with intended and unintended consequences of efforts to change the power equilibrium?
- h. Do SDC's efforts stop at empowerment of individual recipients or do they extend to creating an enabling environment for the entire marginalized population in the recipient countries by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts does SDC make to facilitate creation and sustenance of such an environment?

### **3.5 Expected Results**

#### **3.5.1 Outputs**

A concise, publishable Final Evaluators' Report in English consisting of:

- (1) An Evaluation Abstract according to DAC Standards.
- (2) A Synthesis Report (not exceeding 50 pages plus annexes and incl. an Executive Summary) drawing on the country case studies and the headquarter missions, consisting of a general assessment of SDC's performance as an institution in empowering poor people. The Synthesis Report will present the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.
- (3) Two Country Case Study Reports (not exceeding 30 pages each plus annexes) as Annexes to the Synthesis Report.
- (4) An Agreement at Completion Point consisting of the stand of the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) and the Senior Management Response regarding the key conclusions and recommendations of the Synthesis Report

### **3.5.2 Outcome level results**

- Greater awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness towards stakeholders' perspectives thereby improved performance towards empowerment of the community and all stakeholders actively engaged in the development process;
- Enriched and shared understanding of empowerment processes leading to better design of, and implementation strategies for, field programs in recipient countries
- SDC-wide appreciation of the value and importance of establishing appropriate mechanisms to provide accountability to the community, partners and governments in recipient countries along with accountability to Swiss stakeholders and international donor community.

## **4. Process Design and Methodology**

### **4.1 Overview of Process**

#### **4.1.1 Nature of exploration**

The Evaluation Team will develop case studies of empowerment-related aspects of SDC programs in Burkina Faso and Bolivia. Specific areas of observation will include successes and shortcomings of field programs, analysis of the processes of deriving outputs and outcomes, exploring meanings and actions associated with empowerment and analysis. Through the various interactions with SDC, with its implementation partners and with its recipient communities, the Evaluation Team will piece together the dynamics of the Swiss development aid in the case study countries.

As the proposed process is exploratory in nature and there are time constraints in terms of attention spans of different stakeholders, the Evaluation Team would like to bring out as many hypotheses as possible and get the participants to freely share their views and whatever they consider as relevant. Issues chosen by participants in itself will be a key finding in the study. Greater emphasis will be placed on developing perspectives than statistical findings.

Burkina Faso and Bolivia have been selected as the case study countries based on the interest of the SDC Cooperation Offices (COOFs) to participate in this evaluation.

#### **4.1.2 Addressing Anticipated Obstacles to valid Data Collection in Case Study Countries**

Language barriers, vested interests, and differing communication capacities pose challenges to effective primary data collection. Translators and local consultants will be hired to facilitate a dialogue between the team members and stakeholders and to deal with language barriers. The local consultants with in-depth understanding of the ethos of the country and of development issues are being identified.

Data collection methods and sample size are designed to address this problem by interviewing stakeholder sets (senior managers, field functionaries and community)

associated with at least three implementation partners in each case study country. This will help compensate for loss of data in a single interview and also add to the quality by providing opportunities for triangulation and corroboration of the data obtained. Moreover, during the individual interviews, the evaluation team members will use the time taken for simultaneous translating, to make extensive notes of the interview. Paraphrasing will also be used to re-confirm the information thus acquired. End of Mission Workshops will be an opportunity to fill gaps and correct misinterpretations in the primary data.

The Evaluation Team will avoid using the word 'empowerment' in their interactions with community members and field functionaries – they will elicit responses to this by asking questions about their perceptions/ experience of the changes that have taken place in their lives, the significance (or otherwise) they accord to the changes and their ideas about desirable changes in the foreseeable future.

The Evaluation Team is extensively experienced in addressing vested interests and communication capacities during primary data collection, and will draw on this expertise by keeping alternative designs ready and modifying methods as needed. These challenges themselves will be included as findings relating to functional and dysfunctional aspects of empowerment approaches.

#### **4.2 Methodology**

The choice of method correlates with the rationale for including the stakeholder group in the evaluation.

**Table 2: Methods, Sample and Processes selected for different Stakeholders Groups**

Source of Information Stakeholder Group	Specific Objectives	Sample size	Method and processes
<p><b>A. Community</b> representing the most disempowered sections such as women, AIDS affected, landless – relevant to the program context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand how different sections in a recipient community define empowerment and perceive changes in themselves (on different facets around which they define empowerment),</li> <li>• To examine what they attribute their “empowerment” (transitions) to (what do you find empowering)</li> <li>• To get a range of self-defined parameters of empowerment</li> <li>• To assess relevance and effectiveness of SDC programs (as implemented by implementing organizations) based on the information gathered.</li> </ul>	<p>At least <b>two</b> communities from each selected implementing partner’s area of operation</p> <p>i) Community members: four to six community groups, and as many members as possible in one sitting of two hours approx. 20 in each group)</p>	<p><b>Opinion poll through ballot</b> papers indicating perspectives of community</p> <p><b>Step 1: Listing parameters of empowerment on ballot:</b> Selected community representatives prepare ballot papers capturing various aspects of empowerment as perceived by the community by using statements / symbols / images, by completing the sentence: “Empowerment means.....”, images are used with the intention of overcoming barriers of illiteracy and social inhibitions.</p> <p><b>Step 2: Community Ballot:</b> Individual community member’s grade themselves on various aspects of empowerment on the parameters covered in the ballots prepared as above ones in the FGD.</p>
		<p>ii) Community leaders (office bearers of Citizens Based Organizations CBOs) Two to four leaders per group (together)</p>	<p><b>Focus Group Discussion (FGD)</b> for validation and interpretation of trend observed in above data</p> <p><b>Step 3: FGD for trend analysis:</b> Validate ‘private’ trends observed by individuals in the community by constructing the “public” reality: When adequate numbers of individuals are covered (as per stratified random sampling) a Focused Group Discussion would be conducted to tally the ballots and find out how many people are at different stages of empowerment, and whether they agree with the attributions or not. The Evaluation Team will determine what the consensus is on each of the key question</p>

Source of Information Stakeholder Group	Specific Objectives	Sample size	Method and processes
<b>B. Implementation partners</b> NGO/ Private sector / government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get the perception of senior managers with regard to Empowerment of the community</li> <li>• To understand the link between empowerment of the community and its implications on issues related to development</li> <li>• To characterize relationships between SDC and the partner organizations</li> <li>• Corroboration of data generated from the field</li> </ul>	i) Field functionaries Five to ten field functionaries working in the selected communities of each selected implementation partner	Projective Techniques – use of pictures and stories – to elicit viewpoints <b>E.g. 1) Sharing images –using pictures</b> to compensate for the limitations in articulation and reduce risk of getting opinions rather than perspectives about situations: Step 1: Field staff draw venn diagrams/rich pictures to depict the actors with whom they frequently need to interact in course of carrying out empowerment interventions, Step 2: Field functionaries describe their relationships with these actors Step 3: Analyse symbols and metaphors used to get insights into the dynamics of their working together <b>2) Field staff to narrate stories about themselves “in their roles of field.</b> Similar such exercises will be designed on the basis of the team’s appraisal of the field situation.
		ii) Senior Managers At least <b>five</b> managers / officers from selected implementation partners	<b>Semi structured individual interviews</b> (to cover the issues as listed in table1) <b>Step 1:</b> construct espoused theory as reflected in various documents (country plans, government plans and policies, NGO’s mission statements and project proposals etc.), and as expressed by senior managers



Source of Information Stakeholder Group	Specific Objectives	Sample size	Method and processes
<b>C. Policy makers (Govt)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get the perception of Policy makers w.r.t. Empowerment of the community</li> <li>• To understand the link between empowerment of the community and its implications on issues related to development</li> <li>• To capture the nuances of the relationship between SDC and local government</li> <li>• Corroboration of data generated from the field</li> </ul>	At least <b>two</b> from relevant Ministries	<p><b>Step2:</b> Elicit theory in use, based on the actual experiences, details of the situation, tasks handled by them, actions taken by them as well as the results obtained, feelings experienced by them during those situations. Etc. This conversation will be based on top of the mind recall. (Spend around one and a half to two hours with each person). If possible observe the individuals in field visits to program areas or during project review.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Validation and interpretation of the data obtained from community and Field functionaries</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> compare and contrast SDC country staff interviews and SDC HQ interviews to capture the themes and dimensions of empowerment within the SDC.</p>
<b>D. SDC staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the concept of empowerment of the community and its implications on development issues</li> <li>• To understand the managerial processes between SDC HQ and country offices</li> <li>• To corroborate the findings generated from the field data</li> </ul>	<p><b>i) HQ level staff</b> At least <b>three</b> thematic leaders At least three country desk officers Any other suggested by CLP</p> <p><b>ii) COOF staff.</b> Country Coordinator At least <b>three</b> senior staff Several junior staff coordinating selected implementers</p>	

The team will provide criteria for selection of the partners and communities for in-depth exploration – they will depend upon the judgement of the concerned country desk officers in SDC HQ and SDC staff in respective COOFs to select a sample that represents a variety of themes and aid modalities available. Similarly, within the selected implementation partners, they will help select the interviewees representative of marginalized groups in the communities and/or all levels within the hierarchies of the selected partner organizations.

