



**Mid-Term Review Report
of the Cooperation Program Republic of Moldova 2018-2021**

December, 2020

Acknowledgements

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ACRONYMS

BMZ – German Federal Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation
CALM – Congress of Local Authorities in Moldova
CMHC – Community Mental Health Centres
CS – Cooperation Strategy
CSO – Civil Society Organization
EDE – Economic Development and Employment
EU – European Union
FCD - Federal Council Dispatch
GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
FDFA - Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
HQ – Headquarters
HG - Healthy Generation
HL – Healthy Life
KAP – Knowledge, Abilities and Practices
KII – Key Informants Interviews
LED – Local economic development
LG – Local Governance
LPAs – Local Public Authorities
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
MERV – Monitoring System for Development-Related Changes Report
MiDL – Migration and local development project
MARDE – Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MECR – Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MEPA - Economic Policy Advice to the Moldovan Government
MHI - Mandatory Health Insurance
MHLSP – Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection
MIA - Moldovan Investment Agency
MoEI - Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure
MTR – Mid-term review
NCDs – Non-communicable diseases
NGO – Non-governmental organization
PHC – Primary Healthcare Centre
PwD – People living with disabilities
RM - Republic of Moldova
SA&C - Small Action and Culture Program
SCO(-M) – Swiss Cooperation Office (Moldova)
SDC – Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SME – Small and Medium Enterprises
SO – Swiss Outcome
TN – Transnistrian region
UN – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
(d)VET – (dual) Vocational and Educational Training
WB – World Bank
WHO – World Health Organization
YFHC – Youth Friendly Health Centre
YFHS – Youth Friendly Health Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *overall goal* of the *Swiss Cooperation Strategy Republic Moldova 2018-2021* is to enhance the well-being of Moldova's population and the cohesion of Moldovan society, with a special focus on the inclusion of marginalized groups. The Cooperation Strategy (CS) has three thematic domains: Health, Local Governance and Economic Development and Employment, each of them with the distinct set of outcomes, performance indicators, targets and milestones. Not explicitly reflected in the CS, there is an additional Small Action & Culture (SA&C) Program, which complements the interventions of the three main domains by providing small grants for grass-roots NGOs, mass media and culture sector.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) was focused on assessment of the relevance, context analysis, implementation process, mid-term performance and sustainability of the results.

The methodology was based on remote data collection and followed a mixed approach, using in parallel *qualitative* methods, mostly individual interviews and, occasionally focus group discussions with a wide range of stakeholders¹ and *quantitative* methods, particularly data from the desk review, as well as internal monitoring and evaluation systems.

The MTR did not encounter any significant limitations in terms of available data on SDC- supported actions and accessibility and representation of the key stakeholders. MTR noted lack of reliable official statistics on some country performance indicators. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation the data collection was performed remotely and the MTR team was not able to use the direct observations as data collection method.

The MTR findings lead to conclusion that the CS is well positioned in the aid sector of the country. The strategic orientation and domains of the interventions are highly relevant and aligned to the country context and development priorities of Moldova, as well as to the policies of the current Federal Council Dispatch (FCD). The context analysis is systematic, qualitative, evidence-based and relevant and takes into account the broad political, economic, social and cultural country contexts. As described in the MTR report, some of the initial political, economic and social assumptions of the strategic domains are still valid and were reconfirmed during the MTR, while some assumptions (especially those linked to health and governance reforms) are not valid or are questionable and, perhaps need rethinking.

The projects/program portfolio is relevant, interlinked with the CS and combines both, much appreciated by the stakeholders, *bottom-up* and *top-down* approaches, which are appropriate for achieving the strategic results. The Results Based Management (RBM), Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) aspects are mostly integrated, while the Theory of Change (ToC) approach and the political economy analysis are partially mainstreamed in the project cycle management.

The adaptive management is widely used by the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) and represents one of the key management-related strengths alongside with the synergy between the Swiss-funded projects and the consistency of the monitoring and evaluation system.

The key national, district and local state and non-state stakeholders from the targeted sites, as well as relevant development partners are involved through the management cycle, which illustrates the participatory approach and inclusiveness. Implementation and, subsequently, the performance of the CS is affected by several political, economic and social factors, including the pandemic crisis, which beside the set back of all strategic domains, as described in the report, generated some opportunities that might be used by SCO and its stakeholders.

Analyzing the CS' fulfillment through the existing set of indicators and mid-term achievements, MTR concluded that the performance represents a mixed picture: mostly modest in terms of country results, and satisfactory regarding the Swiss-funded results.

¹ Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), implementing partners, State Chancellery, line ministries, public agencies, Local Public Authorities (LPA), Civil society organizations (CSO), educational institutions, primary healthcare providers, private companies; final beneficiaries, other donors and development partners.

Despite the influence of the above-mentioned factors, the fulfilment of the CS (Swiss-funded results) is satisfactory within the domains of cooperation and SA&C Program. The review results show that 11 out of 22 Swiss-funded targets from all three strategic domains are achieved, eight targets are on track to be achieved, while four targets are less likely to be achieved by the end of the current CS.

The most significant changes generated by the Swiss-funded actions are:

<i>Domain</i>	<i>The most significant change</i>
Health	Increased the national capacity of the public health agency and of the primary healthcare services providers.
	Enhanced the functionality of the Primary Healthcare Centres (PHC), Youth Friendly Health Centres (YFHC), Community Mental Health Centres (CMHC), which are well integrated in the national healthcare system and sustainable.
	Improved health awareness as the results of the participatory health promotion mechanisms.
Local Governance	Increased participation of men & women in local decision-making as result of the four thematic national platforms and District Participation Councils (DPC) in the piloted districts.
	Increased engagement of migrants' in local development through the Home Town Associations (HTA).
	Replication of the HTA model with and without SDC support.
Economic Development & Employment	Increased number of people, who have new or improved jobs and net additional income.
	Increased relevance and attractiveness of the dual Vocational and Educational Training (dVET) system.
	Extension of the dVET actions in Transnistrian (TN) region.

