

VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



Vocational skills development (VSD) is a cornerstone of Swiss development cooperation. Vocational training bridges the world of education with the world of work: graduates increase their chances of finding decent employment and earning a better income. A skilled workforce raises companies' competitiveness. As such, VSD has a direct bearing on poverty alleviation and on social and economic development.

Challenges

- › **High un- and underemployment:** The impact of COVID-19, combined with geopolitical turmoil and natural disasters, has pushed social progress backwards. Millions of people who had escaped working poverty to join the middle class lost their jobs and risk to fall back below the poverty line, especially if they lack the adequate skill set to adapt. Today, 222 million crisis affected children and young people worldwide had their education path disrupted or never had access to education or VSD, with fewer chances to get a job. The lack of work and income prospects for a growing number of people threatens to undermine social stability.
- › **Inadequate coverage:** Of all secondary students in the world, only 21% are enrolled in vocational education and training. Low social acceptance and attractiveness, affordability and other barriers hinder access to vocational skills development, especially for the poor and vulnerable.
- › **Low relevance:** There are still major gaps in labour market relevance and the quality of training available. A shortage of skilled workers reduces companies' productivity and impedes a country's long-term economic development.

Lines of intervention

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) responds to the needs and priorities of its partner countries. The Swiss dual vocational education system serves as an inspiration, while the various elements of this system are adapted and embedded in local structures. The SDC proposes skills development solutions that match the local context and strengthen national education systems along the following lines:

Support national partners in providing skills for the youth

The SDC strengthens national vocational education and training systems and institutions. It reinforces the permeability of education systems, paying attention to linking basic and vocational education. The private sector's engagement in the governance, funding and delivery of vocational training is essential to improve the quality and social acceptance of such training.

Foster access to skills for the vulnerable

The SDC and its partners propose training accessible to the poor and disadvantaged, women and men. There is a special focus on inclusion and equity. This may include non-formal training offers, for example in refugee camps. Particular emphasis is placed on the linkage of VSD with basic education skills when addressing these specific target groups.

Ensure that skills lead to jobs

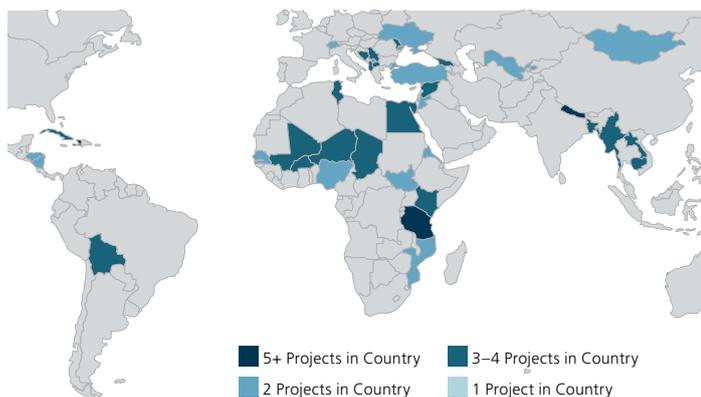
By integrating entrepreneurship, career counselling and job placement as complementary measures of skills development programmes, the SDC joins forces with other partners to facilitate the integration of job seekers and graduates in the world of work. In doing so, it capitalises on synergies with private sector development initiatives and access to finance.

Skills for the economy

Vocational skills development needs to meet the demand of local and regional labour markets. Quality skills are beneficial to the whole economy, especially when training is developed and implemented together with the private sector.

Education and vocational skills development have a transformative potential across sectors. The SDC sees education as a catalyst for change to enable people to address global issues, enhance their resilience, foster peaceful cohabitation, and to help reduce poverty.

SDC projects in vocational skills development (VSD)



Project examples



Niger: vocational training for young people in rural areas

Since 2011, the SDC has been committed to improving the education and training system in Niger, particularly for young people living in rural areas. The project –

inspired by the Swiss dual system – collaborates with associations of local craftsmen and farmers. Apprentices alternate between on-the-job training and basic skills and literacy courses given in local languages. By 2024, some 25,000 young women and men will be trained.



Haiti: training for sustainable reconstruction

South-west Haiti has been repeatedly devastated by earthquakes and hurricanes in recent years. Immediately after the devastating hurricane Matthew in

October 2016, the SDC began to train local bricklayers and carpenters in improved local building techniques. This has since evolved into a dual vocational training project for 30,000 craftsmen.



Kosovo: connecting jobseekers and employers

More than 50% of the young people in Kosovo are unemployed. By connecting employers and jobseekers through online and offline job mediation services,

including career guidance and skills training, the SDC is helping to reduce unemployment and drive economic growth. Since 2017, the project has had a particular focus on the economic empowerment of women, low-skilled youth, and minorities such as the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.



Bangladesh: joining forces with informal enterprises

In Bangladesh, 86% of the entire labour force works in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the informal economy. These jobs are characterised by

low productivity and low wages. To promote decent employment and income opportunities for poor and disadvantaged men and women, the SDC on the one hand fosters increased productivity and growth of such SMEs, and on the other hand provides workplace-based training for young apprentices. More than 15,000 young people, 54% of them women, have already been placed in employment.

Partners

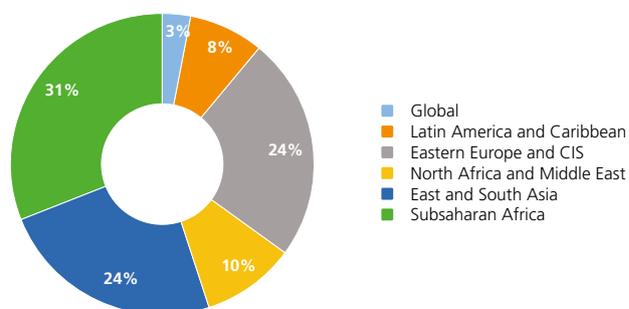
Successful vocational education and training relies on close collaboration with a broad alliance of partners from government ministries, local authorities, vocational schools, sometimes civil society or NGOs, and – of utmost importance – the private sector. Developing these partnerships is a priority for the SDC.

In many countries, the SDC works with other bilateral donors. Particularly close cooperation exists with Germany, Austria, and Liechtenstein – all countries with traditions in dual vocational education and training. Since 2015, these countries have joined forces in the Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training (DCdVET). The International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and various development banks are key partners for Switzerland's international cooperation at the multilateral level.

To make use of Swiss expertise, close coordination is maintained with other Swiss federal agencies and the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training. Additionally, the SDC supports the Swiss Forum for Skills Development and International Cooperation ("FoBBIZ") which fosters exchange between Swiss vocational education players and experts.

Strategic relevance of project portfolio

In 2022, the SDC supported the implementation of over 90 VSD projects or projects with a VSD related component with a yearly investment of about CHF 39 million.



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