#### **4.3 Framework of analysis**

Data collected from the process as described above will be analysed to get responses to the key questions. The experienced reality of stakeholders will form the basis for constructing the *theory in use*, to be compared with the *espoused theory* of SDC, as apparent from various SDC publications, policies and other relevant documents. The issues raised by the stakeholders groups A, B, and C will throw light on the key questions, both related to SDC's Strategic Orientation and Partnerships.

Specifically, the evaluators will build on the *theory in use* to examine gaps and overlaps in perspectives on empowerment between stakeholders and secondary data and derive responses to questions related to Strategic Orientation and Partnership management. An analysis on the process of implementing programs and SDC's overall approach to empowerment will be derived from primary data to answer Strategic Orientation questions c and d, and supplement Partnership question b. The information gathered through Focus Group Discussions will help converting findings into conclusions about the functional and dysfunctional aspects of empowerment strategies for recipients and stakeholders alike. The End of Mission Workshops will be of particular importance in this regard. These will help to acknowledge and create awareness about strengths and limitations about the currently deployed empowerment strategies for various stakeholders. Evaluators hope that this process itself can empower evaluation participants.

### **5. Organizational Set-up and Respective roles**

**SDC's Evaluation and Controlling Division:** SDC evaluation officers will negotiate and approve the evaluation framework with participatory input from the Core Learning Partnership, draft and administer the contracts with the evaluators, ensure that the evaluators receive appropriate logistical support and access to information and organize the overall process with respect to i) discussion of evaluation results, ii) elaboration of the Agreement at Completion Point and Lessons Learned, iii) Senior Management Response, iv) publication and v) dissemination. A consultant has been mandated to provide methodological inputs and critical feedback to the evaluation officers.

**Core Learning Partnership (CLP):** Representatives from SDC's Country, Humanitarian, Multilateral and Thematic Departments (E-Department: Fellay Pascal, Ferrari Beatrice, Läubli Ursula, Perich Isabel, Streit Max, Zumstein Susanne, Zwahlen Anne; F-Department: Beltrani Guido, Nicod Chantal, Ruedin Laurent, Sancar Annemarie; M-Department: Hassberger Anne; H- and O- Depts.) have been recruited. They will comment on the evaluation design and the draft evaluation report (feedback to evaluators about whether additional research needs to be done). During the Completion Point Workshop, the CLP will discuss the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, negotiate and approve the Stand of the CLP in the Agreement at Completion Point (ACP), and identify the Lessons Learned.

**SDC Department-level Management and the Director General** will articulate the Senior Management Response.

**The Poverty Net**, an informal body constituted within SDC Headquarters is carrying out research on “empowerment” approaches as evolving within SDC programs. The Evaluation Team will share key findings with the Poverty Net group and validate the findings.

**Evaluation Team:** The Evaluation Team has been selected as per the criteria<sup>2</sup> defined by SDC's E + C Division. Ms. Seemantinee Khot, as the Team leader, and Mr. Shirish Joshi and Ms. Mona Dhamankar as Co-evaluators have been involved in developing this approach paper as well as detailing process and methodology of data collection. The team will collaborate with the SDC country offices in Bolivia and Burkina Faso to recruit secretarial, data collection and translation assistants to complement language and cultural awareness. The Team Leader will be responsible for the organizational, logistical and administrative aspects of the evaluation to ensure smooth implementation. The work-plan submitted by the team will guide the mission during field and HQ work.

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<sup>2</sup> E+C selection criteria for Evaluation Team: “distance” from Swiss Development Cooperation, independent from the national Government, critical and constructively engaged in and advocacy for the cause of the poor, adequate experience and a track record in participatory research at the grassroots level.

## 6. Main Steps and Timetable

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Date</b>
Approach Paper Draft, Call for 3-5 offers from a short list, Selection of Evaluation Team	First Quarter 2006
Evaluation Team mission to SDC Delhi COOF for familiarization with SDC	May 2-10, 2006
<b>Evaluation Kick-Off with CLP</b> / Discussion of Approach Paper with CLP (with Seema Khot (SK), Mona Dhamankar (MD), Shirish Joshi (SJ))	<b>Wed., May 24, 2006, 9:00-13:00</b>
Preliminary interviews at SDC Headquarters (conducted by SK and MD)	June 1-2, 2006
Finalisation of Approach Paper and posting on Internet	Beginning June, 2006
Burkina Faso Case Study Mission (with SK, MD, SJ, Camille Narayan (CN)) including preparatory phase in Burkina	June 19-July 13, 2006
Burkina Faso <b>End of Mission Workshop</b> including presentation of Draft Burkina Faso Case Study Report	<b>Thurs., July 13, 2006</b>
Bolivia Case Study Mission (with SK, MD, SJ, CN)	Aug. 1-Aug. 21, 2006
Bolivia <b>End of Mission Workshop</b> including presentation of Draft Bolivia Case Study Report	<b>Mon., Aug. 21, 2006</b>
Evaluation Mission to SDC Headquarters, (Interviews at SDC conducted by SJ and MD, SK and CN summarize case studies and prepare Debriefing)	Aug. -25 and 28 2006
<b>CLP Debriefing at SDC Headquarters</b> on Country Case Studies and preliminary findings of Headquarters Mission (with SK; SJ, MD, CN)	<b>Wed., Aug. 30, 2006 10:00-16:00</b>
Country Case Study Reports finalised and submitted	Sept. 15, 2006
Draft Synthesis Report (including Recommendations) submitted	Oct. 2, 2006
Draft Synthesis Report distributed to CLP	Oct. 16, 2006
<b>CLP Meeting to discuss draft Synthesis Report</b> (with SK, SJ)	<b>Wed. Nov. 1, 2006, 10:00-16:00</b>
Evaluators finalize Synthesis Report, submit Final Evaluation Report (Synthesis and Case Study Reports) including Evaluation Abstract and DAC Summary	Nov. 16, 2006
Final Evaluation Report distributed to CLP	Nov. 23, 2006
<b>Agreement at Completion Point Workshop:</b> CLP negotiates and approves Agreement at Completion Point and Lessons Learned, determines follow-up (with either SJ, MD or SK)	<b>Thurs. Dec. 7, 2006, 10:00-16:00</b>
Senior Management Response elaborated in COSTRA	February 2007
Final Evaluation Report posted on Internet and electronically disseminated	February 2007

## 7. Time Effort

Total person days for core team (SK, MD, SJ) 223, additional person days for the team assistant and for local consultants and translators.