There are some promising sustainability prospects in terms of policy sustainability (e.g. adjusted and adopted national and local regulatory and normative frameworks) and institutional sustainability (e.g. integrated educational curricula, replicated HTA model). The financial sustainability is mixed: promising (YFHC, CMHC), weak (DPC) and challenging to be monitored (employment). However, the ultimate sustainability indicator will represent the level of implementation of those adjusted and/or adopted normative acts, as well as the functionality of the institutionalized models and duration of the jobs created proved by data delivered by the evidenced-based M&E system.

The MTR recommendations are classified in two groups:

- 1) *General recommendations*, which are valid for the entire CS and its portfolio and
- 2) *Domain recommendations*, i.e. tailored for each of the strategic domains.

General recommendations:

1. Capitalize on the achievements and continue implementation of the CS within the same strategic framework.
2. Extend the current CS with one year.
3. Mainstream the ToC and the regular political economy analysis through the project cycle management.
4. Further support for the development of the statistical system.
5. Use the increased awareness on digitalization for mainstreaming it as a transversal topic.

Domain recommendations:

Health domain:

- Continue supporting the Health domain, because the emergency preparedness of the health system of Moldova is still weak.
- Support a study to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the health system of Moldova.
- Focus on policy influencing, especially advocacy for increasing and optimizing the budget allocations for health system and maximizing the national healthcare capacities.
- Support monitoring the quality of the primary healthcare service provision.

- Keep the *Health* domain as distinct and focus on systemic interventions addressing governance.
- Retain the sector lead, but make a gradual switch from supporting implementation of the healthcare services to facilitation and consolidation of the sustainability prospects.

LG domain

- Continue strengthening local governance based on the existing administrative structure, put less emphasis on TAR and decentralization, while remain open to support it.
- Reshape the *LG* domain and transform it into *Governance*. Mainstream *good governance* and *anticorruption* components and support thematic initiatives. Decide the strategic position of the *LG* actions.
- Support further civic participation in the policy-making alongside with the implementation and public monitoring initiatives of the civil society and media.
- Prior to scaling up the piloted local policy influencing model, increase its financial sustainability prospects.
- Analyse success factors, lessons learnt, capitalize the good practices and scale up in the TN region the HTA model, as a local development and diaspora involvement approach.

EDE domain

- Maintain the current strategic orientation, but update the existing set of performance indicators.
- Replicate the *retaining* approach during pandemic period and focus more on retaining the investors than on attracting the new ones.
- Gain momentum of the dVET piloting in TN region for more active involvement of the Chamber of Commerce from Tiraspol and encourage cross—river cooperation.
- Support development of the financial sustainability plans of the VET institutions for diversification of their sources of income. Support VET's capacity strengthening for implementation of those plans.
- Develop a policy sustainability strategy.

Small Actions & Culture

- Keep SA & C Program in the portfolio of the next CS and support cultural and independent media development.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Mid-Term Review of the Cooperation Strategy Republic Moldova 2018-2021 was carried out on the initiative of the Swiss Cooperation Office Moldova (SCO-M) following the outlines provided in the Terms of Reference (ToR). The assessment was focused on review of the relevance, context analysis, implementation process, mid-term performance and sustainability of the results.

The MTR report is prepared based on the desk review of the strategic documents² and remote individual consultations and focus group discussions with a wide range of local, national and international stakeholders, as well as representatives of SDC and SCO-M.³

The report provides an overview of the strategy, describes the overall review methodology and the manner in which it was conducted, and reveals key findings, conclusions, lessons to be learnt and suggests the general and tailored per each domain recommendations. The annexes include: 1) Key review questions; 2) Agenda of the MTR consultations with the interviewed stakeholders and 3) List of reviewed documents.

2. BACKGROUND & COOPERATION STRATEGY DESCRIPTION

SDC's engagement with Moldova dates back to 2000, when Switzerland started a humanitarian relief program to help Moldova deal with the consequences of catastrophic draughts, floods and severe winter conditions. Over the years, Switzerland's support to Moldova became more long-term-oriented. Until 2017, interventions concentrated on the two core domains of *health* and *water & sanitation* complemented by a migration and development program.

The *overall goal* of the current 2018–2021 Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Moldova is to enhance the well-being of Moldova's population and the cohesion of Moldovan society, with a special focus on the inclusion of marginalized groups. The CS has three thematic domains and one additional program:

- 1. Health. Goal: *Men/boys and women/girls effectively enjoy essential healthcare services and act responsibly with regard to their own health.*

The focus is on integrated healthcare, health promotion and disease prevention and ensuring equitable access to qualitative and affordable primary healthcare. The domain has two outcomes (O):

- O1: *Health institutions ensure equitable access to qualitative and affordable primary healthcare services, responsive to the users' needs, and with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention.*
- O2: *Men/boys and women/girls have increased health awareness, make healthier lifestyle choices, improve their healthcare-seeking behavior, and actively hold health institutions accountable for delivering quality services.*

- 2. Local Governance (LG). Goal: *Women and men, with a special focus on excluded ones, are actively involved in local governance, shaping the development process of their local communities and effectively enjoying quality services.*

The focus is on ensuring that people, especially from excluded groups, have more opportunities to participate in local decision-making processes, demand the respect of their rights, and hold LPAs accountable for the provision of quality public services for all. The LG domain has three outcomes:

- O1: *Women and men, with a special focus on excluded ones, effectively participate in local decision-making processes, demand the respect of their rights, and hold local authorities accountable.*
- O2: *LPAs have increased access to resources, allocate and spend funds in line with the population's priorities and provide sustainable and quality services in an inclusive and accountable way.*
- O3: *A broad-based coalition of different stakeholders actively advocates for effective decentralization and advances the decentralization reform agenda.*

² For the full list of consulted documents, see the Annex 3 of the MTR report.

³ For the full list of the interviewed stakeholders, see the Annex 2 of the MTR report.

