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POSITION
PAPER

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

Skills Development in Economic Development Cooperation



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What do we mean by *skills development*?

Skills are acquired throughout life. People learn, adapt, and form their skills through a multitude of interactions and mechanisms within the household and neighborhood, during the formative years of schooling, at work, and in training.

In international terminology, professional skills are acquired through vocational education and training (VET) and life-long learning. The European Training Foundation defines VET as processes which qualify people for work and life, and as systems, which organize such processes. The systems perspective focuses on the VET systems, which organize initial vocational education and training (I-VET) and continuing vocational education and training (C-VET).

In its terminology and according to its mandate, SECO refers to *skills* – technical and professional ones. Technical and professional skills encompass highly specific ones, related to the graduate's field, to more general, transferable ones. SECO focuses its activities on C-VET and higher education (post-secondary/tertiary level) based on the private sector's needs in order to reduce the skills gap and create jobs.

This position paper explains SECO's approach to skills development within its economic development cooperation and is addressed to a broader public and partners in Switzerland and abroad.

Jobs at the heart of economic development policy

According to the ILO over 1 billion people of the working age population are unemployed or earn so little that they live below the poverty line. Some 200 million people are unemployed today. Over 600 million young people are neither working nor studying and hundreds of millions of additional jobs will have to be created worldwide by 2020 due to demographic trends. Besides missing jobs, people need to become employable – in particular young people, but also other groups – taking into account the private sector’s skills requirement. Moreover, people already part of the workforce do lack the necessary skills to support a dynamic economy, which is able to grow sustainably and is integrated in the global trade system. This is due to missing quality basic education, availability of relevant quality vocational skills development and training offers. This is often referred to as the so called skills gap or skills mismatch.

Skill-biased technical change

In addition, the technological revolution implies a *skill-biased technical change*: work environments will become more technology-rich demanding highly qualified people. Jobs requiring people with few or no formal qualifications are expected to decline. The biggest losers will thus be workers with less-specialized skills¹ but also lack of transversal competences such as relevant attitudes. Companies and producers worldwide need to ensure a conducive environment that facilitates continuous skills upgrade and provides a decent working environment.

Why skills development?

One major constraint for small and medium enterprises (SMEs; in particular export-oriented ones) and producers is to find people with the right skills – cognitive, socio-emotional and job-relevant skills; a constraint even more important than labour regulations. Why is the private sector then not able to fully address its training/skills needs? Firms underinvest because they cannot fully appropriate the return to investment in training, since employees can be poached by other firms; employees underinvest because they would not receive fair remuneration for their higher productivity or because of a lack of information about degrees and related job perspectives. Also, at the outset skills development and VET is expected to only lead to “blue collar jobs” and lacks social recognition. Market failures include imperfections in labor and capital markets, coordination failures, as well as decision making problems². This justifies donor support and public intervention³.

In addition, recent impact evaluations from Asia and Africa have shown that various forms of skill-building benefit firm productivity and youth employability. Different skills development interventions are associated with an increase in productivity, wage and return on investment at firm level up to 25 % (through improved work safety, increased employee satisfaction and motivation, lower attrition rates, and lower operational risks) and can enhance the company’s reputation.

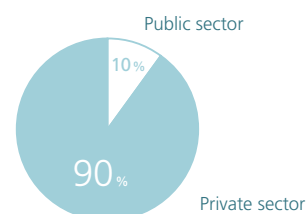
The Role of SECO

SECO is the Swiss Confederation’s centre of expertise for economic affairs. The overarching objective of SECO’s economic development cooperation is sustainable inclusive growth to reduce poverty and global risks. Accordingly, SECO’s official development assistance (ODA) through economic and trade policy measures strive to integrate its partner countries into the global economy and foster economic growth that is both inclusive and resource-efficient.

