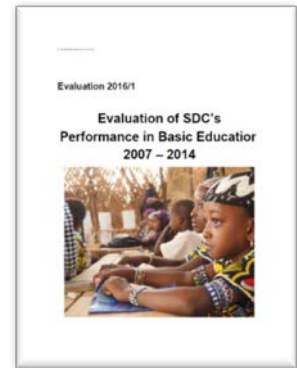




## Fact Sheet

# Evaluation of SDC's Performance in Basic Education 2007 – 2014



### 1. Evaluations at SDC

The E+C Division is responsible for the execution of thematic and institutional evaluations, country strategy evaluations and reports on effectiveness. The section conducts this process on behalf of SDC's Directorate and in accordance to an annual rolling plan.

### 2. Objectives of the Evaluation

This report summarizes the findings and conclusions of an independent evaluation of SDC's Performance in Basic Education (BE) 2007 – 2014. It addresses the following four key evaluation areas:

- Alignment with strategic objectives of SDC in education
- Relevance and effectiveness of the BE projects and programs
- Appropriateness and efficiency of SDC's implementation modalities
- Correspondence with international agendas, standards and "best practices"

### 3. Methodology and Main Results

The Evaluation and Corporate Controlling (E+C) Division and the Core Learning Partnership (CLP) ensured that the evaluation team focused on key evaluation questions that are useful for SDC's strategic decisions and further operational planning in Basic Education.

The evaluation produced a portfolio analysis of SDC's BE programs and used it as a foundation for drawing a representative sample of nine cases or programs for in-depth evaluation.

Two field-based case studies took place in Burkina Faso and on the Roma Education Programs in the West Balkans with visits to Romania, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania. Additionally, document analysis with selected interviews was conducted for following cases:

- BE in country programs: Afghanistan, Haiti, Mongolia, Niger
- SDC's collaboration with key international organizations in education
- United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

- Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC).

The **portfolio analysis** shows that SDC disburses annually more than CHF 100 million for programs in BE - using three main funding modalities: bilateral aid, multi/bilateral aid to key partners in education ("multi-bi") and multi-lateral aid through global partners.

Basic education in West Africa is a priority followed by Europe as well as Asia and Oceania; Latin America is semi-orphaned.

The comparison over the period 2007 to 2014 yields a few **interesting trends** on SDC's priorities and aid selectivity:

- There is a discrepancy between perception and actual allocation in education. In documents of SDC, there is more talk of non-formal education and vocational skills-development than of formal basic education. SDC actual disbursement over the period 2007 to 2014, however, has moved towards formal basic education and support for education policy, that is, towards systemic educational reform.
- SDC's BE bilateral contribution in fragile and conflict-affected areas increased considerably from 2007-2014. The evaluation estimates that BE support to fragile states and regions increased from CHF 7.4 million in 2007 to CHF 13.5 million in 2014. Clearly, the decision of the Swiss Government in 2012 to increase aid to fragile and conflict-affected states is reflected in this visible increase of BE spending.
- SDC's contribution to multi/bilateral aid to key partners that specifically work in education is with an annual disbursement of CHF 13.7 million relatively small. More than half of these funds were assigned to the most important global player in education: the Global Partnership for Education.

Main **best practices** identified by SDC staff and partners are as follows

- Bilingual education, community participation, and/or education for sustainable development are comparative advantages of Switzerland in BE. The commonality between these three areas of Swiss expertise

is its salutary effects on the inclusion of the hard to reach and most excluded.

- SDC has successfully increased its impact and voice by participating in governance structures of SDC partners, by coalition-building with like-minded donors as well as multilateral organizations, and by supporting advocacy work in regional and international organizations.
- SDC's preferred contractual arrangements works well for diffusion of innovation - but might prevent scaling up of innovation at large scale.

The report also discusses **five areas in need of improvement**:

- Educational programming is currently not systematically driven by SDC's comparative advantages, but essentially determined by consideration of the funding source (frame credit) or by political considerations that are reflected in Cooperation strategies.
- There is widespread data skepticism at all levels and manifest itself in disbelief that the collected data is reliable and valid and that data analysis could possibly yield meaningful and useful findings.
- The evaluation identifies a lack of professional expertise in international educational development. This has a negative impact in at least two regards: low recognition and profile of SDC and low quality of education components in non-education programs.
- Like others SDC is experiencing one of the greatest challenges of development and cooperation: innovation and pilot project are rarely scaled-up or institutionalized, and often discontinued after project funding dried up.

There is a risk that SDC does inadvertently become the sole or largest donor in programs or organizations that other donors left behind.

#### **4. Recommendations of the Evaluation**

Eight key recommendations are formulated of which the following six are of strategic nature.

- Design a SDC education sector strategy that is unified and comprehensive, considers all types of contributions and adheres to SDC's unique conception of lifelong learning and relevant skill development. This strategy should continue to building alliances with like-minded partners, invest in coalition-building and communicate these partnerships more clearly.
- Prioritize areas of intervention and clearly and widely communicate the Swiss comparative advantage in bilingual education, community participation, education for sus-

tainable development, and in general in inclusive education for the most excluded.

- Enhance inter-sectoral collaboration in SDC to improve the effectiveness and quality of programs, in particular in areas that are proven to benefit from an integrated approach (e.g., adult literacy, education for sustainable development) and in non-education programs that contain educational components.
- Determine which innovations in basic education should be systematically scaled up and which ones should be phased out, respectively.
- Enhance expertise in SDC's education programs by cooperating with (Swiss) universities and institutions in the field of international educational development.
- Require that all entry proposals include a detailed institutionalization and handover plan. This will increase the chances that the innovations or pilot projects are sustained beyond the duration of SDC funding

#### **5. Consequences of the evaluation**

The Board of Directors mostly agreed on the recommendations and welcomed the formulation of a new Education strategy which will serve as a reference document for the Cooperation programs which are supporting education (basic education and/or VSD) projects and programs. This strategy will adequately address the evaluation recommendations.

The evaluation has been published in various places including the Swiss federal administration's database of external studies. (<https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentat ion/studies.html> ). The publication helps to ensure accountability and allows lessons learned to be shared.

#### **6. Tender Procedure**

Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Columbia University, New York USA conducted the evaluation with a team of 3 people, plus 4 local consultants for the field visits. The mandate was subject to an international tendering procedure.