- 3. *Economic Development and Employment (EDE)*. Goal: *Better functioning market systems in selected sectors and localities increase the quantity and quality of jobs and provide net additional income to women and men, specifically benefiting excluded groups.*

The focus is on the development of better functioning market systems and on improving the investment climate to stimulate the creation of more and better jobs and income opportunities. The domain has two outcomes:

- O1: *Women and men, with a special focus on excluded ones, have new or improved jobs and/or net additional income.*
- O2: *Vocational Education and Training (VET), lifelong learning and job mediation systems match relevant skills with jobs in demand on the labour market.*
- 4. *Small Action and Culture Programme (SA&C)*. Although this program is not explicitly reflected in the current CS, it complements the interventions of the three main domains by providing small grants for grass roots NGOs, mass media and culture sector.

Switzerland promotes *gender equality, good governance*, as well as *conflict-sensitive programme management* transversally and addresses *migration & development* as a cross-cutting issue in its priorities and domains of interventions.

The foreseen program disbursements amount is CHF 46.9 million.

3. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF REVIEW

The goal of this MTR is to help the SCO-M and SDC Eurasia Division's management in strategic and operational steering, improving aid effectiveness and in preparing the ground for the next CS. The review was focused on learning, steering and informing regarding a potential extension of the current CS.

The MTR strived to achieve the following objectives:

- To assess whether SDC and its partners reach the strategic objectives, as defined in the CS, and to appraise the efficiency of the strategic and operational steering mechanisms, including the ability to adapt to contextual changes;
- To assess the option of extending by one year the current CS in order to counterbalance the impact of the COVID crisis and to allow for the results set for the two new domains (*LG* and *EDE*) to be achieved;
- To timely build the foundation for defining the key elements for the new CS (domains, transversal themes, modalities), taking into consideration the new Dispatch on international cooperation 2021-2024 and the new guidelines on cooperation programs/regional approaches;
- To assess the relevance and coherence of the Swiss development cooperation in Moldova with national development results and as part of the development partners' contribution (added value);
- To assess the Swiss contribution to strengthening the health sector in Moldova and advise on the future of this domain of intervention;
- To identify the good practices, innovative approaches, and key factors, which enhance or hinder aid performance and results achievement as well as share experiences in managing CS.

4. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The MTR adopted a participatory approach, engaging a wide and diverse range of state and non-state stakeholders targeted by the CS. Participation of the different type of stakeholders was a necessary condition to ensure representativeness, accountability, promote ownership, and arrive at comprehensive recommendations for SDC and key local, national and international stakeholders.

The MTR involved SCO-M management team and coordinators (National Program Officers) of all three domains and SA&C Program throughout the review process, i.e. review design and planning; organizing the data collection; analyzing the findings, conclusions and recommendations; and (providing feedback to)

reporting. The SDC peers were actively involved by: providing feedback and input to the inception report; participating to parts of the data collection process; analyzing and interpreting the collected data; providing feedback and input to the MTR Report and participating in the validation workshop.

The methodology was based on remote data collection and followed a mixed approach, using in parallel *qualitative* methods (mostly individual interviews and, occasionally focus group discussions as reflected in the Evaluation Matrix) and *quantitative* methods (data from the desk review and internal monitoring and evaluation systems). The key MTR questions were tailored for each of the consulted stakeholder groups.

The MTR took place over July-November 2020 and included three phases as described in the Table 1.

Table 1: *Phases of the MTR*

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
Inception phase	Preliminary desk review and initial consultations with SCO-M team to familiarize with the CS intervention logic, identify the sampling framework and to fine-tune the MTR methodology.	Inception report
Data-collection phase	Further collection of documentation; in-depth desk review; remote interviews with the selected stakeholders; presentation of preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations.	Preliminary conclusions and recommendations
Data analysis and report synthesis	Analysis of the collected data, definition of findings in line with the MTR objectives, assessment of progress and contribution to achieved results, development of recommendations. Final reporting.	Draft MTR report Final MTR report
Validation	Analysis and reflection on the progress of the CS and MTR recommendations. Validation of the MTR conclusions and recommendations by the stakeholders.	Final MTR report

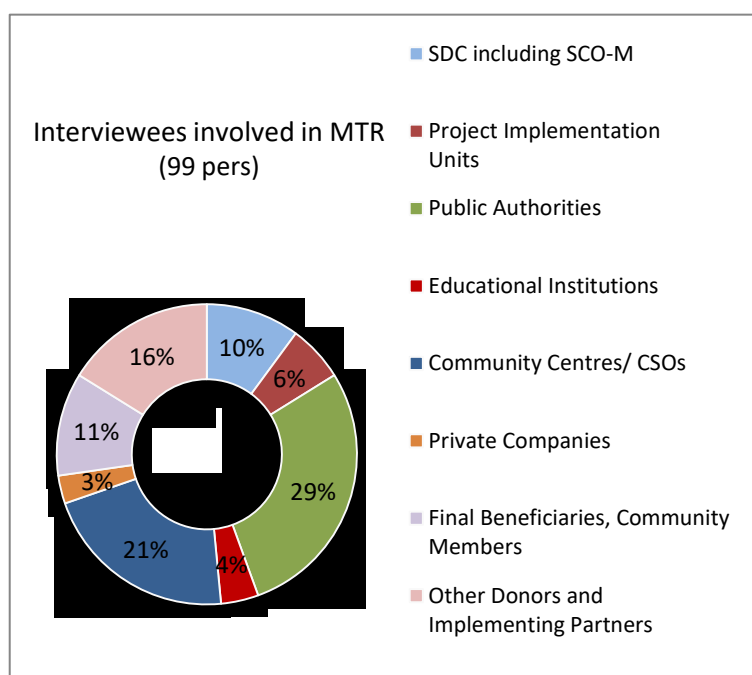
Primary information was collected through remote semi-structured individual and double⁴ interviews and focus-group discussions. These involved a total of 99 interviewees (60 or 61% women and 39 or 39% men) aged 14-69, representatives of: SCO-M; Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) Political Division; SDC HQ; Swiss Embassy in Ukraine; implementing partners; State Chancellery; line ministries and public agencies⁵; CALM; VET institutions; schools involved in civic education; CSOs, including those representing excluded groups; HTAs; DPCs; PHCs; YFHCs; CMHCs; YCs; private companies; final beneficiaries; donors and development partners.