More and better jobs

The goal of *more and better jobs* is an important part of SECO’s work and explicitly mentioned in the parliamentary dispatch 2017–2020. In poor countries getting a job is one of the main reasons why people are able to rise out of poverty. To meet this goal, SECO promotes the development of skills that improve labour productivity and competitiveness in the specific sectors targeted by SECO. It also contributes to facilitate the dialogue in selected partner countries for developing more conducive working conditions and match the supply and demand for relevant technical skills in selected sectors. By doing so, it can build upon its expertise in economic, trade, and labour market policy within SECO.

Skills gap or skills mismatch – skills that companies require are not being imparted to the workforce.



90 % of jobs are created by the private sector.



’ The Arab World has 25 % youth unemployment, the highest in the world. The Arab World is overwhelmingly young, 1/3 are below age 15 and 1/3 are ages 15 to 29. Youth unemployment costs the Arab World \$ 40 – 50 billion per year.

E4E Initiative for Arab Youth aims to provide youth with skills that are relevant to the market place through linking employer skills requirements with educational and training provision, so that Arab youth earn a better future.

Strategic framework and approach

SECO's activities to support skills development directly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals number 4 (quality education) and number 8 (decent work and economic growth), and ultimately also to goal number 1 (no poverty). Under SECO's parliamentary dispatch 2017–2020 a strategic goal has been formulated for achieving *more and better jobs*, under which a substantial part of the activities contributing to skills development is to be found. This is particularly the case for the business line *dynamic entrepreneurship, strengthened skills and flexible labour market*. However, also activities under the remaining strategic goals and notably the ones for *enhanced trade and competitiveness* do feature a skills development component for specific sector/value-chain interventions.

The goal of SECO's interventions on skills development is:

- To support skills up-grading, facilitating the adoption of new technical and/or organizational adaptations within a specific sector (along the value-chains supported by SECO, e.g. textiles, tourism, agriculture-processing and sectors such as construction or banking).
- To promote multi-skilling and skills diversification that enhances employability and/or career advance.
- To facilitate continuous, advanced and specialized training that improves quality and/or promotes higher productivity and competitiveness in a particular sector.



Balance labour supply and demand

SECO's interventions attempt to support sustainable, inclusive growth, ultimately enabling more and better jobs. Good framework conditions for the labour market can be selectively supported to ensure a balance between labour supply and demand. This requires the social partners working together on solutions of mutual benefit to workers, employers, governments and society at large. Some SECO interventions aim thus to create mechanisms to better align labour supply and demand with regard to (specialized) skills which will benefit workers and employers alike. SECO can thereby build on existing activities, including good corporate governance, consultancy services, improvements to social and environmental standards, the ability to secure market access (including through Free Trade Agreements), and the creation of better working conditions.

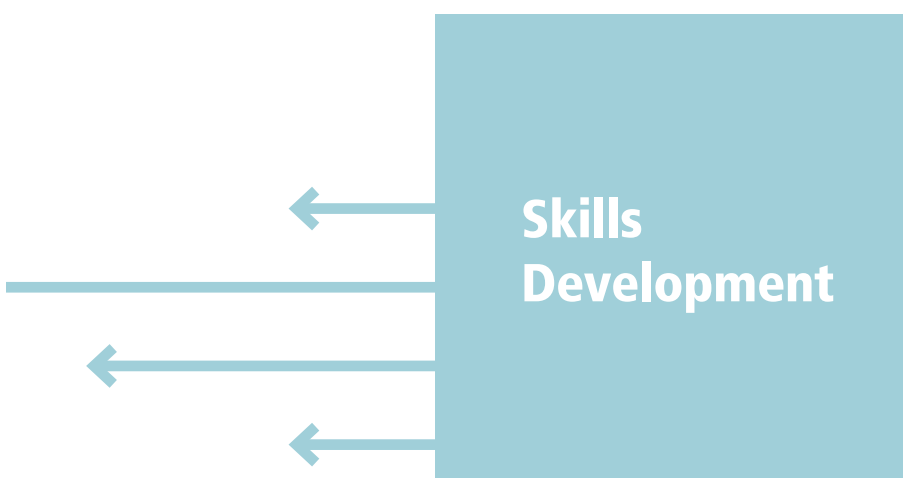
Economic inclusion

Economic inclusion is directly addressed in skills development activities through different means. In some cases projects in cooperation with the private sector (SMEs and/or producers) promoting skills development facilitate inclusion by working in sectors directly relevant for the poor (e.g. textiles or construction) or in regions with high poverty incidence (e.g. activities in the cocoa value chain). Also large national or multinational companies can make a positive contribution to inclusiveness by investing into firm-specific solutions to overcome the skills gap.

