

Common Outcome Indicators in Vocational Skills Development

A Working Aid on the Use of Common Outcome Indicators in Vocational Skills Development Programmes

Final version as of end of November 2013

→ Background

Common outcome indicators for learning and reporting

Reporting on the results of vocational skills development (VSD) has rapidly gained in importance. The focus of interest is on programme outcomes: what did the programme¹ change? To what extent did it have any sustainable effect on the system of intervention? Do we observe a positive change for the targeted people, organisations and institutions due to programme activities? If yes, what kind of change can we identify?

Evaluations in the field of VSD have shown that SDC is able to show outcomes only to a limited extent. Yet it is highly important both to bring about, and to talk about, the relevant and positive effects of VSD programmes. VSD will only continue to benefit from strong public support if its effects are demonstrated.

Following SDC's VSD portfolio evaluation in 2010/2011, SDC management strongly suggested developing and testing common indicators for VSD programmes on outcome level.

The introduction of common indicators for VSD has three objectives:

- to promote learning across SDC;
- to make it easier for programmes to measure and report on their results on outcome level in a credible way and on that basis support the steering of programmes; and
- to allow for an aggregated reporting of SDC on organisation level.

SDC strongly suggests that the common outcome indicators (COIs) should be used at the following two levels: the programme level (logframes or similar) and the country strategy level (results frameworks). While all four key outcomes and related indicators will be used at programme level, we might focus on employ-

¹ In order to simplify the text, the authors use the term "programme" throughout, but this should be understood to include "project", "intervention", etc.

ment and system change in the scope of the cooperation strategy results framework.² Of course, links will also be maintained between the two levels (cooperation strategy and programme) when it comes to monitoring and (annual) reporting.

Based on a bottom-up initiative within the employment and income network (e+i network), a working group on common VSD indicators on outcome level was set up in May 2011, comprising SDC field and headquarters staff as well as staff of strategic partners of SDC. The working aid was developed by committed people in the belief that their work is leading to change and that this change should be made more visible and its effects should be reported on. The members of this working group chose and defined the four key outcomes and corresponding common outcome indicators (COIs) and they greatly contributed to this working aid.³

The common outcome indicators have been inspired by advances in result measurement in private sector development, such as the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) standard, and by efforts of other donor agencies such as BMZ and GIZ. Given its nature as a tool born out of practice, it does not necessarily reflect and align with all international standards available, but reflects SDC's practice and working experience.

² This is in line with one of SDC's key messages on results: results achievement and management are important on both levels, namely population and organisation/system.

³ See list of participants at the end of this document.

→ Four key outcomes and common outcome indicators (COIs)

1 Gainful employment		
Key Outcome	Sustained self- or wage employment of the participants of VSD and/or employment promotion programmes above a defined minimum income threshold.	COI
		1a Percentage of participants in employment 1b Percentage of participants earning a net additional cash and/or in-kind income above a predefined and widely accepted national or regional threshold 1c Return on investment
2 Systemic change		
Key Outcome	Contribution of the programme to changes in the TVET and labour market system.	COI
		Assessment of the contribution of the programme to the following areas of intervention (only a selection is shown here!): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal framework • Capacity development of ministries and public administrations • Decentralisation, centralisation and structural reform • Cooperation with the private sector • National qualification framework
3 Relevance of training		
Key Outcome	Extent to which the training has taught the competencies, skills and attitudes which are demanded by the labour market and/or which are needed to continue further (vocational or general) education.	COI
		3a Percentage of students passing exams (skills test pass rate) 3b Percentage of participants who work in a job related to the training 3c Percentage of trainees continuing in any form of organised learning in VSD (formal and non-formal) or in general education 3d Graduates' assessment of the relevance of the acquired competencies, skills and attitudes for the workplace 3e Employers' or customers' (in the case of self-employed graduates) assessment of the relevance of skills, competencies and attitudes of the graduates
4 Outreach		
Key Outcome	→ number of the target group (trainees, trainers, institutions) reached by a project or programme compared to the total target group regionally and nationally (output level) → extent to which replication and scaling-up take place (outcome level).	COI
		4a Percentage of participants reached directly and indirectly compared to the total number of the defined target group at regional <i>and</i> at national level 4b Percentage of trainers and counsellors reached directly and indirectly compared to the total number of the respective staff in all training providers nationwide 4c Percentage of organisations/institutions reached compared to the total number of the respective organisations/institutions nationwide 4d Model replicated by another organisation/institution/actor 4e Model replicated by responsible training authority 4f Public funds for model replication made available

Note: All indicators shall always be monitored in a gender-disaggregated way.