For more details on interviewed stakeholders, see Figure 1 and Annex 2 of the MTR report.

⁴ Two respondents participating.

⁵ Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection; National Agency for Public Health; National Health Insurance Company; District Public Health Council; Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment; Local Public Authorities; Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; National Employment Agency; Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure; Moldovan Investment Agency; National Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Finance.

Figure 1: Disaggregation of respondents by type of stakeholders



Secondary information was gathered through a desk-review of a wide range of policy documents in the area of: Public Health, Economic Development & Employment, Vocational Education, and Investments; annual progress reports; voluntary national review; monitoring and backstopping mission reports; management responses to the annual and backstopping mission reports and other related documents provided by SCO-M and interviewed stakeholders.

Collected data have been grouped according to assessment areas. Available documentation and interviewees allowed quality review of the data against the indicators and their triangulation in major part of the CS. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects were considered.

The MTR adhered to the principles of the collaborative and participatory approach through all stages of the assignment. The transparency of the process was ensured by the availability of and the agreement on the sampling, review questions and methodology (inception phase) and by clear communication through the MTR process. To increase the accessibility and to maximize responses of the respondents, the consultations were done in English, Romanian and Russian and conducted via Zoom/Skype/WhatsApp/Viber and phone.

Quality Control, Challenges and Limitations

Diverse sources of information were used, and types of information gathered during the MTR of the CS. The comprehensive data obtained from the desk-review of documentation and remote interviews ensured sufficient information for triangulation and synthesis of objective conclusions.

The MTR did not encounter any significant limitations in terms of available data on SDC- supported actions and accessibility and representation of the key stakeholders. MTR noted lack of reliable official statistics on some country performance indicators as described in the MTR report. Most of the risks identified during the inception phase and reflected in the inception report have not materialized in negative effects on the MTR, except the above mentioned one. These were largely thanks to the SCO-M team and consulted stakeholders, their openness in sharing available information and reflect on the review topics. Still, the following challenges and limitations should be taken into consideration, in order to understand the scope of the MTR report and to correctly interpret, use and communicate the data:

Table 2: Challenges and limitations

Scope	The focus of the review was on the context analysis, relevance, implementation progress, results, and sustainability aspects in order to synthesize supportive recommendations for the remaining period of the CS and future strategic planning. Aspects of the impact were not in the focus of the MTR. However, the MTR put efforts in identification of the most significant changes generated by SDC-supported interventions.
Approach	The review was mostly done according to the methodology described in the inception report and outlined in the TOR. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the data collection was performed remotely and the MTR team was not able to use the direct observations as data collection method.

5. REVIEW FINDINGS

This part of the review report presents the main findings and analysis of the MTR organized to highlight the key review areas of the strategy, as required in the ToR and specified in the inception report.

5.1 Context analysis.

5.1.1 Positioning and adaptation of CS

The strategic orientation, overall goal, domains of interventions and the results framework (outcomes – outputs – indicators – targets) of the CS are well aligned both to: 1) Strategic development priorities of Moldovan Government reflected among others in the national policy documents, such as: EU Association Agreement⁶, Nationalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - 2030 Agenda⁷, Moldova 2020 National Development Strategy „Seven Solutions for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction”⁸; National Strategy „Diaspora 2025”⁹ and 2) Sectorial priorities set in National Employment Strategy and the Matrix of Actions (2017-2021); Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development Strategy (2012-2020); Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy (2013-2020), National Strategy for Investment Attraction and Export Promotion (2016-2020) and sectorial reforms in health, public administration, particularly territorial-administrative, decentralization and vocational and civic education.

The context analysis is comprehensive, evidence-based and reflects political, economic, social, humanitarian, security, cultural and civil society development contexts of Moldova, as well as contextual risks for programmatic and institutional levels and risk mitigation measures. Tendencies and aspects of Rule of Law, Good governance and Human Rights are also highlighted. The context analysis is well integrated both within the strategy¹⁰ and the projects/program portfolio of all three domains. The analysis is done on a regular basis through the management cycle, i.e. needs assessment – planning – implementation – monitoring – reporting and is reflected in: Cooperation Strategy, thematic projects/programs, annual reports, backstopping mission reports, Monitoring System for Development-Relevant Changes (MERV) and management responses to the annual reports.

The CS is based on Switzerland’s foreign policy goal to alleviate need and poverty in the world, advance human rights and democracy, and promote peaceful co-existence of people. The three domains of the CS are aligned with the Federal Council Dispatch (FCD) on International Cooperation (2017–2020), the guiding document for Switzerland’s development cooperation programs globally.¹¹ The Federal Act on Cooperation with Eastern Europe focuses on four sectoral priorities: *Governance and Decentralization, Economic Development and Employment, WSS infrastructure, and Health*.¹² The *Migration and Development*

⁶ Areas of: governance, public health, youth, education, economic development and employment, statistics, civil society cooperation and culture. https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/7048451_en_acord_asociere.pdf

⁷ SDG 1 – No poverty; SDG 3 – Good Health and well-being; SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities; SDG 16 Promote just peaceful and inclusive societies and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/SDG/docs/Targets_UNU_EN.pdf

⁸ Priority: 1. Aligning the education system to labor market needs in order to enhance labor productivity and increase employment in the economy. Moldova 2020 – National Development Strategy „Seven Solutions for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction. https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/1100271_en_moldova_2020_e.pdf.

⁹ Objective 3: To mobilize, harness, and recognize diaspora’s human potential and Objective 4: To engage diaspora directly and indirectly in the sustainable economic development of Moldova. National Strategy „Diaspora 2025” https://brd.gov.md/sites/default/files/sn_diaspora_2025_web.pdf.

¹⁰ Swiss Cooperation Strategy Republic of Moldova. 2018-2021.