Gender considerations

Also gender considerations need to be adequately factored and mainstreamed in skills development activities, to ensure that women have the same opportunity to participate in skills projects/ programs at all levels. As the impact study of the SECO financed Better Work program has proved, empowering women through skills development such as supervisory skills training has a direct positive impact on productivity and ultimately on the sustainability of global supply chains.⁴

A substantial part of the skills development activities contribute to the target outcome more and better jobs. However there are also activities under the other strategic goals, notably the one for enhanced trade and competitiveness.



Areas of intervention

SECO's interventions to support skills development aim at achieving macroeconomic (for the whole economy) and microeconomic (at the individual level) outcomes through increased productivity and competitiveness with a sectoral/niche approach. *The focus is on post-secondary and tertiary level and on advanced/specialized, work based training aimed at those who are already in the labor force.* Activities thereby build on existing elements of the national education systems. A particular interest shall be given to pilot approaches with strong potential for scalability. Geographically, SECO targets generally its middle-income priority countries.⁵ Engagement in other selected Swiss ODA countries may be considered following SECO's engagement principles, in close coordination and complementarity with SDC as well as other federal agencies.

SECO intervenes in three areas:

- a labour market framework conditions at the macro level;
- b national training systems at post-secondary and tertiary system at the meso level; and
- c advanced work based training at a company/sector level.

The interventions at the meso and company/sector levels build on broad skills development activities in specific sectors (e.g. textiles, tourism, agricultural processing, banking, construction) in which SECO has been active for a long time, underpinning SECO's approach to knowledge transfer leading to skills development. They include numerous bilateral or multi-bilateral value chain development projects, governance, social and environment-related training programs with IFIs and through Switzerland's Development Finance Institution SIFEM. The chart below mentions examples of ongoing activities in the trade promotion and private sector development area⁶ at the three levels.

Macro level	Meso level	Company/Sector level
Labour Market Framework Conditions	National Training Systems (Post-Secondary and Tertiary)	Advanced work based training
Labour Market Inventory II, ASEAN with focus on Indonesia and Vietnam (ILO in partnership with OECD/ ADB)	E4E-Education for Employment for Arab Youth (IFC)	Better Work (ILO/IFC) SCORE-Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (ILO)
	APII-Establishment of the Association of Advanced Polytechnics Indonesia (SITECO)	Training components within specific value chain interventions in export sectors

Labour market framework conditions

Cooperation at this macro level is sought mainly with multilateral institutions on diagnostics or comprehensive labor market analysis. Sector wide skills development interventions need to be well coordinated with the policy level and be underpinned by policies that facilitate scaling up training provided by firms (such as training funds, tax incentives, grants, technical assistance, payback clauses). In selected cases (e.g. Vietnam) the work on labour market framework conditions is part of a more comprehensive dialogue on labour and employment issues carried out by SECO's Directorate of Labour seeks to support better alignment of national regulations with international labour standards and complements SECO's activities in the area of skills at the meso and company level.

The aim of SECO's interventions in this area is to create a conducive policy environment that provides the relevant skills needed by the private sector and promotes decent work and sustainable trade.



Example

SITECO Indonesia:

One of SECO's intervention is the setup of a platform for Indonesian polytechnics and industrial companies (APII). APII implements skills development concepts on professional tertiary level with similarities to the dual VET systems in Switzerland and other European countries, to promote skills development within specific sectors such as maintenance engineering, and with a focus on achieving an industry required qualification level. Through the platform, the polytechnics are taking care of the theoretical and basic skills training and the companies hiring apprentices are providing for the advanced practical training. The government of Indonesia as the third partner holds in particular regulatory functions (see annex 2).