**SDC Evaluation Officer**  
Anne Bichsel

**Evaluation Team Leader**  
Seemantinee Khot

## Evaluation Schedule - Key events and Dates

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Date</b>
Evaluation Team mission to SDC Delhi COOF for familiarization with SDC	May 2-10, 2006
<b>Evaluation Kick-Off with CLP / Discussion of Approach Paper with CLP</b>	<b>May 24, 2006</b>
Preliminary interviews at SDC Headquarters	June 1-2, 2006
Burkina Faso Case Study Mission	June 19-July 13, 2006
Burkina Faso <b>End of Mission Workshop</b> -Draft Case Study Report	<b>July 13, 2006</b>
Bolivia Case Study Mission	Aug.1- 21, 2006
Bolivia <b>End of Mission Workshop</b> - Draft Case Study Report	<b>Aug. 21, 2006</b>
Evaluation Mission to SDC Headquarters,	Aug. 25 -28 2006
<b>CLP Debriefing at SDC HQ</b> on Case Studies and Headquarters Mission	<b>Aug. 30, 2006</b>
Country Case Study Reports finalized and submitted	Sept. 25, 2006
Draft Synthesis Report distributed to CLP	Oct. 5, 2006
<b>CLP Meeting to discuss draft Synthesis Report</b>	<b>Nov. 1, 2006</b>
Evaluators finalize Synthesis Report, submit Final Evaluation Report	Nov. 16, 2006
Final Evaluation Report distributed to CLP	Nov. 23, 2006
<b>Agreement at Completion Point Workshop:</b>	<b>Dec. 7, 2006</b>
Senior Management Response elaborated in COSTRA	February 2007
Final Evaluation Report posted on Internet and electronically disseminated	February 2007

## List of Persons Consulted

<b>Adrian Schlaepfer</b>	Director of E-Department (former Head Latin America Division, Head of COOF Bolivia, Desk in Latin America Division)
<b>Anne Hassberger</b>	Int. Financial Institutions Division
<b>Anne Zwahlen</b>	West Africa, Gender, Empowerment, Participation, Poverty Reduction, <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Annemarie Sancar</b>	Governance, Gender, <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Beate Wilhelm</b>	Director Thematic Department, catalyst for innovation, science, economy and society
<b>Beatrice Appius</b>	Head of Personnel Development Division
<b>Chantal Nico</b>	South Asia + Governance, <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Cyril Rogger</b>	AOS – SAH, Swiss Labour Assistance, Zürich, Desk Burkina
<b>Daniel Valenghi</b>	Helvetas
<b>Edita Vokral</b>	Deputy Director of E-Department, Head of Working Group on Harmonization (former Head of Coof Mali, Deputy Head E+C, Coof Tanzania)
<b>Gerhard Siegfried</b>	Head E+C Division, (formerly South Africa Div., Coof Tanzania, Personnel Department)
<b>Guido Beltrani</b>	E+C , F-Department, <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Isabel Perich</b>	Desk Bolivia, (formerly desk Employment and Income Division), <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Jean-François Cuenod</b>	Desk Officer Conflict Prevention Division, (Formerly Head Governance Division, Head of COOF Ecuador, Deputy Head of COOF Bolivia, Rwanda Desk, UNDP Niger and Madagascar)
<b>Koumba Boly</b>	Social Development, NPO Burkina Faso
<b>Laura Bott</b>	Niger Desk in West Africa Division, specialist on <b>decentralisation</b>
<b>Laurent Ruedin</b>	Social Development, Coordinator Poverty Net <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Marco Ferrari</b>	Marco Ferrari, Vice Head of H-Department, Humanitarian Aid
<b>Max Streit</b>	Desk Regional Program South Africa, <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Maya Tissafi</b>	Head of Social Development Div., Poverty policy
<b>Pascal Fellay</b>	Desk Burkina Faso
<b>Peter Arnold</b>	Retired Head of COOF Tanzania, Backstopper for this independent Evaluation, <b>(CLP member)</b>
<b>Peter Bischof</b>	Head Latin America Division
<b>Peter Meier</b>	NGO Division, Formerly E+C E-Dept., Head of Coof Ecuador, Coof Peru
<b>Peter Sulzer</b>	Nepal Desk, Former Bolivia Desk, focal point Good Governance, Latin America Division
<b>Remo Gautschi</b>	Deputy Director of SDC, (former Head of O- and A-Department, Head of East Asia Division, Indonesia Desk, COOF Nepal)
<b>René Holenstein</b>	Head Governance Div. former Head of COOFs of Bosnia + Herzegowina and Burkina
<b>Reto Wieser</b>	Social Development Division Livelihood for Equity, Former Head South Asia Div, E+C Div., COOF of Nepal
<b>Roger Denzer</b>	Head of Latin America Division
<b>Ruth Huber</b>	Income and Employment Division, formerly COOF Bolivia
<b>Sabine Schenk</b>	Head West Africa Division
<b>Theres Adam</b>	Head of O-Dept. - Cooperation with Eastern Europe
<b>Thomas Zeller</b>	Head of Social Development Division (formerly Latin America Division)
<b>Walter Hofer</b>	Deputy Director Multilateral Department, expert on aid modalities

## **2. Annexes to the Case Study Burkina Faso**





## Annex a

### **Mission Dates**

26<sup>th</sup> June – 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2006

### **Programs Studied**

#### **Adele**

Location: Fada N’Gourma.

Dates: 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> June.

#### **Tintua**

Location: Fada N’Gourma.

Dates: 30<sup>th</sup> June & 1<sup>st</sup> July.

#### **EPCD**

Location: Koudougou & Ouahigouya.

Dates: 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **Union of Kumbri**

Location: Ouahigouya.

Dates: 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **FNGN**

Location: Ouahigouya.

Dates: 8<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **Alpha**

Location: Ouahigouya.

Dates: 8<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Interviews of Individuals Related to Various Programs**

Location: Ouagadougou

Dates: 27<sup>th</sup> June, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, & 10<sup>th</sup> July.

## List of Persons Consulted

### Adele

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Bibata Sankara      | Director, Adele                                      |
| 2. Kone Beuiba         | Regional Director, Adele.                            |
| 3. Mrs Badolo Eloise   | Finance Officer, Adele.                              |
| 4. Safiatou Bikienga   | Secretary, Adele.                                    |
| 5. Batouri Arouna      | Selection Committee of Gourma, Association of Fimba. |
| 6. Ghada Idrissa       | Selection Committee of Gourma, Association of Fimba. |
| 7. Kobayaga Ralti      | Selection Committee of Gourma, Association of Fimba. |
| 8. Kinia Jorissa       | Selection Committee of Gourma, Association of Fimba. |
| 9. Lagassani Millogo   | Veterinarian, DPRA- INERA, Association of Fimba.     |
| 10. Thiambiano Lenabou | Selection Committee of Gourma, Association of Fimba. |
| 11. Thiombiano Ounteni | Selection Committee of Gourma,                       |
| 12. Yara Alain         | Consultant, Gulmu Consult.                           |

### Tintua

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 13. Benoit Ouoba                | Director, Tintua.                    |
| 14. Yaro Anselme                | Head of Community Education, Tintua. |
| 15. Christophe Tankoano Loutha  | Training and Evaluation, Tintua.     |
| 16. Couliadiati Hadiara         | Monitoring and Evaluation, Tintua.   |
| 17. Executive Committee Members | Presidents and Cashieres, Tintua.    |
| 18. Lankoande Etienne           | Teacher (Alphabetisation), Tintua.   |
| 19. Lankoande Karim             | Diema Support, Tintua.               |
| 20. Oualy Labidi                | Youth Programs Tintua.               |
| 21. Sawadogo Loutha             | Training, Tintua.                    |
| 22. Staff members               | Tintua Diemas.                       |

### EPCD – Koudougou.

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 23. Vincent Kabore         | Director, EPCD.  |
| 24. Mokara Julie           | Sanitation, EPCD.  |
| 25. Joseph Nikiema         | Infrastructure and Institutional support, EPCD.          |
| 26. Samay Abduramane       | Infrastructure and Institutional support, EPCD.          |
| 27. Sano Abduramane        | Institutional support, EPCD.                             |
| 28. Mr. Ouedreogo          | First Assistant Mayor of Koudougou.                      |
| 29. Seydou K. Zagre        | Governor of Koudougou.                                   |
| 30. Yaméogo Francois       | Councillor (Sector 8), Municipality of Koudougou.        |
| 31. Jean Marie             | Secretary General to the Mayor.                          |
| 32. Benao N. Georgette     | President, Women's' Garbage Collection Association.      |
| 33. Gandema S.N. Albertine | President, Women's' Garbage Collection Association.      |
| 34. Yameogo Clarisse       | President, Women's' Garbage Collection Association.      |
| 35. Bouda Thérèse          | President, Women's' Garbage Collection Association.      |
| 36. Regma Etienne Kabore   | Provincial Education Officer, Municipality of Koudougou. |
| 37. Yaméogo Jeanette       | Councillor (Sector 8), Municipality of Koudougou.        |
| 38. Yameogo Jean Pierre    | Councillor, Municipality of Koudougou.                   |

### Union of Kumbri

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 39. Porgho Moustapha         | Technical Training and Management, Union of Kumbri. |
| 40. Segue Inoussa            | Land Use, Union of Kumbri.                          |
| 41. Technical Training Staff | Union of Kumbri.                                    |
| 42. Mr. Zongo                | Education Officer, (Local Government)               |

### FNGN

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 43. Executive Committee, FNGN. |  |
|--------------------------------|--|



## Annexe c

### List of Community Exercise Locations

#### Adele

Bogande : Association of Fimba  
Natiaboani : Association Tui Taani Fii

#### Tintua

Malimou Diema  
Tiankiaka Diema  
Federation Committee Members, (Local Government Representatives)

#### EPCD


























Representatives and Members of the Women's Garbage Collection Association,  
Sectors 1 and 8, Koudougou.