¹¹ <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/strategy/legal-bases/message-international-cooperation-2017-2020.html>

¹² The SDC’s efforts in Eastern Europe are focused on: 1) Reinforcing democratic structures and the rule of law and improving the quality of public services; 2) Enhancing the potential of the private sector with a particular emphasis on improving employment prospects, particularly for young people; 3) Ensuring effective and sustainable public utilities for the supply of drinking water, sanitation services and 4) Ensuring that the population has equal access to improved health services, improving preventive healthcare to reduce the incidence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, and strengthening healthcare systems. <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/strategy/legal-bases/message-international-cooperation-2017-2020/cooperation-eastern-europe.html>

represent the cross-cutting theme and is reflected in the *Making Most of Migration* Program that includes two thematic project-components: *Migration and Development* (MiDL) and the support provided to the Bureau for Relations with Diaspora (BRD).

5.1.2 Quality of context analysis

The context analysis is systematic, qualitative, evidence-based and relevant and takes into account the broad political, economic, social and cultural contexts. The analysis is well described in the planning, monitoring and reporting documents and identifies the causes of the development dynamics, the roles of the stakeholders. It includes among other aspects: current issues, social and economic inequalities, particularly the most excluded groups (elderly people, persons leaving with disabilities, ethnic minorities and youth); power relations in the country, including in the Transnistrian region (TN) and in the Autonomous Region Gagauz Yeri. The existing territorial disparities are analyzed and are taken into account while programming and implementing actions in TN, for instance in the case of the *Health* component of the *Confidence Building Measures* Programme co-financed by SDC (*Health* domain) and dVET-focused actions piloted in TN (*EDE* domain). The key stakeholders such as central governmental bodies, public agencies, local public authorities, political parties, private sector, civil society and media are covered by the analysis.

The MTR findings show that some of the key political, economic and social assumptions of the strategic domains are still valid, while some other are not or are questionable. Thus, in case of *Health* domain the assumptions¹³ are still valid, while the core assumption „*Commitment to reforms and good leadership of MoHLSP*” is questionable because of the political instability and insignificant progress regarding the expected healthcare reforms.

In case of LG domain, as illustrated by surveys and confirmed by the interviewed stakeholders, indeed „*LPAs enjoy more trust than the national government*”; „*Mayors are trusted and well respected by the population*” and „*Civil society at national level is relatively well organized and active in lobbying for inclusive policies*”, while two core assumptions¹⁴ are not valid, because there is no progress so far in this regard. The anticipated risks „*Mayors may delay the TAR implementation at local level, as it threatens their positions*” and „*CALM is against the amalgamation of municipalities and has an ambivalent position on the TAR*” have materialised, but they are not the main reasons for lack of progress in case of administrative reforms as described below in the report. The implementation strategies of interventions have different scenarios, based on existing country context and governance structure. One project from CS portfolio (*Ma implic*) has a dual strategy depending on the country development context, i.e. one implementation strategy in case the expected reforms are taking place and second project approach in case if the reforms are not pursued.

In case of *EDE* Domain, the core assumptions¹⁵ are still valid, but the anticipated risk „*Migration & brain drain: skilled labor force leaves the country, creating a bottleneck for companies` growth*” has materialised and, among other factors, affects economic development of the targeted enterprises.

5.2 Relevance and appropriateness of the projects/program portfolio of the CS.

5.2.1 Relevance of the projects/program portfolios

The desk review and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders show that the projects/program portfolio is relevant and adequate for achieving the results of the CS. Thus, there is a consistent link between

¹³ „Existing strategies and action plans are a good basis for continuing systemic reforms” and „Private sector actors are already involved in promoting healthier lifestyles”

¹⁴ „After years of delay in decentralization reform, there appears to be will in the government to push the agenda forward” and „With the PAR Strategy 2016-2020, a concrete and structured Action Plan for Territorial- Administrative and Decentralization reform has been established. The proposed changes would close the gaps in the legal framework and provide the basis for effective interventions at the local level.”

¹⁵ „The private sector appears to be open for cooperation...”; „The diaspora is willing to provide skills, know-how transfer”; „Chambers of Commerce and sector associations exist and are willing to cooperate and Government pays increased attention to VET and has shown openness to introduce elements of dual VET.”

the projects/program portfolio and the SDC-supported outcomes in terms of baseline, overall approach, targets and indicators. The Results Framework clearly illustrates the link of the portfolio with the performance indicators and qualitative and quantitative contribution of the projects to the achievements of the strategic targets of the CS.

The LG domain covers issues relevant to multi-level governance, which is in line with the SDC's approach to LG.¹⁶ Some actions such as the four national policy influencing civil society platforms (Elderly people, Youth, PwD, Roma – EC-EC Project), Migration & Diaspora related activities (*MiDL* Project), and revision of the WSS legislation are linked to governance as such, not just to LG.

The CS and its portfolio integrates Results Based Management (RBM) principles and includes a logically inter-linked and results oriented approach consisting of baselines – actions – results chain – indicators – targets – milestones (on yearly basis). In terms of Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), the portfolio and the CS targets both the *duty bearers* (for instance capacity strengthening and increasing the functionality of the line ministries, public agencies, LPAs, educational institutions, YFHCs, PHCs, CMHCs, YCs) and the *rights holders* (supporting involvement of the communities in the policy making and community development through DPCs, national civil society platforms, HTAs, job creation etc.). Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Principle is mainstreamed in the portfolio, as the SDC-funded actions are focused on inclusive approach, but the difficulty is that there is no a clear definition of the left behind groups in the national regulatory framework. The MTR remarked the *Engaging Citizens, Empowering Communities* (EC-EC) Project (LG Domain), which has a prominent focus on the LNOB and includes the most excluded groups by supporting establishment and activity of the policy influencing platforms created by the CSOs working with: elderly people, PwD, youth, Roma. All domains of CS include equitable access and increased participation for the excluded groups, while two projects¹⁷ specifically focused on social inclusion have focal points and thematic plans on LNOB, which represents a good experience and needs replication. The most excluded persons (women, former prisoners¹⁸, PwD, ethnic minorities) are also reflected in the reporting of the disaggregated results and their milestones: *Nr of persons having new or better employment*; *Nr. of persons earning net-additional cash and/or in-kind income* (EDE domain). One of the LG domain indicator (*Nr. of women and men from vulnerable groups empowered to participate in relevant peace, development and political processes*) is fully focused on vulnerable persons. Again, it is an issue of definition in the legal framework and development policies whether the term „vulnerable groups” is the same with the „most excluded persons” or/and „left behind groups”. The SCO-M has a flexible approach in this regard and each project document defines who are these groups.¹⁹