→ General remarks

Alignment and harmonisation

The international commitment on aid effectiveness leads among other things to programme-based approaches and sector-wide approaches. Therefore, a certain standardisation among donors is not only desirable but is a prerequisite for common action. Common outcome indicators should be easily understandable and acceptable for local partners (alignment) and other donors (harmonisation). Since many activities regarding quality assurance and accreditation are currently under way at national level in developing countries, alignment is of great importance for any activity within this field. The chosen indicators meet these criteria.

Status and use of the Working Aid

This working aid provides a guide on how to work with the four key outcomes and the corresponding common outcome indicators for SDC's VSD programmes. It is an easy-to-use support instrument for all phases of the project cycle. It strictly focuses on the outcome level and does not replace or compete with the existing instruments for planning, results measurement and M&E, but aims to complement these and simplify M&E endeavours. SDC as an organisation requests all programmes to report on outcome level in its new reporting formats (annual report, end of phase report). A certain standardisation in reporting will make life easier for programmes and will allow SDC to publicly account for its activities.

Other useful sources

- *How to work with indicators in vocational education and skills development – manual and tables*. SDC 1998, prepared and updated by Gunter Kohlheyer, INBAS, 2013)
- Tracing-related instruments
- SDC planning and reporting documents

All documents available at:

www.sdc-employment-income.ch

The four key outcomes and the COIs have been agreed upon in a participatory process with an e+i working group in the driving seat.

The users of the indicators and this working aid are the SDC cooperation offices, SDC headquarters staff and consultants mandated by SDC. Not all indicators are necessarily relevant to each programme. However, SDC strongly recommends that *all* four key outputs and all corresponding COIs should be taken into consideration while designing and planning a programme, and if certain indicators are not to be included in the measurement system, this should be justified. Furthermore, SDC suggests considering the national quality assurance and accreditation systems of relevance for education providers when designing and planning a new programme. In many cases local partners will be forced to report on these indicators or similar ones in any case. SDC programmes should always make use of such resources and be aligned with given systems. The working aid is not yet an official SDC guideline to be applied by all programmes. However, the four key outcomes and the COIs are being used for SDC's impact assessment.

What the common outcome indicators do not cover

By introducing the common outcome indicators, SDC is highlighting four key outcomes of VSD. Other purposes, such as the social dimensions of VSD programmes, are not covered. The extensive work of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and in particular its Decent Work Agenda, can be a helpful complement to cover these dimensions, if the specific situation of a programme asks for more information about these dimensions. Another aspect that is not covered in the common outcome indicators is value for money since the heterogeneous and highly context-specific programmes of SDC do not allow for comparisons of this kind. If a context asks for such information, the programme staff is invited to address it explicitly in their M&E system.

Excel-based tool for data collection

An Excel-based tool for gathering data regarding the common outcome indicators forms an integral part of this working aid. A sample reporting goes along with this tool.

→ The key outcomes and its COI in detail

The following four chapters cover each of the key outcomes:

- definition of key outcome
- identification of common outcome indicators (COIs)
- hints and tips on monitoring and data collection
- application examples and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools

1. Gainful employment

A. Definition of key outcome

Definition

Gainful employment is defined as the sustained self- or wage employment of the participants of VSD and/or employment promotion programmes above a defined minimum income threshold.