National Training Systems⁷ **potentially with a sector or institutional approach**

Develop and implement short and medium term up-grading training, typically for employed people in specific, selected professions, in close cooperation with the private sector and training/educational institutions/actors.

Training/educational institutions: Train the trainers approach; competency based job profile and curriculum development; apprenticeship and dual like training forms with intensive business involvement, examination and certification systems. Introduce quality and sector specific standards in VET. Support development of national and local-level sector skills councils and associations to help organize and control the definition and/or assessment of skills at post-secondary and tertiary level.

The goal is to achieve improved quality and productivity at sector level. Create strong links and feedback loops between labour market policies, national training systems and the private sector, thus taking into account the needs of the companies. Where appropriate, enable partners in training skills to access new technology.

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Advanced work based training

SECO's interventions at the company/sector level cover in-house, firm-based, or work based training, as part of a conducive working environment. They may also cover public utility companies. SECO's interventions shall attempt to:

Create the evidence that training pays off for the private sector (firm influenced training is consistently found to go hand in hand with productivity increases)⁸.

Support sector-specific SME development (e.g., in tourism/hospitality, construction or agribusiness) along the value chain to improve product quality, productivity and work safety.

Support management skills that are positively correlated with innovation and productivity which is key with regard to transnational/global competition.

Promote technical skills upgrade, retraining and diversification.

Facilitate advanced and specialization training.

Support decent (good working conditions) and sustainable (e.g. poverty-reducing, resource-efficient) work.



Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE):

The SCORE program was set up to strengthen SMEs' competitiveness through responsible practices at the workplace that adhere to labour and environmental standards and improve quality management along the entire production cycle. It supports the training of local instructors who assist companies in improving their practices with a modular work schedule. This program is implemented by the ILO and has received SECO support in nine countries since 2009. Between 2009 and 2012, some 250 improvements were made using the SCORE method, mainly in China, Colombia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Vietnam and South Africa, for specific sectors like textile/apparel or tourism.

These efforts are now beginning to bear fruit, with improved social dialogue in the companies concerned and fewer workplace accidents and absences. In addition, over 50% of the companies have lowered their production costs, and 80% report that they have reduced their reject rate. Over half of the companies managed to improve their energy efficiency. Such encouraging results lay the ground for a continued SECO engagement in this program.

The goal is to improve productivity and competitiveness within a specific sector or economic area, thus strengthening market players within national and global value chains.

Principles of cooperation

When designing specific skill development interventions or skill development components within wider projects, SECO shall consider the following principles:

Engage with a long-term focus to increase the sustainability of impact.

Focus on specific **sectors** and economic areas taking into account the following aspects (not necessarily cumulative): 1) lack of skills needed by the private sector, 2) willingness of the private sector to be an active and integrated part of a skills development program or activity, to achieve a better skills match and reduce training costs, 3) potential of the sector/economic area, 4) potential for labour absorption, 5) potential for scale.

Private sector orientation and involvement (through functioning and committed local industry associations) to achieve a better skills match and reduce training costs. This may include **Swiss companies** and experts but is not compulsory.

Consider synergies and complementarities with other ongoing Swiss projects and/or donors.

Address **gender equality and inclusion** through skills-building.

Facilitate a public-private dialogue including social partners to clarify roles and responsibilities in the definition, provision and financing of vocational training/continuous education in order to ensure relevance and sustainability of interventions.

Make information on the quality and performance of training providers publicly available and increase transparency on results achieved.

Outsource implementation of training programs to public and private companies to **stimulate competition** and quality.

Besides long known training vouchers, social bonds or other **innovative finance mechanisms** might be used to finance investments and/or service delivery.