There are innovative approaches in all three domains of the CS and SA&C Program. Thus, in the *Health* domain the approaches implemented for the first time in the selected areas among other include: 1) Multidisciplinary approach of the community based health centres, which increased comprehensiveness of the health promotion and protection; 2) Territorial Health Profiles in 10 targeted territorial centres (*Healthy Life* project), which uses uniformed indicators and approach; 3) Operational standards of the cervical cancer screening, which improved the quality of the screening, and subsequently of the healthcare services.

In the LG domain, among the remarkable innovative approaches, are establishment and functionality of the: 1) DPC in three pilot districts, which increased participation and influence of the civil society in the

¹⁶ The SDC's Guidance on Governance.

<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/Documents/SDC%20Governance%20Guidance%20201110%20Web.pdf>

¹⁷ EC-EC Project and GIZ implemented Project

¹⁸ SO1: *Women and men, with a special focus on excluded ones, have new or improved jobs and/or net additional income*, particularly in two indicators: *Nr of persons having new or better employment* and *Nr. of persons earning net-additional cash and/or in-kind income*. For additional information: See the Results Framework (2019,2020).

¹⁹ For instance, not all migrants are vulnerable, but most of them used to be excluded from the local and national decision-making processes before the thematic projects (aiming at involving migrants) started. The same is about Roma - not all Roma are vulnerable, but most of them were not involved in the policy-influencing and/or local and national development.

policy-making at the district level (*EC-EC Project*) and 2) HTAs, which increased involvement of diaspora in local (economic) development (*MiDL Project*). It is worth noting that the HTAs can be perceived as partially innovative approach, because a few of them were created and were active before SDC-funded actions, but *MiDL Project* supported establishment of their links with the diaspora and encouraged active involvement of migrants in a wide range of community development initiatives, which represents innovative elements. Another innovative approach is the dual scenario-based implementation strategy of the *Ma Implic Project* (with and without the reforms), which makes it more adaptive to the context and uncertainty regarding the TAR reforms.

In *EDE Domain* the Innovation Networks dimension (*Optim Project*), which is cutting across the economy, is developing and implementing new interventions that are appropriate in terms of constraints and opportunities in the Informational Technologies (IT) and agribusiness sectors.

The SA&C Program, a champion in terms of promoting visibility, also supported some innovative approaches in the cultural sector such as: providing support and promoting undeveloped and less known types of arts; transferring arts into the digital space (*Virtual Reality Arts Gallery*), which encouraged digitalization of culture, especially during the difficult pandemic period.

5.2.2 Theory of Change approach

The relatively new change-oriented Theory of Change (ToC) approach is partially integrated in the Project Cycle Management (PCM) of the portfolio. Thus, in some projects the ToC is integrated in the planning phase (project document), while in other projects it is not. The ToC is insufficiently reflected in the narrative reporting phase.

The ToC in general is a new approach for SDC and there is not yet a common vision on the ToC concept and its complementarity to results frameworks.

5.2.3 Synergy

The projects are not chronologically aligned, as they are at the different stages of implementation. However, they are aligned thematically and the SCO ensures good synergies between them, which was noted by the consulted stakeholders, as well.

Synergies across domains are identified and exploited from the inception phase. Examples of synergies exists at the national and local levels regarding: communication strategies; community participation; policy-influencing; local governance; promotion of local economic development (detailed in both backstopping mission reports²⁰); creation of health-friendly environments etc.

The regular coordination meetings, contributed to improved communication and information sharing between the projects, and better understanding of the development dynamics; and allowed to fine-tune the approaches, for instance: in case of communication strategies of the projects, joint actions that add value to ongoing interventions (e.g., integration of the ex-prisoners in the labour market), projects' responses to COVID pandemic situation.

5.2.4 Implementation approaches

The implementation strategies of the domains are appropriate and combine both much appreciated *bottom-up* and *top - down* approaches, with a greater focus on the first one, which was remarked also by the consulted local, national and international stakeholders.

Bottom-up approach is reflected in supporting: community mobilisation initiatives (e.g. DPCs, HTAs, small actions); increasing the functionality and improving the primary health care at the community /district level (e.g. YFHCs, PHCs, CMHCs); youth centres, employment; civic and (dual)vocational education; cultural events. The *top-down* approach is used while: improving the Quality Management System (QMS) of the National Agency for Public Health – NAPH; enhancing the capacity and increasing the functionality of the

²⁰ Economic Development and Employment Backstopping Reports (July 2019 and September 2020).

national public authorities (ex. National Employment Agency/Labour Market Observer, National Bureau of Statistics-NBS); Supporting national policy making and development of the sectorial strategies (e.g. WSS legislation, Strategy for Non-Communication Diseases); direct implementation modality (e.g. project implemented by the Bureau for Relation with Diaspora).

5.2.5 Involvement of the stakeholders

Both approaches, bottom-up and top-down, apply inclusive principles. The key relevant state and non-state stakeholders (central and local public authorities, civil society, private sector, educational and cultural institutions, international development partners, most excluded groups) are involved through the entire management cycle from the needs assessment to evaluation, validation of the results and dissemination.

5.3 Implementation of the CS and its portfolio.

5.3.1 Management performance

The portfolio management is indicators-based, results-oriented²¹ and flexible, using both proactive and reactive approaches, as exemplified below, and is one of the key success factors and driving forces. It uses a wide range of tools and approaches in management (planning, coordination, monitoring, reporting), makes effort for better coordination and encourages transversal communication, synergy and collaboration of the local, national and international actors, representing end beneficiaries, civil society, public authorities, private sector, educational institutions, and other development partners.