Limitations:

- Gainful employment consists of two major but separate concepts: employment *and* income level (earning). When monitoring outcomes, both of these must be measured, since participants in VSD/employment promotion programmes may be employed but earn less than the national (or any other applicable) minimum wage/salary level.
- The definition of employment considers all types of formal and informal as well as self- and wage employment.
- Incomes may be in cash or in kind. In order to measure the income, the benchmarks must be clearly defined by using existing (government) minimum wages, project-defined thresholds, average occupation-specific earnings or any other widely accepted and applied standard applicable in the context.
- The definition of gainful employment is related to the much more holistic concept of “decent work” developed and mainstreamed by the ILO which states “adequate earnings and productive work” as one of 11 standard indicators for measuring decent work.⁴
- Sustained employment relates to continuous employment for at least *6 months* after termination of the programme.⁵

B. Common outcome indicators

- 1a Percentage of participants in employment (in % of the total number of participants who graduated from the programme)
- 1b Percentage of participants earning a net additional cash and/or in-kind income⁶ above a pre-defined and widely accepted national or regional minimum level/threshold (in % of the total number of participants who graduated from the programme)
- 1c Return on investment: average numbers of months the participants have to be gainfully employed to generate the initial investment by the programme in their empowerment/training.

All indicators should always be monitored in a gender-disaggregated way. Indicators should be further disaggregated if necessary in the given context (e.g. minority issues, geographical criteria, others).

C. Data collection and monitoring

1. *Who should do it?*
 - Self-monitoring by the training provider(s): empowers them to design their own improvements of the training programme.

⁴ Anker et al., 2002. *Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators*. Working Paper No. 2. Policy Integration Department, Statistical Development and Analysis Group, International Labour Office, Geneva.

⁵ There is no clear and straightforward reference regarding the duration of employment that should be called “sustained”. The definitions found are highly context and topic related. However, a 6-month period is found to be used more often in practice than any other, which is why SDC suggests retaining this criterion.

⁶ Income can be measured either as an absolute figure (i.e. income after the training intervention) or as a before/after change (i.e. incremental income). This should be decided based on the project context and objectives.

- Monitoring by programme: it is advisable to organise joint monitoring teams (i.e. programme staff together with training providers' staff).

2. *How should we do it?*

- Outcome monitoring visit, tracer study (use [new SDC instrument guide](#) available on the e+i Shareweb) and/or impact evaluation.
- Main proposed field method: face-to-face interview with the participant in the VSD/employment promotion programme (ideally at his/her workplace) at (a) pre-defined point(s) in time after graduation (see point 3 "When should it be done?").
- Triangulation with employers (or, in case of self-employment, with the cash book of the participant in the VSD/employment promotion programme) as well as neighbours, relatives or friends is advisable.
- If the population is large, apply stratified random sampling.
- Outcome indicator 1c) should be calculated by comparing the average per capita cost (= total programme expenditure divided by the number of participants) with the average monthly income.

3. *When should we do it?*

- Depends on the purpose of the monitoring; i.e. outcome monitoring (at the level of use of output) should ideally be conducted during the first few months after graduation (i.e. up to 6 months). Outcomes (at the level of direct benefit) as well as impact are ideally measured between 6 months and 2 years after graduation.
- In order to develop robust and comparable data it is advisable to measure at least *6 months* after graduation *and after 2 years*.
- Collect baseline data before the training.
- Make a link to SDC's results tools: to determine the dates of the reporting, refer to the (yearly) progress reports by partners, the end of phase reports (programme level) and the annual reports (cooperation strategy).

4. *What are the typical problems we might encounter and how should we cope with them?*

Typical challenges encountered	Useful remedies and workarounds
Participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme not traceable (i.e. migrated within country or abroad)	Early development and continuous updating of a database on all participants of the VSD/employment promotion programme (inc. complete contact details) considerably reduces resources spent on tracing them.
Self-employed participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme not able to state his/her income (due either to lack of records or to ambiguity on how direct/indirect business costs are taken into account when measuring income)	Clear and transparent definitions of what is considered as self- and wage employment (i.e. daily labourer with erratic income) and what is included in the income calculation
Participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme overstate their income (i.e. to impress monitor and/or peers present during the interviews; particularly prevalent if the programme applies an outcome-based financing method which gives the training provider a vested interest in influencing the statement of the participant of the VSD/employment-promotion programme)	Avoid income verification in groups of participants of the VSD/employment promotion programme Train monitoring staff in psycho-social approach (and/or other adequate methods of interviewing primary stakeholders) Validate stated incomes with the living conditions of the participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme
Inclusion of fringe benefits (food, accommodation, etc. provided by employer; goods produced by the trainee during training) or in other words "money saved is money earned"?	Clear and transparent definitions of what is included in the income calculation

