

The SDC remains committed to education that...

...is accessible, of good quality, and gives children and young people the tools they need to develop their potential and gain control of their lives.

Access to basic education and vocational skills development gives children and young people brighter prospects, resulting in a youth population that is eager to contribute to their country's social, political and economic future.

...fosters peace, social cohesion, sustainable and economic development in its partner countries

A society that invests in basic education and vocational skills development improves its chances of generating social cohesion, political participation and economic development. People who have had the time to learn and reflect on the world around them will be more likely to foster a culture of peace, constructive conflict resolution and enlightened citizenship.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**  
Freiburgstrasse 130, 3003 Berne  
www.sdc.admin.ch

West Africa Division – Focal Point Basic Education  
Email: deza-dao@eda.admin.ch  
Tel. +41 (58) 462 34 65

Latin America and Caribbean Division – Focal Point Employment and Income / Vocational Skills Development  
Email: sekretariat.abteilung.lateinamerika@eda.admin.ch  
Tel. +41 (58) 462 34 75

2017

Education: a priority for the SDC

**A good education lays the foundation for further development – not only of the individual but of society as a whole.** Education helps to reduce poverty and social disparities and, in doing so, stimulates economic growth. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education with lifelong learning opportunities for all is the fourth **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4)** of the 2030 Agenda. Education also benefits society in other ways, for example by promoting better hygiene practices, advocating responsible agricultural production, building knowledge on the prevention of climate change and natural disasters, or changing attitudes towards gender equality and a culture of peace. In short, education in any society is fundamental to achieving **sustainable development underpinned by peace and social cohesion**. Realising this key role, developing countries are now also devoting more attention and resources to education.

**The SDC engages with partner countries in contributing to improve their education systems and to address the huge challenges they face.** The figures for 2017 indicate that some 263 million children and young people worldwide are out of school. Many children do not complete primary school, or the **quality of teaching is so poor** that they learn very little. Almost 800 million people around the world cannot read or write. Apart from poverty, other disruptive events can bring an end to a child's education, such as war, natural disasters or forced displacements. Another shocking figure is that **71 million young people of working age are unemployed**. More than twice this number are living in poverty, often because they lack the right education and training for the local job market.

Clearly, there is a strong need to improve the education system in many developing and transition countries. It is equally important to ensure access to education in **fragile contexts**, where social disparities tend to worsen. Moreover, better educational and socio-economic prospects help to reduce the risk of violence.

What exactly does this mean?

The SDC focuses on **basic education** and **vocational skills development**. It sees these as interconnected and complementary – not only as a sequential learning path but also because, taken together, they offer young people the best opportunity to acquire the fundamental skills needed for the labour market.

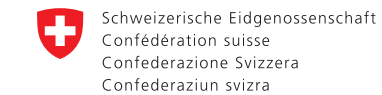
#### Basic Education

The SDC regards basic education as the cornerstone of personal and societal development. It is the gateway to equal opportunities for social, economic and political participation. Basic education aims to teach the fundamental skills that all children, young people and adults need to know – reading, writing and numeracy – as well as a general understanding of the world around them, how to live within society, environmental matters and the values inherent to human rights and democratic principles. What we learn at school shapes the people we become. **Quality basic education** is a prerequisite for future educational and professional success. The SDC is therefore committed to ensuring **basic education for all, whether as part of a compulsory school curriculum, alternative forms of education or lifelong learning**. Particular attention is given to marginalised and vulnerable groups and the quality of learning. The SDC supports its partner countries' **education systems**. It facilitates bridging classes, teaching adapted to local realities, mother tongue schooling, and

education that promotes sustainable development and peace, like the Swiss education system. It advocates integrating the basic education modules into vocational training programmes (e.g. literacy skills) or education as part of other sectors (e.g. health, water, agriculture, climate change, protection, governance).

#### Vocational Skills Development

The SDC campaigns for vocational skills development that will give everyone an opportunity to **find and keep a job**, with fair and decent working conditions. Qualified professionals can then contribute to the formal or informal economy as salaried or self-employed workers. The SDC wants to ensure that young apprentices, once trained, can go on to find employment and contribute to productivity growth. This is why it aims to include not only the public authorities but also the **private sector** in the design and implementation of new training programmes. Whether as part of formal or informal learning, such programmes are particularly beneficial when they comprise an element of both theory and practice, like Switzerland's own dual vocational education. Adapting training programmes to other activities in **private sector development and job creation** is of paramount importance, given the role of vocational skills development as a bridge between basic education and the workplace.