Community Members of Sectors 1 and 8, Koudougou

#### Union of Kumbri

Kumbri Union Members: Community of Koumbri  
Community of Boulzouma

**Pictorial Set for Participatory Community Exercise** (Artist: Raju Deshpande of Prime Enterprises, Pune, India) *(Cards in grey were later removed after tool modifications)*

<p><b>1. Self confidence</b></p> 	<p><b>2. Seeking Information</b></p> 	<p><b>3. Mobility</b></p> 	<p><b>4. Means of Communication</b></p> 	<p><b>5. Health Behaviour</b></p> 
<p><b>6. Leisure</b></p> 	<p><b>7. Food, Shelter, Clothes</b></p> 	<p><b>8. Employment Opportunities</b></p> 	<p><b>9. Saving Potential</b></p> 	<p><b>10. Small Assets</b></p> 
<p><b>11. Big Assets</b></p> 	<p><b>12. Community Gatherings</b></p> 	<p><b>13. Sharing Domestic Work</b></p> 	<p><b>14. Community Organization</b></p> 	<p><b>15. Participation in Public For a</b></p> 
<p><b>16. Voting</b></p> 	<p><b>17. Legal Awareness</b></p> 	<p><b>18. Demonstrating Solidarity</b></p> 	<p><b>19. Soil</b></p> 	<p><b>20. Water</b></p> 
<p><b>21. Vegetation</b></p> 	<p><b>22. Livestock</b></p> 	<p><b>23. Access to School / Education</b></p> 	<p><b>24. Access Primary Health</b></p> 	<p><b>25. Access to Credit</b></p> 

## **Tools of Data collection**

### **Tool 1: Interview NGO Directors, Government Officials**

- I. Name, educational, designation, roles and responsibilities, program details, reference documents**
- II. Responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the local community:**
  1. In your experience/ according to you who were the most marginalized sections of the community? How did you identify the marginalized sections of the community and their needs? How did you incorporate their needs and priorities in your intervention strategy/ work plan?
  2. How did you ensure that the benefits of the interventions reached the marginalized sections?
  3. Did you try to ensure that the intervention did not lead to harmful impacts on the lives of the marginalized sections? How?
  4. Did you find that the identified needs of the marginalized sections of the community remained same throughout the intervention life cycle? If not, how did you understand the changes? Did these changes lead to any change in the intervention? If so, what and how?
  5. Did you involve the marginalized sections of the community in assessing the results? How? How was this evaluation used? Do you think these efforts were adequate? Why?
  6. How did you enter into a partnership relationship with SDC? What were the stages, if any, in strengthening or deepening the partnership? What was your thought process in progressing from one stage to another?
  7. Do you think SDC makes efforts in enabling its partners in empowering the community? If yes, what kind of efforts? Do you think that these efforts were in line with SDC's participatory image?
  8. Can you point out a few distinguishing characteristics of SDC vis-à-vis other donors?
  9. Can you share some your experiences when SDC has tried to influence the partners in any way, programs, processes, internal functioning of partner organizations etc.? Have there been instances where the partners were able to influence the SDC in any way? When did you last interact with SDC staff? What happened? What was the outcome?
  10. What would you like SDC to do differently to further enhance the partnership with a view to empower marginalized sections of the society.
  11. What image comes to your mind when you think of your relationship with SDC?
- III. Empowerment:**
  12. What role do you envisage for the field functionaries? How do you support them to empower communities? Any examples beyond day to day administrative interface with them?
  13. In the policy dialogue with government or other donors does SDC try to bring up the needs of the marginalized sections of the community? How?
  14. Do you aim for empowerment of individual recipients or do you make any efforts to create an enabling environment for the entire marginalized sections in the community by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts have you made to facilitate and sustain such an environment?
  15. How did you account for the power relations within and consequences of the power dynamics of the different sections in the communities? Did your organization support this? If yes, did SDC (as a funding partner) play any part in making this happen?

### **Tool 2: Interview Partner Organization Staff**

- I. Name, education, organization, designation, roles and responsibilities**

## **II. Responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the local community:**

1. We have been told that ---- interventions in --- area have been successful in empowering the marginalized sections of the community, do you agree? Why/ Why not?
2. How did you identify the marginalized sections of the community? What tools/ mechanisms did you use? (Who were they?)
3. How did you identify their needs and priorities? (What were their needs? What were their priorities?) What did you do to find out new needs? How often do you find out? What mechanisms do you use? In hindsight, do you think that you understood their needs in the way they meant it?
4. How did you incorporate those needs and priorities in your intervention strategy/ work plan?
5. How did your organization help you / respond to the changes you made in the intervention strategy/ work plan in order to better address their needs?
6. When did you feel that there are positive changes in the community? What made you feel so – give some examples? How have those mechanisms evolved over the years? How did you monitor changes earlier? What do you do differently now? Why? Are/ were the beneficiary communities involved in monitoring changes? How did you involve them?
7. How do you ensure that your interventions/ programs/ activities are addressing their needs? What mechanisms do you/ does your organization use?
8. Which needs were you not able to address through your interventions/ programs/ activities? Why do you think they could not be addressed? What could have been done (more/ differently) to address them? How did “not addressing them” affect the marginalized sections of the community? How did you find out?
9. If you were to redesign this program all over again, what changes would you like to make in the program design / activities etc.?
10. Did you find that the identified needs of the marginalized sections of the community remained same throughout the intervention life cycle? If not, how did you understand the changes? Did these changes lead to any change in the intervention? If so, what and how?

## **III. Empowerment:**

11. Were there any unintended consequences of the program? Did you try to ensure that the intervention did not lead to harmful impacts on the lives of the marginalized sections? How?
12. Do you aim for empowerment of individual recipients or do you make any efforts to create an enabling environment for the entire marginalized sections in the community by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts have you made to facilitate and sustain such an environment?
13. How did you account for the power relations within and consequences of the power dynamics of the different sections in the communities? Did your organization support this? If yes, did SDC (as a funding partner) play any part in making this happen?
14. Describe an example where you took a risk / initiative in favor of community empowerment – over and above your regular work?

## **Interview Tool 3: Community Member Representatives**

### **I. Community name, programs in the area, length of time program is in the area, no, male, female**

### **II. Changes in the interviewee:**

1. Since how long have you been associated with \_\_\_\_ program? During this association, how have you communicated your needs and expectations to the program staff? (what were those needs) What benefits have you received from the program?

2. In the course of this program, you might have got several things and many changes might have taken place in your lives...share some of those things / changes with us? (What are those changes?)

Which of those changes have contributed to and / or come in the way of building your capacity to take charge of your lives / to positively influence your present and future reality?

Narrate an example of how you deployed this capacity to bring about change in your lives? What/ who helped you in utilizing this capacity?

3. What has been your role in shaping the program and aligning it better with your needs?
4. Have you been involved in the evaluation of the program and if so, how has your feed back been used?