Measurement of the individual income of the participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme in case of family enterprise	Clear and transparent definitions of what is included in the income calculation
Measurement of income in multi-task occupations and/or trades with longer return-on-investment periods, such as farming	[To be completed based on feedback on using the instrument]
Valuation of in-kind income	[To be completed based on feedback using the instrument]
Informal employment which makes it difficult to measure the immediate outcome	Validate stated incomes with the living conditions of the participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme
Baseline not developed at the beginning of the intervention	Since income measurement is often based on self-declaration the missing baseline can be reconstructed afterwards by asking the participants about their income before training.

5. What are the major lessons learnt?

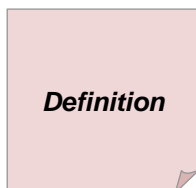
- Measuring employment is not the major challenge, but measuring income can be.
- Measuring only employment (instead of *gainful* employment) provides only half the picture as it still remains unknown whether the situation of the participant in the VSD/employment promotion programme has improved (i.e. most trainees are already in some type of (mostly) informal employment at the time of applying for the training)
- Measuring gainful employment is feasible in most programmes but needs to be planned during the programme conceptualisation stage (i.e. sufficient allocation of resources for baselines, tracer studies, monitoring system and database development, etc.)
- Independent third party monitoring adds credibility to monitoring results with regard to gainful employment.

D. Examples of application and existing tools

- Employment Fund in Nepal: HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is implementing, with the support of SDC, DFID and the World Bank, the Employment Fund in Nepal, which applies an outcome-based payment system based on the concept of gainful employment: www.employmentfund.org.np. The Employment Fund has developed and applied various tools such as comprehensive monitoring guidelines, database system and guidelines, result-based payment system and a code of conduct. Other programmes and donors such as Winrock/USAID and ADB simultaneously developed similar systems. Based on the experiences of the Employment Fund the World Bank and ADB are mainstreaming result-based systems as well as the concept of gainful employment within the Nepalese Ministry of Education.
- HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is implementing, with the support of Liechtensteinischer Entwicklungsdienst, the Tourism Skills Training in Rural Areas (STAR) project in Kyrgyzstan. The concept of gainful employment was used during project review. See: <http://kyrgyzstan.helvetas.org/en/activities/projects/star/>

2. Systemic change

A. Definition of key outcome



Systemic change: contribution of the programme to changes in the TVET and labour market system

Limitations:

- Programmes always have a limited effect on TVET or labour market systems and they are subject to political and contextual developments not under the control of the programme.
- According to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, ownership is central to all activities; this is most important for activities that aim at systemic change. Effects on systemic change can thus only be estimated by actors closely involved in programme activities and policy-making.
- Comparability between programmes will be limited since many different actors collect data and this reduces its reliability. The time and effort needed to standardise this process in order to produce reliable data would be disproportionate and make this instrument too heavy.

B. Common outcome indicators

Assessment of the contribution of the programme to the following areas of intervention:

- 2a Legal framework and policies (e.g. contribution content processes)
- 2b Capacity development of ministries, public administrations (only at national/regional level; not to be considered if the programme works on the level of the training providers)
- 2c Decentralisation, centralisation and structural reform
- 2d Associations, networks
- 2e Cooperation with the private sector
- 2f Financing VET systems
- 2g Employment services, counselling
- 2h TVET and labour market research
- 2i Quality management
- 2j National qualification framework
- 2k Occupational standards, curricula, manuals
- 2l Assessment and certification
- 2m Design and implementation of programmes not funded by SDC (replication)
- 2n *Others, (name your own)*

All indicators are assessed by persons and organisations involved in the programme based on the following scale:

- 5 = contributed to a very significant extent
- 4 = contributed to a significant extent
- 3 = contributed to a moderate extent
- 2 = contributed to a small extent
- 1 = contributed to a very small extent
- 0 = no contribution achieved
- n = no contribution planned

The assessment should be comprehensible and be illustrated by comments and key data on the issue.