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

## Education

The SDC's commitment to basic education and vocational skills development





# The six strategic orientations of the SDC's engagement

The SDC has several priorities in education, such as **giving children and young people a central role**, integrating disadvantaged and marginalised groups, supporting the performance of quality education systems, contributing to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and facilitating economic growth and employment. It works to improve the education offering in different contexts of development, transition and crisis. To this end, it has defined **six main strategic orientations** in its 'Education Strategy' adopted in 2017.

The SDC is firmly committed to its dialogue with the government ministries concerned, various multilateral organisations and all other private sector and civil society stakeholders. It strengthens education systems and develops education offers adapted to specific local needs.

## 1. Global and regional agenda

At the international level, the SDC actively contributes to defining frameworks for action to support national education systems, such as mobilising resources and allowing access to relevant education in times of humanitarian crisis.

## 2. Education system governance

In many partner countries, the SDC supports efforts by the education authorities to apply the principles of good governance in basic education and/or vocational skills development. This calls for a decentralised approach, policy dialogue, the involvement of different stakeholder groups such as civil society and the private sector, and institutional capacity building.

## 3. Quality and relevance

The SDC works to improve the quality of education in its partner countries. There is little point in sending children to school if they are not receiving a quality learning experience. The same applies for young people in vocational skills development if these programmes are not relevant to the labour market.

## 4. Inclusion and equity

In the contexts in which the SDC operates, certain sectors of the population (e.g. girls, refugees, the poor, cultural minorities) are denied access to education. To prevent such discrimination, these groups need educational opportunities adapted to their needs, options such as bridging classes and training to facilitate their insertion into the labour market.

## 5. Sustainability, social cohesion, migration and resilience

Sustainable and peaceful development is possible only when a society realises the importance of education in influencing values and attitudes and as a key element in transforming social practices. The SDC encourages education that teaches people about peace, citizenship, human rights and resilience to diseases and natural disasters.

## 6. Transition to work

The SDC seeks to train young people in skills that will help them find work once they have finished. This means matching training programmes to market needs, ensuring a balance between job supply and demand, and aligning programmes with job creation initiatives. Career guidance and counselling also help young people to make the right choices in due course.

# Examples of projects

**INTERNATIONAL AGENDA**

**A global partnership**

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the SDC's main multilateral partner for education aid. The SDC earmarks CHF 10 million a year for the GPE and has significant strategic influence on its priorities. The GPE acts as a funding platform for bringing together in dialogue representatives of donors, partner countries, the private sector and civil society. It contributes to funding the education systems of some 60 countries.