### **III Responsabilisation / Auto Promotion/ Empowerment**

5. According to you who are the most marginalized sections of the community? Why are they marginalized? How different are their needs? If so are they able to communicate their needs?
6. Whose and which needs were better addressed by the programs? What makes you feel so? What made that possible?

Whose and which needs did not get addressed? Why did they not get addressed / addressed adequately, satisfactorily etc.?

7. Did you find that your needs remained same throughout the program? If not, which needs changed? How did you communicate the changes? How did the program staff respond to them? Give an example of such needs and responses.
8. Has the programs led to any undesirable effects, especially with respect to marginalized sections of the society? If so what are they?
9. If this program was to be done all over again, how differently should it be done so that the marginalized sections get more empowered?
10. Beyond the program, do you think whether any legal or structural changes are required to help you take charge of your life? If so what are they? What efforts have been made you / program implementation agency / SDC for the same?

### **Interview Tool 4: SDC Staff (HQ, COOF)**

#### **I. Name, education, designation, roles and responsibilities, program details, reference documents**

#### **II. Responsiveness to the needs and priorities of local communities:**

1. In your experience/ according to you who were the most marginalized sections of the community? How did you identify the marginalized sections of the community and their needs?
2. Did you try to ensure that the benefits of the interventions reached the marginalized sections? How?
3. Did you try to ensure that the intervention did not lead to harmful impacts on the lives of the marginalized sections? How?
4. Did you find that the identified needs of the marginalized sections of the community remained same throughout the intervention life cycle? If not, how did you understand the changes? Did these changes lead to any change in the intervention? If so, what and how?
5. Did you involve the marginalized sections of the community in assessing the results? How? How was this evaluation used? Do you think these efforts were adequate? Why?

#### **III Partnership**

6. How did you enter into a partnership relationship? What were the stages, if any, in strengthening or deepening the partnership? What was your thought process in progressing from one stage to another?



7. How does SDC account for the power relations between different stakeholders in recipient communities and countries? Do SDC's approaches and strategies to help partners deal with intended and unintended consequences of efforts to change the power equilibrium? How?
8. Do you think SDC makes efforts in enabling its partners in empowering the community? If yes, what kind of efforts? Do you think that these efforts were in line with SDC's participatory image? How?
9. Can you share some your experiences when SDC has tried to influence the partners in any way, programs, processes, internal functioning of partner organizations etc.? Have there been instances where the partners were able to influence the SDC in any way?

When did you last interact with partner staff? What happened? What was the outcome?

#### **IV. Policy Dialogue:**

10. Are there any variations in SDC's ability to influence the empowerment orientation across a variety of engagement patterns/ aid modalities like directly funded projects, sector support, contributions to multilateral institutions, projects undertaken in association with other donors, policy dialogue etc. If so, how are they different?
11. Do SDC's efforts stop at empowerment of individual recipients or do they extend to creating an enabling environment for the entire marginalized population in the recipient countries by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts does SDC make to facilitate creation and sustenance of such an environment? In the policy dialogue with government or other donors does SDC try to bring up the needs of the marginalized sections of the community? How?
12. If you were to redesign this program all over again, what changes would you like to make in the program design / activities etc.?
13. Describe an example where you took a risk / initiative in favor of community empowerment – over and above your regular work / beyond the rules / procedures of SDC?

#### **Interview Tool 5: Community Participatory Exercise**

**Question 1** : These are some examples of what rural communities consider as important. From among these, which 5 you consider as most important for empowerment? All are important, but we want the ones that come first according to you for communities to be empowered and take charge of development. If you think that these 20 cards do not cover some aspects you deem important, you may add new cards. Discuss each card, and select five. You can take 20 to 30 minutes.

**Question 2:** Rank these changes in order of their importance from 1 to 5. You can take 5 to 10 minutes.

**Question 3:** You may be already experiencing some of these changes. In last five years, state whether and how each of the change you deem important is changing, changing for better or worse. (No change, Negative change, Positive or Very positive change. You can take 10 to 20 minutes.

**Question 4:** For the positive changes, what factors are making these changes possible? You can take 10 minutes.

**Question 5:** For the negative changes, what factors are affecting? What are the obstacles? You can take 10 minutes.

## What did Community find empowering?

**Table 1: Dimensions of Empowerment ranked by the order of significance**

Order of significance	Rank1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Total
1. Education	11	32	26	0	0	68.4
2. Livestock	5	16	0	13	31	64.8
3. Agriculture production	16	5	16	13	13	61.8
4. Water	16	11	5	13	0	44.1
5. Health services	26	11	0	0	0	36.8
6. Com.Org	5	0	16	0	13	33.6
7. Public Participation	5	5	5	6	6	28.3
8. Health Behavior	0	0	5	25	6	36.5
9. Sharing Work	0	11	5	0	6	22.0
10. Access to info	0	0	11	6	13	29.3
11. Soil	5	5	0	0	6	16.8
12. Mobility	5	0	5	0	0	10.5
13. Self confidence	0	0	5	13	0	17.8
14. Community Celebrations	5	0	0	0	0	5.3
15. Personal Utilities	0	5	0	0	0	5.3
16. Market Access	0	0	0	6	0	6.3
17. Employment	0	0	0	6	0	6.3
18. Credit	0	0	0	0	6	6.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	

(Figures in the cells indicate % times each dimension was ranked in the order of significance)

**Table 2: Changes perceived in significant dimensions of empowerment**

Aspects deemed important	Less	No change	More	Much more	Can't say
Education	1		9		4
Livestock	2		6	2	3
Agriculture production	4	2	4		?
Water	3		3	1	1
Hospital/treatment	3		3	1	
Participation in public fora	1	1	2		3
community gathering	1		2	3	
Health Behavior		1	2	1	1
Sharing Domestic Work	2		2		1
Access to information			3	1	
Soil	2		1		1
Mobility	1		1		1
Employment Opportunity		1			1
Self confidence			2		
Access to Market			1		
Credit					1
Hospital/treatment					1
Small Assets					1

## End of Mission Workshop

The purpose of the EOM workshop was to share findings and have feedback from COOF staff and partner organization heads to clarify misunderstandings, factual correctness and to promote ownership of the findings.

Evaluators outlined the rationale and the timing of the evaluation, then the methodology, the process of data collection, and then described trends from the community data, specifically what communities described as empowering, and factors contributing and obstructing empowerment.

Preliminary findings discussed were related to the key questions on SDC's responsiveness to needs & priorities of marginalized and SDC's partnership practices for empowering marginalized.

### EOM Workshop Participants: Invitees

1	Madame Chrystel Ferret Balmer	DDC Burkina Faso
2	Dabiret Jean – Marie	DDC Burkina Faso
3	Rouamba Pascal	DDC Burkina Faso
4	Kouanda Habibou	DDC Burkina Faso
5	Zongo Alfred	DDC Burkina Faso
6	Tapsoba Ambroise	DDC Burkina Faso
7	Bibata Sankara	ADELE, Fada
8	Vincent Kabore	ARC
9	Benoit Ouoba	Tintua Fada
10	Paul Bayili	CAGEC
11	Barro David	CAGEC
12	Sawadogo Dramane	Programme Alpha
13	Alassan Kabore	EPCD Koudougou
14	Amadou Zalle	EPCD Ouahigouya
15	Alexis Kabore	CORADE
16	Daniel Thieba	Consultant
17	Kere D. Jimmy	Medev / DGAT / DLR / DPDLR
18	K I Noel	Cooperation Suisse / programme Alpha
	Anne Bichsel	Evaluation Officer, SDC-Bern

### Independent Evaluation Team

Seemantinee Khot	
Mona Dhamankar	
Camille Narayan	
Martin Nazotin	Translator
Edmonde Lompo	Translator
Konseibo Dsire	Translator

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## **2. Annexes to the Case Study Bolivia**





## **Annex a**

### **Mission Dates**

5<sup>th</sup> August – 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2006.

### **Programs Studied**

#### **EMPODER**

Location: Challapata, Quacachaca, Oruro.

Dates: 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> August

#### **PADEM**

Location: Tarata, Tapacari, Cochabamba

Dates: 11<sup>th</sup> August & 12<sup>st</sup> August

#### **PRONALAG**

Location: Santa Cruz and Chane.