C. Data collection and monitoring

1. *Who should do it?*
 - Programme staff: the programme staff should facilitate the assessment.
 - Outcomes should be assessed by actors closely involved in programme activities and policy-making.

2. *How should we do it?*
 - The assessment should not be done by single persons but in a participatory way (e.g. within a project progress review or evaluation workshop) and thus reflect a common understanding of the project contribution.
 - The Swiss Cooperation Offices could make use of the domain specific (VSD) workshops done for annual reporting (results framework reporting).
 - Specific information regarding the target group should be gathered and evaluated for project steering purposes.

3. *When should we do it?*
 - A systemic analysis including a definition of systemic effects to be achieved must be part of the programme planning.
 - Policy and actor-specific monitoring throughout the project duration is needed to make an estimate based on facts.
 - Systemic effects can be estimated or measured at the end of the project duration.
 - Ex-post evaluations should be conducted about two to three years after projects have ended in order to provide evidence on *sustainable* systemic effects.
 - Make a link to SDC's results tools: to determine the dates of the reporting, refer to the (yearly) progress reports by partners, the end of phase reports (programme level) and the annual reports (cooperation strategy).

4. *What are the typical problems we might encounter and how should we cope with them?*

Typical challenges encountered	Useful remedies and workarounds
Attribution	Attribution can only be addressed by plausible estimations of experts and key actors in the field.
Comparability of measurement	A certain standardisation or calibration of the scale used for estimates can only be achieved by giving examples for each of the indicators and by reusing the instrument over time.

5. *What are the major lessons learnt?*
 - Systemic effects can be estimated in a plausible way.
 - Intended systemic effects must be described when identifying and conceptualising the project
 - Continuous policy and actor monitoring is a prerequisite for fact-based and plausible estimations that are consistent with other data available.

D. Examples of application and existing tools

- GIZ Key VET Indicators (not yet publicly available but similar to the instrument presented)

3. Relevance of training

A. Definition of key outcome

Definition

Relevance of training is defined as the extent to which the training has taught the competencies, skills and attitudes which are demanded by the labour market and which are needed to continue further (vocational or general) education.⁷

Limitations:

- Relevance of training is a concept directly linked with the concept of training quality, which can be considered as a multi-dimensional, relative and context-related concept.
- Relevance of training does not give immediate information about employability. This information can only be traced and gathered by asking graduates and employers (→ see also key outcome *gainful employment*)

B. Common outcome indicators

- 3a Percentage of students passing exams (skills test pass rate)
- 3b Percentage of participants who work in a job related to the training
- 3c Percentage of trainees continuing in any form of organised learning in VSD (formal and non-formal) or in general education
- 3d Graduates' assessment of the relevance of the acquired competencies, skills and attitudes for the workplace.
- 3e Employers' or customers' (in the case of self-employed graduates) assessment of the relevance of skills, competencies and attitudes of the graduates.

For 3d and 3e the following scale is applied:

- 5 = contributed to a very significant extent
- 4 = contributed to a significant extent
- 3 = contributed to a moderate extent
- 2 = contributed to a small extent
- 1 = contributed to a very small extent
- 0 = no contribution achieved
- n = no contribution planned

The assessment should be comprehensible and be illustrated by comments and key data on the issue.

All indicators should always be monitored in a gender-disaggregated way. Indicators should be further disaggregated if necessary in the given context (e.g. minority issues, geographical criteria, others).

⁷ Relevance of training is closely linked to *employability*, which is defined as the participant's capability to gain and maintain employment due to his/ her competencies, skills and attitudes gained or strengthened in training.