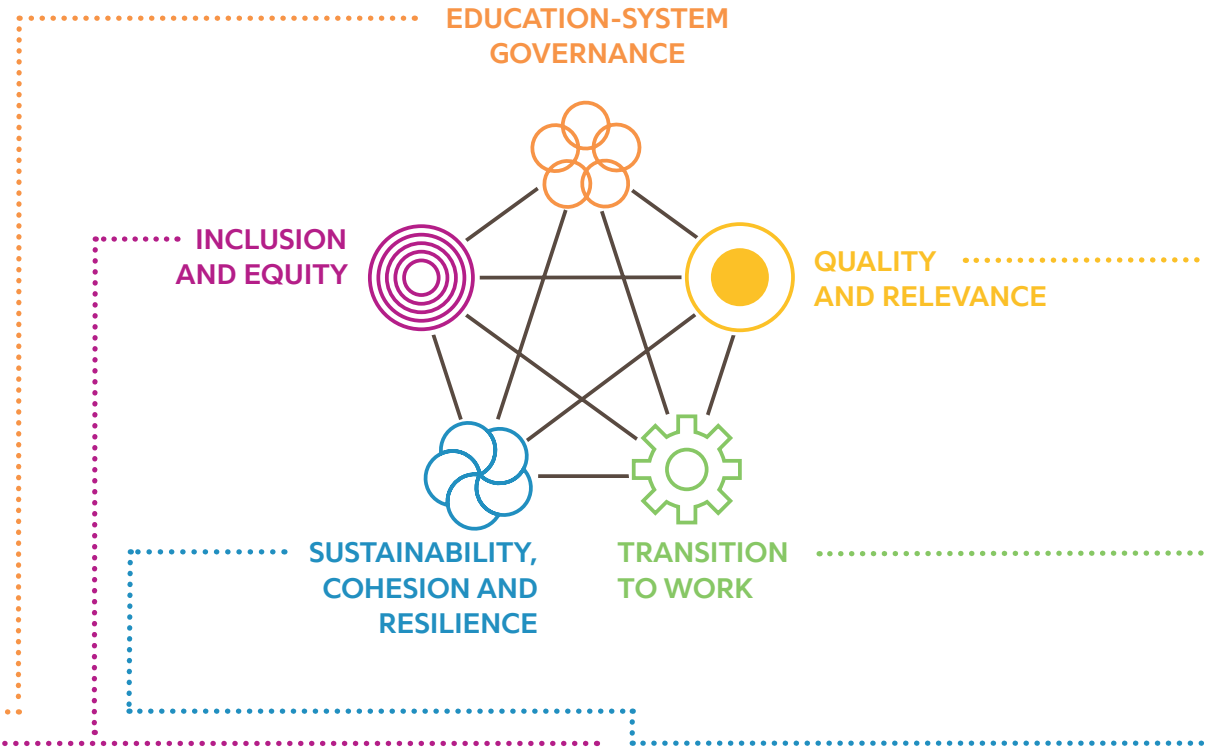
## Bangladesh: a helping hand for the state

The enormous employment challenges facing Bangladesh are the reason behind the SDC's targets there: to enable 260,000 young people to complete an apprenticeship and 70% of these to get a job. The SDC aims to achieve this through its involvement in steering a specialised coordination unit in the education sector, with private sector support.



## Benin: catching up on missed schooling

An SDC project in Benin makes it possible for 3,200 vulnerable out-of-school children aged 9 to 15 to catch up on their schooling. With lessons in their own language (French is introduced progressively) and a curriculum adapted to their specific circumstances, they make up for their lost education and can then switch to a formal school or vocational training. This project has been a source of inspiration for Benin's education policy.



## Jordan: learning as a means of forgetting the war

Through its support for basic education and psychosocial services, the SDC enables young Syrian refugees in Jordan to continue their studies, overcome the traumatic experience of war and integrate into society. The SDC is also rehabilitating schools. More than 70,000 students from both Jordan and Syria benefit from it. These efforts constitute a powerful leverage for social cohesion.



## Nepal: support for migrants

Tens of thousands of Nepalese see their future as migrant workers in the Gulf States. An SDC project offers job seekers training in the construction industry and information on their rights before leaving Nepal with a view to helping them find decent work and increase their income.



## Bolivia: adapting to the needs of the market

In Bolivia the various segments of the population need to be involved in order to identify the demands of the local economy and design an appropriate vocational training programme. Since 2006, the SDC has facilitated the participatory design of over 600 curricula. More than 50,000 people have benefited from this, including many women. As a result, many microenterprises have been founded, and the skills of the manufacturing workforce have improved.



## The Sahel: education as a means of conflict resolution

A nomadic lifestyle makes it difficult for herders to gain an education, and there are frequent conflicts with settled farmers. The SDC supports basic education and vocational skills development for 11,500 herders in seven countries. It promotes their civic participation and socio-economic development, offers courses on the rights and duties of herders and on conflict management. As a result, tensions between herders and farmers have abated.



## Afghanistan: developing the potential of girls

In Afghanistan, two programmes supported by SDC are addressing the poor quality of education and the reluctance to send girls to school. Teachers in 200 secondary schools and shuras (school councils) receive training. Courses are also offered in peace education, human rights and gender. Religious schools that support girls' education get technical assistance. Today, four out of every ten students are girls, compared with just one in ten in 2001.



## Albania: support for school-leavers

Getting an education is good, but finding a job is better. This is particularly so in Albania. Here the SDC has launched a project to ensure that secondary school students are better informed and to link job seekers and the centres of vocational skills development with potential employers. One thousand apprentices have already found employment as a result of the training, advice and information made available.