Dates: 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> August

### **Interviews of Individuals Related to Various Programs**

Location: La Paz

Dates: 8<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> August.

**Annex b****List of Persons Consulted****Empowerment Workshop, La Paz**

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Mateo Laura            | Ex Governer of La Paz. Ex Municipal Mayor. Presently in an indigenous peoples' NGO  |
| 2. Paulino Guarachi       | Fundación Tierra (Land Foundation) & Ex Vice Ministry of Popular Participation  |
| 3. Alejandro Choque       | Indigenous leader (Mallko)  |
| 4. Eliana Camacho         | Work in indigenous areas for 6- 8 years with the popular participation law & PDCR (Biologist)   |
| 5. Erika Brockmann        | Ex Diputada / Senadora, Comisión de Descentralización Participación Popular, Ex chairwoman and congresswoman linked to the decentralization process in the government. (Psychologist) |
| 6. Vladimir Pary          | World Bank and Official a cargo de program Experiencia en Participación Popular   |
| 7. Marcelo Rengel         | Ex Vice Ministro de Participación Popular, Dialogo 2000 & Consultant of PADEM   |
| 8. Jorge Aliaga           | QHANA (NGO), (Social Sciences)  |
| 9. Roberto Delgado        | Comunicador Social, CEDEFOA. (NGO)  |
| 10. Xavier Díaz de Medina | Comité Enlace (Organization for local artisans)   |

**EMPODER**

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 11. Miriam Campos               | Director, EMPODER                                      |
| 12. Lucio Chiri                 | President of Councillors (Potosi), Pocata Municipality |
| 13. Alfredo Lipiri              | Subalolde Distrito Indigena. Norte Condor              |
| 14. Eugio Juntuma,              | Tax Collector  |
| 15. Valerio Pairumani           | Ex District Deputy Mayor                               |
| 16. Eugenio Condor Quispe       | Promoter, EMPODER                                      |
| 17. Juan Maraza Mamani          | 2nd Governor Avaroa Provice,                           |
| 18. Gregorio Titi Tola          | Deputy Mayor from District of Aguas Calientas          |
| 19. Jose Leon Amgne             | SDC Challapata Office Responsible, SDC                 |
| 20. Oscar Chiri,                | Deputy Mayor -Culta,                                   |
| 21. Victor Ossio,               | Community Leader Ayllu Jucumani,                       |
| 22. Eucrasio Condori,           | Member of Union of Council of the Ayllus of Peace,     |
| 23. Juan Panfilo Condori Choque | Technical Assistant of Deputy Mayor of Qaqachaca       |

**PADEM**

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| 24. Carlos Soria    | Director, PADEM   |
| 25. Luis Nieto      | Capacitation / Facilitators, PADEM                      |
| 26. Rene Fernandez  | Capacitation / Facilitators, PADEM                      |
| 27. Charo Tindal    | Capacitation / Facilitators, PADEM                      |
| 28. Norah Pardo     | Municipal Councillor                                    |
| 29. Pedro Corrales  | Mayor of Tarata   |
| 30. Roberto Laserna | Social Scientist  |
| 31. Ramiro Suazo    | Executive Director of Association of Municipalities     |
| 32. Fernando Perez  | Land Plannification Head, Association of Municipalities |

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 33. Camillo Torrez | Economist & Director of Planning, Association Of Municipalities |
| 34. Nemesio Louera | Congressman   |
| 35. Sergio Cirales | Gestion Municipalisation  |

## PRONALAG

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 36. Nelson Rodriguez   | Dean of Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, University of Santa Cruz |
| 37. Margaret Ferguson  | Deputy Dean, University of Santa Cruz                              |
| 38. Gladys Aguilera.   | Director of Agronomy, University of Santa Cruz                     |
| 39. Juan Ortube Flores | Director, PRONALAG   |
| 40. Adalid Terceros    | Technical Staff and capacity building, PRONALAG                    |
| 41. Jorgo Nogzlos      | Technical Staff and capacity building, PRONALAG                    |
| 42. Martin Molle       | Technical Staff and capacity building, PRONALAG                    |
| 43. Roberto Curctic    | Technical Staff and capacity building, PRONALAG                    |
| 44. Victor Choque      | Agronomists - Management of Bean Trials, PRONALAG                  |
| 45. Jose Padilla       | Bean Trials, PRONALAG  |
| 46. Sixto Barriga      | Technical Support for Oxfam Project, PRONALAG                      |
| 47. Tito Anzuete Gui   | Genetic Improvement and developing varieties of Beans, PRONALAG    |

## La Paz – Based Interviews

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 48. Marco Rossi  | Country Director, COSUDE  |
| 49. Dominique Favier   | Deputy Director, COSUDE   |
| 50. Geraldine Zeuner   | Deputy Country Director, COSUDE                                     |
| 51. Carlos Carafa  | Program Officer, COSUDE   |
| 52. Sylvia, Rosmarie, Annie Hug, Amparo Céspedes                 | Administrative Staff, COSUDE  |
| 53. Marcelo Collao   | Program Officer, COSUDE   |
| 54. Thomas Hentschel   | Consultant, SECO  |
| 55. Javier Zubieta   | Representative, International Cooperation                           |
| 56. Waldo Albarracin   | Director, Defensor de Pueblo  |
| 57. Carlos Cuasacs, Ernesto Sánchez, Manuel Presopej, Henri Tito | Senator, Social Leaders, Defensor de Pueblo                         |
| 58. José Antonio Terán   | Manager, Federation of Municipalities                               |
| 59. Javier Albo  | Anthropologist  |
| 60. Lupe Cajías  | Director, Citizens Against Corruption                               |
| 61. Isabel Canedo  | Coordinator, National Seeds Program                                 |
| 62. Ximena Aramayo   | Director, PROBONA   |
| 63. Julia Gómez  | Director, PROFIN  |
| 64. Dolores Charali  | Director National Unit, Vice Ministry of Culture                    |
| 65. David Tuchsneider y Vladimir Pary                            | Program Officer, World Bank   |
| 66. Mónica Bayá  | Coordinator, Community of Human Rights                              |
| 67. J. José Castro   | Director of Commercialization, Ministry of Agriculture              |
| 68. Fabian Yacsick   | Vice Minister of Decentralization, Ministry of Decentralization     |
| 69. Diego Cuadros.   | Director of International Cooperation, Ministry of Decentralization |
| 70. Antonio Miranda  | Ex Vice Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice                    |