Monitoring and evaluation

SECO is committed to strengthen results monitoring as part of its accountability commitment towards the Swiss Parliament and the public in general, but also to learn from the experience and improve the impact and sustainability of its interventions. Towards this end SECO has agreed on the following standard indicators to aggregate results across various projects:

Number of jobs created and retained.

Number of persons/entities undergoing training or continuing education (entrepreneurs, producers, staff).

Measures for improving capacity development.

Measures for improving working conditions.

These indicators are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, evaluations of projects are also regularly conducted to measure if real impact has been reached.

Complementarities with other actors in Switzerland

Switzerland is known for its quality education system and successful dual vocational education and training and a comparatively low youth unemployment rate. Although the interrelation between these elements is complex and depending on several additional factors, the interest of the international community for the “Swiss model” as an effective and efficient education system close to the needs of the labour-market has increased. Therefore, different actors of the federal administration, involved in international cooperation in VET, developed a *Joint Strategic Framework Paper on Swiss International Cooperation in VET*⁹.

SECO, the SERI (State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation), the SDC and the Directorate of Political Affairs and the Directorate of European Affairs of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the SEM (State Secretariat for Migration) are committed to an interdepartmental coordination of their activities in VET. The strategic framework paper emphasizes the three strategic objectives of Switzerland for VET activities, namely:

- a Strengthening of the Swiss VET System in the international context,
- b Promotion of the economic and social development in partner countries through VET, and
- c Promotion of Switzerland as relevant international player in VET.

In the area of ODA, SECO coordinates its activities mainly with SDC, the organization with most VET-related projects and activities in ODA, and other offices of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as with the SERI as the competent national authority for VET-policy. Given SERI's focus and expertise at the meso level, coordination is particularly close in countries of common focus. Besides state actors, Switzerland has many private sector actors (foundations, consultants, educational institutions etc.), with whom a cooperation is ongoing.

Focus on vulnerable groups

SDC's mainly focuses on I-VET and on vocational skills development. Their programs promote individual, social and economic outcomes in rural and increasingly in urban areas. Depending on the context a focus is put on women's economic empowerment, youth employability or specific vulnerable groups. SDC further works with a systemic approach, focusing on the enhancement of vocational skills development systems and the interlinkages between basic education and vocational skills development, which includes teaching of soft and life skills as an integral part of its activities. The focus is generally on lower and higher secondary education as well as lifelong learning and vocational skills development. SDC is supporting the formal and non-formal offer of relevant vocational skills development and also works on recognition of prior learning. Depending on context, SDC's interventions address the needs of formal or informal economy.

Switzerland is recognised as an international partner with specialised expertise

SERI focuses on the objective of strengthening the Swiss VET system in the international context. In order to achieve this overarching objective, SERI implements various measures to improve the international recognition of Swiss VET and Professional Education qualifications, to establish Switzerland as an international partner recognised as possessing specialised expertise, to promote the international competences and mobility of the Swiss stakeholders and to assure the quality of Swiss VET on an international level.

SERI's cooperation activities are carried out in multilateral as well as in bilateral settings. In the latter, SERI prioritizes cooperation with European countries and countries with which Switzerland entertains strong ties in an economic and educational policy perspective. In the few cases where country priorities overlap with SDC's and SECO's strategic priorities, SERI either closely coordinates its activities with the other agencies or takes a subsidiary and supporting role.

SDC is supporting the formal and non-formal offer of relevant vocational skills development and also works on recognition of prior learning.

Conclusion

Going forward, SECO is expanding upon existing activities and building up a skills development project pipeline according to the features outlined in this position paper. It is also mainstreaming skills development into country portfolios.

It contributes thereby to Switzerland's strategy in the area of international cooperation in VET and to political coherence.

When addressing the needs for skills development in its projects SECO takes into account potential synergies with other actors within the Swiss administration, notably within SECO, with SERI and SDC, to ensure the optimal mobilization of Swiss expertise and know-how.

¹ UNDP: Human Development Report 2015.

² Skills and Jobs, lessons learned and options for collaboration, May 2015, WBG.