Programmatic adjustments²² are taken in a timely manner, based on the analysis of the trends and changes in the country context. The management responses to annual reports, reviews/assessments, and backstopping missions are incorporated in the action plans and are part of the performance management procedures. Regardless of the changes in the country context, the Swiss-funded projects remain highly relevant and inclusive and this is one of the key contributions of the management.

5.3.2 Consistency and quality of the CS monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system

The Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) is linked to all three strategic domains and to the logic of intervention of the CS. It is robust and relevant and provides reliable data, such as:

- a. key data for assessing and reporting on the progress towards achieving expected results (*proving/accountability*);
- b. evidence-based information for decision-making regarding necessary adjustments to ensure effectiveness and relevance of the Swiss portfolio (*steering*);
- c. good practices and lessons learnt (*improving/learning*).

The M&E system is focused on data collection on three dimensions:

- 1) *Country development context* – the most important political, economic, social, security-related trends and other relevant developments, and how they (may) affect the Swiss portfolio;
- 2) *Cooperation results* - progress in achieving the Swiss portfolio results and how they contribute to country performance, including with regard to transversal themes (social inclusion, gender, and good governance);
- 3) *Portfolio management* – effectiveness and efficiency of operational, financial-administrative, human resources, security and other management tasks.

The SCO uses different sources of data for monitoring process, such as:

- *Official sources* of Moldova – statistical data and national/subnational reports. For some country-related indicators there is no available official data.

²¹ As reflected in the Monitoring Matrix and Results Framework.

²² For instance: Based on the context analysis funds from EC-EC Project were redirected for an ad-hoc Call for Proposals for NGOs and media on monitoring Parliamentary Elections in 2019 or prompt reaction in 2020 to COVID-19 pandemic situation. SDC was the first donor/development partner to support Moldovan healthcare system in response to the crisis.

- *Alternative resources* – shadow reports by NGOs and think tanks, reports of international organizations, joint analyses of development partners;
- *Reports of the SDC-funded projects* - generate data in their respective areas of action.

The Monitoring Matrix of the CS is regularly updated and includes a consistent set of mostly quantitative²³, but also qualitative²⁴ performance indicators for each of the three strategic domains of cooperation. Implementing partners are included in the monitoring process and contribute through project reporting and their participation in SCO-organized regular monitoring and reporting meetings.

The analysis of the collected information, the main learnings and recommendations generated by the M&E system are reflected in the annual reports and guide SCO's steering decisions on programmatic adjustments, such as changing approaches or aid modalities, setting priorities, shifting financial resources, extension of the projects etc. There is a clear link between monitoring and programing.

SCO also supports Human Rights monitoring in Moldova (e.g. Universal Periodic Review, National Human Rights Action Plan) and bases its analysis and advocacy on those reviews.

5.3.3 Coordination and aid effectiveness in the country set up

SCO is well positioned and recognized by the governmental bodies, local authorities, civil society, donor community, development partners and other stakeholders as an important partner and policy influencer both at the national and local levels. SDC is a key bi-lateral strategic donor in the *Health* domain and one of the important players in two other domains (*LG* and *EDE*), as well as in cultural sector, supporting independent cultural actors, which are not supported by the Government.

The core added values of the support provided by Switzerland to Moldova are:

- Well-anchored bottom-up projects based on the wide participation of the key actors and inclusion of the most excluded groups;
- Decentralised management, flexibility and promptness of the SCO during the implementation;
- Pragmatic approach and orientation towards sustainable results;
- Long-term vision, multi-phase projects and strategic partnerships.

In terms of synergies between the SDC-funded projects and other donors' projects, the MTR findings reveal that, despite the periodical donors' coordination meetings, there are still overlaps and duplications between some project implementation units of the CS and other development actors, especially UN Agencies (ILO, OIM, UNDP) and GIZ. For instance, the most recent example remarked by the representatives of the national public authorities and UN Agencies is the research on the impact of COVID crisis on the labour market.

5.3.4 Key factors influencing implementation of the CS and its portfolio

There are several internal and external factors, which are influencing implementation of the CS and its portfolio, such as:

- *Political factors* – corruption, political instability, frequent changes/staff turnover, especially at the national level (valid for all three domains); delayed reforms in public healthcare service, primary healthcare (*Health* domain); Territorial Administrative Reform, fiscal decentralisation and amalgamation (*LG* domain);
- *Social factors* - COVID pandemic situation, migration, aging of the staff, brain drain;
- *Economic factors* - poverty, which underlines vulnerabilities, high unemployment rate, low remuneration, which impedes, for example, the dVET students to return to the enterprises after graduation of the dVET institutions (*EDE* domain).

Some of the most significant factors, which influence the implementation and subsequently the joint performance (Swiss-funded results and country results) in all three domains are: 1) Commitment of the government and, more recently, 2) COVID-19 crisis. Stagnation of the reforms in the public health sectors,

²³ *Nr of ...; Proportion of...; Share of...; Level of...; Percentage of...; Rate of...*

²⁴ *Efficiency in interactions...; Coordination and cooperation...; Progress towards...*

TAR and fiscal decentralization hinders the overall sustainable development process and questions the commitment and capacity of the government to undertake those reforms.

The pandemic, among other impediments, affected the functionality of the primary health structures and policy influencing platforms at the district and national levels; decreased the number of the beneficiaries of the PHCs, YFHCs, MHCs; locked down the educational institutions and enterprises, including those involved in dVET, side-lined civil society from the pandemic response, cancelled cultural events, capacity enhancing and many other public activities; impeded the utilization of the allocated funds and generated delays in getting things done according to the initial work plans.

The prompt response of the SCO contributed to at least partially diminishing the negative effects of the crisis. This response included, among other: support in adjustment the policy framework, reallocation of savings; provision of the COVID protection means and ventilators; remote guidance and consultations and switching to online actions; non-costs extensions of the projects (three); focusing rather on retaining jobs than on job creation in EDE domain; crisis-related psychological support services for apprentices and VET school teachers etc. Still, some actions cannot be done remotely, for instance some primary healthcare services (e.g. medical examinations) or apprenticeship within the dVET institutions.