## **Community Exercise Locations**

EMPODER: Challapata

PADEM: Tarata and Tapacari

PRONALAG: Santa Cruz

**Pictureorial Set for Participatory Community Exercises** (Artist: Raju Deshpande of Prime Enterprises, Pune, India)



**1. Having Confidence in One's Self**



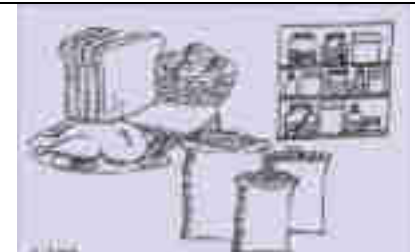
**2. Information**



**3. Mobility**



**4. Health Habits**



**5. Food**



**6. Clothing**



**7. Shelter**



**8. Income Generation**



**9. Access to Market**



**10. Savings (Cash & Kind)**



**11. Implements and Material for Agriculture**



**12. Sharing Domestic Work**



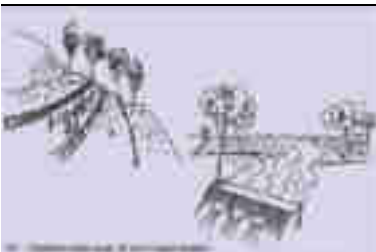
**13. Organised Collective Action**



**14. Voting**



**15. Solidarity**



**16. Sustainable use of Land and Water**



**17. Livestock**



**18. Education**



**19. Health Services**



**20. Access to Credit**

## **Tools of Data collection**

### **Tool 1: Interview NGO Directors, Government Officials**

#### **I. Name, educational, designation, roles and responsibilities. Program details, reference documents**

#### **II. Responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the local community :**

- 1 In your experience/ according to you who were the most marginalized sections of the community? How did you identify the marginalized sections of the community and their needs? How did you incorporate their needs and priorities in your intervention strategy/ work plan?
- 2 How did you ensure that the benefits of the interventions reached the marginalized sections?
- 3 Did you try to ensure that the intervention did not lead to harmful impacts on the lives of the marginalized sections? How?
- 4 Did you find that the identified needs of the marginalized sections of the community remained same throughout the intervention life cycle? If not, how did you understand the changes? Did these changes lead to any change in the intervention? If so, what and how?
- 5 Did you involve the marginalized sections of the community in assessing the results? How? How was this evaluation used? Do you think these efforts were adequate? Why?
- 6 How did you enter into a partnership relationship with SDC? What were the stages, if any, in strengthening or deepening the partnership? What was your thought process in progressing from one stage to another?
- 7 Do you think SDC makes efforts in enabling its partners in empowering the community? If yes, what kind of efforts? Do you think that these efforts were in line with SDC's participatory image?
- 8 Can you point out a few distinguishing characteristics of SDC vis-à-vis other donors?
- 9 Can you share some your experiences when SDC has tried to influence the partners in any way, programs, processes, internal functioning of partner organizations etc.? Have there been instances where the partners were able to influence the SDC in any way? When did you last interact with SDC staff? What happened? What was the outcome?
- 10 What would you like SDC to do differently to further enhance the partnership with a view to empower marginalized sections of the society.
- 11 What image comes to your mind when you think of your relationship with SDC?

#### **III. Empowerment:**

- 12 What role do you envisage for the field functionaries? How do you support them to empower communities? Any examples beyond day to day administrative interface with them?
- 13 In the policy dialogue with government or other donors does SDC try to bring up the needs of the marginalized sections of the community? How?
- 14 Do you aim for empowerment of individual recipients or do you make any efforts to create an enabling environment for the entire marginalized sections in the community by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts have you made to facilitate and sustain such an environment?
- 15 How did you account for the power relations within and consequences of the power dynamics of the different sections in the communities? Did your organization support this? If yes, did SDC (as a funding partner) play any part in making this happen?

## **Tool 2: Interview Partner Organization Staff**

### **I. Name, education, organization, designation, roles and responsibilities**

### **II. Responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the local community:**

1. We have been told that ---- interventions in --- area have been successful in empowering the marginalized sections of the community, do you agree? Why/ Why not?
2. How did you identify the marginalized sections of the community? What tools/ mechanisms did you use? (Who were they?)
3. How did you identify their needs and priorities? (What were their needs? What were their priorities?) What did you do to find out new needs? How often do you find out? What mechanisms do you use? In hindsight, do you think that you understood their needs in the way they meant it?
4. How did you incorporate those needs and priorities in your intervention strategy/ work plan?
5. How did your organization help you / respond to the changes you made in the intervention strategy/ work plan in order to better address their needs?
6. When did you feel that there are positive changes in the community? What made you feel so – give some examples? How have those mechanisms evolved over the years? How did you monitor changes earlier? What do you do differently now? Why? Are/ were the beneficiary communities involved in monitoring changes? How did you involve them?
7. How do you ensure that your interventions/ programs/ activities are addressing their needs? What mechanisms do you/ does your organization use?
8. Which needs were you not able to address through your interventions/ programs/ activities? Why do you think they could not be addressed? What could have been done (more/ differently) to address them? How did “not addressing them” affect the marginalized sections of the community? How did you find out?
9. If you were to redesign this program all over again, what changes would you like to make in the program design / activities etc.?
10. Did you find that the identified needs of the marginalized sections of the community remained same throughout the intervention life cycle? If not, how did you understand the changes? Did these changes lead to any change in the intervention? If so, what and how?

### **III. Empowerment:**

11. Were there any unintended consequences of the program? Did you try to ensure that the intervention did not lead to harmful impacts on the lives of the marginalized sections? How?
12. Do you aim for empowerment of individual recipients or do you make any efforts to create an enabling environment for the entire marginalized sections in the community by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts have you made to facilitate and sustain such an environment?
13. How did you account for the power relations within and consequences of the power dynamics of the different sections in the communities? Did your organization support this? If yes, did SDC (as a funding partner) play any part in making this happen?
14. Describe an example where you took a risk / initiative in favor of community empowerment – over and above your regular work?

## **Interview Tool 3: Community Member Representatives**

- I. Community name, programs in the area, length of time program is in the area, no. Male, Female**

## **II. Changes in the interviewee:**

1. Since how long have you been associated with \_\_\_\_\_ program? During this association, how have you communicated your needs and expectations to the program staff? (what were those needs)  
What benefits have you received from the program?
2. In the course of this program, you might have got several things and many changes might have taken place in your lives...share some of those things / changes with us? (What are those changes?)  
Which of those changes have contributed to and / or come in the way of building your capacity to take charge of your lives / to positively influence your present and future reality?  
Narrate an example of how you deployed this capacity to bring about change in your lives? What/ who helped you in utilizing this capacity?
3. What has been your role in shaping the program and aligning it better with your needs?
4. Have you been involved in the evaluation of the program and if so, how has your feed back been used?

## **III Responsabilisation / Auto Promotion / Empowerment**

5. According to you who are the most marginalized sections of the community? Why are they marginalized? How different are their needs? If so are they able to communicate their needs?
6. Whose and which needs were better addressed by the programs? What makes you feel so? What made that possible?  
Whose and which needs did not get addressed? Why did they not get addressed / addressed adequately, satisfactorily etc.?
7. Did you find that your needs remained same throughout the program? If not, which needs changed? How did you communicate the changes? How did the program staff respond to them? Give an example of such needs and responses.
8. Has the programs led to any undesirable effects, especially with respect to marginalized sections of the society? If so what are they?
9. If this program was to be done all over again, how differently should it be done so that the marginalized sections get more empowered?
10. Beyond the program, do you think whether any legal or structural changes are required to help you take charge of your life? If so what are they? What efforts have been made you / program implementation agency / SDC for the same?

## **Interview Tool 4: SDC Staff (HQ, COOF)**

### **I. Name, education, designation, roles and responsibilities, program details, reference documents**

### **II. Responsiveness to the needs and priorities of local communities:**

1. In your experience/ according to you who were the most marginalized sections of the community? How did you identify the marginalized sections of the community and their needs?
2. Did you try to ensure that the benefits of the interventions reached the marginalized sections? How?
3. Did you try to ensure that the intervention did not lead to harmful impacts on the lives of the marginalized sections? How?
4. Did you find that the identified needs of the marginalized sections of the community remained same throughout the intervention life cycle? If not, how did you understand the changes? Did these changes lead to any change in the intervention? If so, what and how?



5. Did you involve the marginalized sections of the community in assessing the results? How? How was this evaluation used? Do you think these efforts were adequate? Why?

### III Partnership

6. How did you enter into a partnership relationship? What were the stages, if any, in strengthening or deepening the partnership? What was your thought process in progressing from one stage to another?
7. How does SDC account for the power relations between different stakeholders in recipient communities and countries? Do SDC's approaches and strategies to help partners deal with intended and unintended consequences of efforts to change the power equilibrium? How?
8. Do you think SDC makes efforts in enabling its partners in empowering the community? If yes, what kind of efforts? Do you think that these efforts were in line with SDC's participatory image? How?
9. Can you share some your experiences when SDC has tried to influence the partners in any way, programs, processes, internal functioning of partner organizations etc.? Have there been instances where the partners were able to influence the SDC in any way?

When did you last interact with partner staff? What happened? What was the outcome?

### IV Policy Dialogue:

10. Are there any variations in SDC's ability to influence the empowerment orientation across a variety of engagement patterns/ aid modalities like directly funded projects, sector support, contributions to multilateral institutions, projects undertaken in association with other donors, policy dialogue etc. If so, how are they different?
11. Do SDC's efforts stop at empowerment of individual recipients or do they extend to creating an enabling environment for the entire marginalized population in the recipient countries by addressing structural / legal dimensions? What efforts does SDC make to facilitate creation and sustenance of such an environment? In the policy dialogue with government or other donors does SDC try to bring up the needs of the marginalized sections of the community? How?
12. If you were to redesign this program all over again, what changes would you like to make in the program design / activities etc.?
13. Describe an example where you took a risk / initiative in favor of community empowerment – over and above your regular work / beyond the rules / procedures of SDC?