³ According to the economist Gary Becker the private provision of skills will tend to be below the social optimum.

⁴ <http://betterwork.org/dev/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Tufts-University-Final-IA.pdf>

⁵ The scope of this paper covers only ODA activities and does not include the Swiss Contribution to EU enlargement. In a first step SECO will focus on its priority countries in the South.

⁶ The Private Sector Development and Trade Promotion sections at SECO are substantially involved in activities contribution to skills development.

⁷ SERI has expertise and experience at the meso level, therefore close coordination with its activities shall be ensured.

⁸ Apprenticeship training in Spain – a cost-effective model for firms? A cost-benefit simulation study commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Fundación Bertelsmann, Prof. Dr. Stefan C. Wolter and Prof. Dr. Samuel Mühlemann, 2015.

⁹ <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/topics/international-cooperation-in-education/strengthening-the-position-of-swiss-vpet-in-an-international-con.html>

Annex 1

Selected links and publications

The Donor Committee for dual Vocational Education and Training

<http://www.dcdualvet.com/homepage-en/>

FOBBIZ

<http://www.fobbiz.ch/de/home/>

International Labour Organization (ILO)

<http://www.ilo.org/skills/lang--en/index.htm>

NORRAG

<http://www.norrag.org/en/themes/tvettvsd.html>

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

<http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/>

SDC

https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/grund-und-berufsbildung/Factsheet-Voc-Training_EN.pdf

SERI

<https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/topics/international-cooperation-in-education/strengthening-the-position-of-swiss-vpet-in-an-international-con.html>

SIFEM

<http://www.sifem.ch/>

World Bank Group (WBG)

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialprotectionlabor/brief/skills-for-jobs>

<http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/step/about>

Annex 2: Association for Swiss International Technical Connection (SITECO) – APII-Project

Linking Training and Industries in Indonesia

Companies and Indonesian Polytechnics working together for demand-oriented training

SECO, together with the Association for Swiss International Technical Connection (SITECO), launched in 2015 the setup of a platform of Indonesian Polytechnics and industrial companies (APII). APII implements skills development concepts with similarities to the dual Vocational Education and Training (dVET) systems in Switzerland and other European countries, with the objective to promote skills development within specific sectors such as mechanical engineering, and with a focus on achieving an industry required qualification level. Through the platform, the Polytechnics are taking care of the theoretical skills training and the companies hiring apprentices are providing for the advanced practical training. The government of Indonesia as the third partner holds in particular regulatory functions. Such “tripartite” skills development systems are successful models in countries practicing dual training, notably Switzerland and Germany as two of the leading countries with a well-developed and very successful dVET system. The system effectively counters 1) skills shortages, as well as 2) youth unemployment. Thus, this is a powerful instrument of a sustainable economic development.

Indonesia’s challenge

The Indonesian economy has gone through significant development steps during the last three decades which resulted in particular during the last decade in a very dynamic economic growth. The extractive industry has developed significantly through local and international investment and with a considerable input of international know-how transfer. The productive industry has developed from a typical least developed country’s production in sectors depending on low wages, like for example the garment industry, into producing in sectors with significantly more value added, such as automotive, food and beverage, machine construction and maintenance. On the one hand, the strong economic growth resulted in a significantly higher number of jobs offered, better wages and an improved quality of life. On the other hand, the strong economic growth also led to a severe shortage of skilled labour because the skills development system could not keep pace with the growth rate of the economy and the faster technical progress. This second effect should not be underestimated: More than two third of the labour being trained on tertiary level is attending universities and is entering the labour market without any practical experience and with only limited employable skills.

The government of Indonesia is aware that this lack of skilled workers is an important obstacle to a smooth continuation of a solid and sustainable economic growth in the country. As a consequence the government is standing behind innovative solutions, helping to bring the Indonesian educational system to a level where it can provide the skilled workers the economy needs – in qualitative and quantitative terms.

Target group

Indonesian Polytechnics and industry members, working together in order to enhance the skills development to a level, required by the Indonesian economy.