C. Data collection and monitoring

1. Who should do it?

- Training provider(s): self-monitoring by the training provider(s) empowers them to improve their training projects or programmes.
- Project: in case of monitoring by the project or programme it is advisable to organise joint monitoring teams (i.e. project staff together with training providers' staff)

2. How should we do it?

- Public data for indicator 3a
- Indicators 3d and 3e: define a representative random sample per training course and survey this sample 6 months after the end of training at the latest.
- Outcome monitoring visit, tracer study (use [new SDC instrument guide](#) available on SDC Shareweb) and/or impact evaluation
- Methods depend on the context and can vary from face-to-face interviews to online surveys.
- Triangulation of the data (trainees, employers/customers) can reveal important insights.

3. When should we do it?

- Depends on the purpose of the monitoring; i.e. outcome monitoring (at level of use of output) should ideally be conducted during the first few months after graduation (i.e. up to 6 months). Outcomes (at the level of direct benefit) as well as impact are ideally measured between 6 months and 2 years after graduation.
- Make a link to SDC's results tools: to determine the dates of the reporting, refer to the (yearly) progress reports by partners, the end of phase reports (programme level) and the annual reports (cooperation strategy).

4. What are the typical problems we might encounter and how should we cope with them?

Typical challenges encountered	Useful remedies and workarounds
Participant of the VSD/employment promotion programme not traceable (i.e. migrated within country or abroad) → typical tracing problem	Early development and continuous updating of a database on all participants of the VSD/employment promotion programme (inc. all contact details) considerably reduces resources spent on tracing them.
Participants rank relevance high as training was provided free of charge.	Contract an independent third party for data collection, so as to obtain less biased data
No proper assessment system established; tests are not relevant and accepted	Concentrate on indicators 3b and 3c

5. What are the major lessons learnt?

- Assessment of the participant's competencies, skills and attitudes by employers and customers is the strongest and most direct indicator of relevance and employability.
- Pass rates (sub-indicator 3a) should be interpreted carefully and always be triangulated with data gained under sub-indicators 3b and 3c.
 - Many certificates still have very little value on the labour market, as employers do not trust the skills testing or do not know about the system and certificates. Hence skills test certificates or any other certificates have limited value in measuring the relevance of training and even less in gauging employability.
 - Very often, pass rates are measuring whether the curriculum has been taught properly. Hence they are actually a proxy indicator for the quality of training. But in developing countries curricula are often outdated (or do not exist) and thus have little labour market relevance.

D. Examples of Application and Existing Tools

See references at:

http://www.deza.admin.ch/en/Home/Themes/Learning_and_Networking/Capacity_Development. In particular:

- *Training and beyond: seeking better tools for Capacity development* by Jenny Pearson, LenCD/OECD Development Cooperation, Working Papers, No. 1, April 4, 2011. → Here you can find some tools and frameworks
- *Getting from skills to better performance – what do we know?* by Nils Boesen, 2010.

4. Outreach

A. Definition of key outcome

Definition

Outreach is defined:

i) *on output level* as the number of the target group reached by a project or programme compared to the total target group on regional *and* on national level.

Outreach is therefore always measured in percentages.

Outreach refers to three target groups:

a) *Trainees* benefitting directly (e.g. in pilot classes) or indirectly (e.g. by being trained using new curricula or testing and certification schemes)

b) *Trainers and staff of the training provider or other targeted institutions* (e.g. teaching staff, counsellors, others)

c) *Organisations/institutions which are providing training and/or employment services* (e.g. vocational schools, training providers, testing centres, centres for further education or in-service training, organisations offering vocational guidance, private businesses offering in-service training, unions etc.)

ii) *on outcome level* as the extent to which replication and scaling-up of the model promoted by the programme take place.