### Interview Tool 5: Community Participatory Exercise

**Question 1** : These are some examples of what rural communities consider as important. From among these, which 5 you consider as most important for empowerment? All are important, but we want the ones that come first according to you for communities to be empowered and take charge of development. If you think that these 20 cards do not cover some aspects you deem important, you may add new cards. Discuss each card, and select five. You can take 20 to 30 minutes.

**Question 2:** Rank these changes in order of their importance from 1 to 5. You can take 5 to 10 minutes.

**Question 3:** You may be already experiencing some of these changes. In last five years, state whether and how each of the change you deem important is changing, changing for better or worse. (No change, Negative change, Positive or Very positive change. You can take 10 to 20 minutes.

**Question 4:** For the positive changes, what factors are making these changes possible? You can take 10 minutes.

**Question 5:** For the negative changes, what factors are affecting? What are the obstacles? You can take 10 minutes.



## End of Mission Workshop

The purpose of the EOM workshop was to share findings and have feedback from COOF staff and partner organization heads to clarify misunderstandings, factual correctness and to promote ownership of the findings.

Evaluators outlined the rationale and the timing of the evaluation, then the methodology, the process of data collection, and then described trends from the community data, specifically what communities described as empowering, and factors contributing and obstructing empowerment.

Preliminary findings discussed were related to the key questions on SDC's responsiveness to needs & priorities of marginalized and SDC's partnership practices for empowering marginalized.

### EOM Workshop Participants: Invitees

- |     |                      |  |
|-----|----------------------|--|
| 1.  | Fabian Yaksic        | Vice Minister of Desentralization  |
| 2.  | Diego Cuadros        | Director of for International Cooperation, Vice Ministry of Decentralization |
| 3.  | Dr. Waldo Albarracin | Ombudsman  |
| 4.  | Blanca Laguna        | Director of International Cooperation  |
| 5.  | Arturo Villanueva    | Defensoría del Pueblo  |
| 6.  | Miriam Campos        | EMPODER  |
| 7.  | Guadalupe Cajas      | Director Movida Ciudadana ANTICORRUPCIÓN                                     |
| 8.  | Monica Bayá          | Community Human Rights   |
| 9.  | Julia Gómez          | PROFIN   |
| 10. | Javier Zubieta       | Intercooperation   |
| 11. | Carlos Soria         | PADEM  |
| 12. | Dominique Favre      | COSUDE   |
| 13. | Geraldine Zeuner     | COSUDE   |
| 14. | Marcelo Collao       | COSUDE   |
| 15. | Ronald Grebe         | Instituto PRISMA   |
| 16. | Camila Urioste       | Translator   |
| 17. | Francisco Aguilar    | Translator   |

Anne Bichsel	Evaluation Officer, SDC-Bern
Seemantinee Khot	Evaluation Team
Shirish Joshi	Evaluation Team
Mona Dhamankar	Evaluation Team
Camille Narayan	Evaluation Team

## SDC Partners

	NGO / Program	Created with SDC funds?	Aid Modality	Theme	Organization Type
1	Rural Productive Support	SDC	Basket	Rural Production / Business Plan	Government
2	FOMEN	SDC	Project -Based	Small enterprise / business services	Program
3	Promotion and Investigation of Andean Products - Pronipa Foundation	SDC	Contribution	Rural Production / Business Plan	Technical Research
4	National Seeds Programme (PNS)	SDC + Other donors	Basket	SEEDS / RURAL	Government
5	Support for the Micro Finance Programme (PROFIN)	SDC	Delegated Cooperation - SDC + DANES give funds, SDC manages the funds.	MICROFINANCE	NGO
6	Bolivian Association for Rural Development (PRORURAL)	SDC	Institutional	Rural Production / Business Plan	NGO
7	Suka Kollus Programme (PROSUKO)	SDC	Project -Based	Traditional knowledge	Program
8	Potatoes Seed Production Company (SEPA SAM)	SDC	Institutional	Rural Development	Private Company
9	Bolivian System of Agricultural Technology (SIBTA)	SDC	Basket	Rural development	Research
10	Centre of Investigation, Formation and Extension for Agricultural Mechanization (CIFEMA SAM)	SDC + UNIVERSITY	Was project based	Rural Development	Private Company
11	Fodder Crop Seeds (SEFO SAM)	SDC	Institutional	SEEDS / RURAL	Private Company
12	Centre for Forest Seeds (BASFOR)	SDC	Institutional	SEEDS / Rural	Research
13	Centre for Information and Exchange of Ecological Agriculture (AGRECOL ANDES Foundation)	SDC	Institutional	Regional (Agriculture)	Research
14	Regional Potato Project (PAPA ANDINA)	SDC	Regional	Regional (Agriculture)	Research
15	National Leguminous Grain Project (PRONALAG)	SDC	Project -Based	Regional (Agriculture)	Research
16	Agriculture / Ecology University of Cochabamba	SDC	Institutional	Traditional knowledge	Research
17	Rural water - Land Programme (ATICA)	SDC	Institutional	Good governance	Project
18	Training and citizen's rights (CDC)	SDC	Institutional	Good governance	NGO
19	Human Rights Community	SDC + GOV	Public / Private Partnership	Good governance	Network
20	The Ombudsman	SDC	Basket	Good governance	Government
21	Indigenous People and Empowerment (EMPODER)	No		Good governance	Government

## Annexes to Case Study Bolivia

22	UNIR Foundation	No	Basket	Good governance	Network
23	Community Justice UMSA	SDC	Project -Based	Good Governance	Research
24	Citizen's Movement Against Corruption	No	Project -Based	Good governance	Gov
25	Support for Municipal Democracy Programme (PADEM)	SDC	Institutional	Good governance	Intermediary between people and government
26	Promotion for Rural Economic Development (PADER)	SDC	Infrastructure, with Gov	Rural development	Government
27	Participating Rural Investment Projects (PDCR II)	No, but focus area decided by SDC	Project -Based	Rural development and good governance	Government
28	Integral Management of River Basins Project PROMIC	SDC	Institutional	Good governance	Government
29	Reduction of Air Contamination in Urban Areas (AIRE Limpio)	SDC	Project -Based	Environment	Research
30	AGRUCO (BIOANDES)	SDC	Institutional	Traditional knowledge	Research
31	Native Forests and Andean Agri Systems PROBONA	SDC	Project -Based	Environment and Rural development	Project

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EVALUATION 2006/1	EVALUACIÓN INDEPENDIENTE DEL PROGRAMA REGIONAL DE AMÉRICA CENTRAL 1999–2005
EVALUATION 2005/3	INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE SDC/seco MEDIUM TERM CONCEPT 2002–2006 IN SERBIA & MONTENEGRO
EVALUATION 2005/2	INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF SDC NEPAL COUNTRY PROGRAMMES 1993–2004 Building Bridges in Nepal – Dealing with deep divides
EVALUATION 2005/1	AUFGABENTEILUNG ZENTRALE – KOBÜ
EVALUATION 2004/4	SDC'S INTERACTION WITH THE SWISS NGO'S (for internal use only)
EVALUATION 2004/3	QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF SDC'S EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORTS (not published)
EVALUATION JR 2004/2	SWISS-SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2000–2003 Joint Review
EVALUATION 2004/1	SDC'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS INFLUENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE WITHIN SDC
EVALUATION EE 2003/6	SDC – COUNTER TRAFFICKING PROGRAMME MOLDOVA
EVALUATION EE 2003/5	SDC – HUMANITARIAN AID IN ANGOLA
EVALUATION EE 2003/4	12 JAHRE OSTZUSAMMENARBEIT BAND 1 DIE TRANSITION UND IHR SCHATTEN BAND 2 BILANZ DER ÖFFENTLICHEN SCHWEIZERISCHEN ZUSAMMENARBEIT MIT OSTEUROPA UND DER GUS 1990–2002
EVALUATION 2003/3	PROGRAMME DE LA COOPERATION SUISSE AU NIGER 1997–2002
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EVALUATION 2002/1	EIN JAHRZEHNT CINFO 1990–2001

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