Budget

Budget as of today:
Total: CHF 510 000,
whereof SECO
contributes
CHF 250 000.

Duration

2015–2020

Regions

Indonesia, primarily Jawa, where more than 50 % of the population live, plus on other islands.

Partners

SECO, Sika,
SR Technics, EROWA,
local industries.

Implementing organization

SITECO

The APII-Project and the private sector

in order to face the above mentioned challenges, selected Indonesian Polytechnics, together with relevant representative industry members, decided in 2015 to build up a dVET platform. Through that platform, the Polytechnics and the industry jointly define and design the educational services the industry urgently needs and successfully contribute towards reducing the lack of skilled workers. The project has a long term perspective. During its implementation, the project aims to grow by integrating more Polytechnics and companies, offering further educational services and even expand the platform to other sectors like tourism, administration or construction. SITECO expects to have 15 Polytechnics, 32 companies and 2 industries/professions to be a part of the platform by the end of project. The number of skills development programs shall increase from 5 at the beginning to about 16 programs. Internship as well as apprenticeship programs shall be developed in the period of 2019 and 2020. The platform shall become self-supporting and be ready to invest and further expand its activities beyond 2020. Thanks to its bottom-up approach, the project shall attract the attention of other interested entities– educational centres and companies – and, in doing so, to be copied by other institutions, thus triggering a multiplication effect over the time.



Annex 3

Lessons learned

Following are some selected lessons learned from SDC's activities* and SECO's projects that are pertinent going forward:

VET is a contribution to economic but also individual and social change.

Need to boost image of VET in partner countries.

No "export" of Swiss VET system 1 to 1 but certain aspects of it. Adapt to the context.

National anchorage: engage the government in skills development interventions to ensure anchorage within national systems and replication by national entities.

Project design, implementation and evaluation processes need to be more streamlined.

Inception phase: Take into consideration the political-administrative structures and existing-training/education cultures in the partner countries. Fundamental basic understanding can differ widely from one country to another. Thus, it is important to assess on time the key stakeholder's motivation to engage in fundamental changes of skills development systems.

Sustainability / exit strategy: exit strategies have to be developed at early stage (level of credit proposal) to ensure sustainability. The infrastructures and networks for a smooth functioning VET system in the long run have to be put in place and need to be financed.

Scaling: Take into consideration support activities in areas with high potential for scale. Learn from SDC' approach on how to scale up projects through development banks with bilateralization of technical assistance (i.e. by the Asian Development Bank in Bangladesh).

Access of women to skills development systems needs to be ensured.

Combine technical training with soft skills and work based training as this leads to better results than classroom training alone.

Need for rigorous impact evaluations of VET/skills projects/programs.

Initiatives related to skills and education are tackling issues involving a number of stakeholders (different ministries, public and private training providers, the private sector, students, etc.) and the overall set up of the education system. This implies that the intervention should be conceived with a longer timeframe in order to be able to see results. This longer timeframe has to be balanced with the need for short term quick wins to improve the situation rapidly and showcase early results.

A sectoral approach with the involvement of the private sector allows to focus interventions without having to address the overall education system and can serve as a pilot for other sectors.

Generally, a reform in professional training is complex as there are multiple stakeholders involved with different interests and capabilities. Therefore, 1) close involvement and strong demand of the private sector and 2) strong political commitment from the top of the government with a clearly designated lead/convening entity are necessary but not sufficient conditions for success.

It is often perceived that a description of skills/ national qualification frameworks are an easier model and faster implemented than e.g. dual vocational training reforms. This is not necessarily true. Furthermore, there is a risk of producing a lot of descriptions on qualifications and skills needed for workers in a specific sector, without real implementation/ improvement of skills. In order to convene the critical mass of firms and coordinate within a sector, such a reform is easier being piloted in concentrated sectors (small numbers of larger firms with strong capacities).

* Main source: https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/grund-und-berufsbildung/202341-sdc-vocational-skills_EN.pdf



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