Limitations:

- Target groups reached directly (e.g. pilot class participants) and indirectly (e.g. participants benefitting from new curricula on national level) must be differentiated and cannot be compared. Nevertheless, both direct and indirect outreach should be assessed.
- Using references is decisive but not an easy task. The total number of participants, trainers trained or organisations/institutions targeted is well known. However, a reference is needed in order to create percentages: the size of the target group at regional⁸ and national level (e.g. a project targeting young Sinti and Romani women between 15 and 25 years old in a certain region of a country would reference all young Sinti and Romani women between 15 and 25 years old in the region *and* countrywide).
- Comparability among projects and programmes will be possible only to a very limited extent. The time and effort needed by all actors to make these data comparable are disproportionate.
- Each project or programme should be able to report on at least one of the suggested levels (participants, trainers, and organisations/institutions).

B. Common outcome indicators

- 4a Percentage of participants reached directly and indirectly compared to the total number of the defined target group at regional *and* at national level.
- 4b Percentage of trainers and counsellors reached directly and indirectly compared to the total number of the respective staff in all training providers nationwide.
- 4c Percentage of organisations/institutions reached compared to the total number of the respective organisations/institutions nationwide.
- 4d Model replicated by another organisation/institution/actor
- 4e Model replicated by the responsible training authority
- 4f Public funds for model replication made available

Indicators 4a and b should be measured in a gender-disaggregated way. All indicators should be further disaggregated if necessary in the given context (e.g. minority issues, geographical criteria, others).

⁸ "regional" means a political entity below nation state level.

C. Data collection and monitoring

1. *Who should do it?*
 - Primary data need to be collected by the programme staff.
 - Referencing is up to Swiss Cooperation Office staff but should be done in consultation with the programme staff.
 - Data regarding replication and scaling-up is collected by Swiss Cooperation Office staff (policy and thematic monitoring).

2. *How should we do it?*
 - Compare programme data to national system data on an *annual basis* and *cumulatively* regarding programme phase duration and complete programme duration.
 - Referencing is decisive: use the size of the target group on regional *and* national levels (e.g. if the project or programme addresses trainee bricklayers in two schools then compare with all trainee bricklayers in that region *and* nationwide).

3. *When should we do it?*
 - Within the usual reporting rhythm
 - For replication: ex-post evaluations provide important data on longer-term achievements of model projects.
 - Make a link to SDC's results tools: to determine the dates of the reporting, refer to the (yearly) progress reports by partners, the end of phase reports (programme level) and the annual reports (cooperation strategy).

4. *What are the typical problems we might encounter and how should we cope with them?*

Typical challenges encountered	Useful remedies and workarounds
Missing references at national level when targeting special needs groups or specially designated target groups	Conduct expert interviews and make plausible estimates in case of lacking data
Scaling-up does not take place within the project duration or we do not know whether it took place elsewhere	Broach the issue of scaling-up at donor coordination meetings and at meetings held with competent public agencies.

5. *What are the major lessons learnt?*
 - Referencing data is feasible and provides important information for estimating programme outcomes regarding the other common outcome indicators as well as further project-specific indicators.
 - 4a: Be aware of the fact that for many projects the percentages will be extremely small if compared to the defined target group.

D. Examples of application and existing tools

- We are happy to find out about good examples! Please contact Simon Junker of SDC's Focal Point e+I, simon.junker@eda.admin.ch

SDC wants to thank the people contributing to this endeavour!

SDC Working Group on Common VSD Indicators

Tanya Abdallah (SDC Gaza and West Bank)
Ismaïla Alhassane Maiga (SDC Mali)
Rudolf Batliner (Centre for Development and Cooperation, NADEL)
Bilguun Ganbat (SDC Mongolia)
Dominique Hempel-Rodas (SDC Knowledge and Learning Processes Division)
Simon Junker (SDC Employment and Income Focal Point)
Franz Kehl (KEK-CDC Consultants)
Arjeta Lleshi (SDC Kosovo)
Valérie Liechti (SDC Education Focal Point)
Adrian Maitre (SDC Quality Assurance)
Siroco Messerli (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation / SDC Bangladesh (since 2013))
Silvana Mjeda (SDC Albania)
Ralph Rothe (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation)
Sibylle Schmutz (Swisscontact)
Katharina Walker (KEK-CDC Consultants)