The pandemic also created at least four opportunities, which might be taken into account by SCO:

- 1) Boosted online communication and implementation at all levels;
- 2) Increased the awareness of the interviewed stakeholders for digitalisation;
- 3) Moldovan diaspora actively engaged in the pandemic response at the local level;
- 4) Increased number of the active donors in the *Health* domain (Romania, UK, EU, Sweden).

5.4 Results of the CS – in relation to the results at country level

Despite the influence of the above-mentioned factors, the fulfilment of the CS (Swiss-funded results) is satisfactory within the strategic domains of cooperation and SA&C Program. Thus, at the MTR stage the preliminary results show that, 11 out of 22 Swiss-funded targets from all three strategic domains are achieved²⁵, 8 targets are on track to be achieved, while 4 targets²⁶ are less likely to be achieved by the end of the current CS.

Regarding the country results – data are not always available for some indicators. Overall, performance represents a mixed picture, mostly modest under the *LG* and *EDE* domains, and satisfactory under the *Health* domain at pre-pandemic stage, with regress during pandemic period.

5.4.1 Domain results, effectiveness and contribution to country results

Domain 1: *Health*

Swiss-funded results

The performance is satisfactory, as three out of six targets of the domain are achieved by the time of the MTR and other three targets are on track and are highly likely to be achieved by the end of the strategy.

²⁵ *Health* domain – 3 targets: Nr. of users of community-based mental health services; % of population (disaggregated) aware of and acting on behaviour-related health risks and how to act on knowledge to maintain health and Nr. of people reached through health education sessions /campaigns related to the prevention of NCDs; *LG* Domain – 5 targets: Nr. of women and men from vulnerable groups empowered to participate in relevant peace, development and political processes; Nr of CSOs that contribute to multi-stakeholder dialogue or to the respect for HR; Nr. of persons from left behind groups benefitting from projects to reduce exclusion, discrimination and inequality and Nr of supported LPA which have benefited from increased resources and Supported LPAs which changed transparency and participation practices.

EDE Domain – 3 targets: Nr of persons having new or better employment; Change in yearly net income and Nr of companies that participate in dVET.

²⁶ *LG* Domain – 1 target: Efficiency in interactions between government authorities; coordination and cooperation between government authorities and responsible public sector actors at different levels. *EDE* Domain – 3 targets: In-company apprenticeship enrolment opportunities for dual VET created by enterprises; Nr. of persons enrolled in new or better vocational skills development and Nr. of youth (15-24 years) and adults (>24 years) (M/F) who gained access to improved vocational skills.

Both men/boys and women /girls equally enjoy essential primary healthcare services and act more responsibly with regard to their own health, which represents an impact level achievement. The progress towards the Swiss Outcomes this is proved by:

- 1) Increased ratio of NCD patients treated for diabetes and for hypertension in PHC;
- 2) Increased number of users of community-based mental health services. All 40 CMHCs provide the Essential Package of Services, yet only 45% of them fully in line with national standards.
- 3) Increased proportion of young people 10-24 y.o. out of the total population of this age using YFHS.

According to the documents²⁷ triangulated with the answers of the interviewed stakeholders, in the first half of 2020 (compared with same period of 2019), because of the pandemic crisis, the number of beneficiaries of YFHCs, CMHCs decreased. During pandemic the CMHCs and YFHCs adjusted their activity and started to use remote solutions for working with the beneficiaries, e.g. phone consultations, share online thematic information, i.e. to use innovative elements of telemedicine.

The targeted beneficiaries generally have increased *health awareness* and, with some exceptions, improved their healthcare-seeking behaviour, as a result of health promotion and behavioural change public actions undertaken by the NPHA and local actors, which benefitted of capacity enhancing. According to the endline KAP study²⁸, progress has been reached in NCDs awareness of the target population, but there are no major behavioural changes or intensions among population of the piloted districts to reduce alcohol consumption and to quit smoking. The coverage of the health education sessions and information campaigns related to the prevention of NCDs reaching over 2 Mio people.²⁹ Communication with healthcare service users has improved and participatory mechanisms in health promotion and health services monitoring were created and scaled up with the involvement of LPAs, District Public Health Councils, Social Departments, and CSOs.

The most significant changes in the Health sector are:

- Increased national capacity (Public Health Agency, primary healthcare services providers).
- Enhanced the functionality of the PHCs, YFHSs, MHCs, which are well integrated in the national healthcare system and are sustainable;
- Improved health awareness as a result of the participatory health promotion mechanisms.

Country results

At the pre-pandemic stage, the country performed satisfactory towards the achievement of the country results under both country outcomes³⁰, but decreased during pandemic.

The public budget contribution to mandatory health insurance (MHI) funds decreased, while the number of self-insured increased. There is no available data on proportion of households with catastrophic out-of-pocket payments, but it is obvious that such situation generates financial burden on the National Health Insurance Company and increases the financial risks for the beneficiaries of state insurance.

The share of private spending for health from total health expenditures decreased, while the volume of MHI fund expenditures for all types of healthcare have increased. Proportion of population covered by MHI slightly increased in 2019 (87.8%) comparing to 2017 (86.9%), but decreased comparing to 2018 (88,2%). It is unclear if the values were correlated with the results of the Census, which revealed a significant decrease of population. This is valid for the statistics under all three domains of cooperation.

With the policy-influencing support of the two Swiss-funded projects (“Mensana” and “Healthy Generation”) the MHI financing of community and home healthcare increased. This illustrates contribution of the SDC to the policy making and consolidation of the sustainability prospects, which is commendable.

The on-going pandemic situation has a negative impact on both: the healthcare system and on the population. On the one hand, it affects the access to healthcare services, puts significant burden on the

²⁷ Annual Report 2020. Swiss Cooperation Office in Moldova. 2020

²⁸ Endline Study: Knowledge, Abilities and Practice Study. *Healthy Life* Project 2020.

²⁹ Nationwide Salt Reduction information campaign.

³⁰ *Universal health coverage and Reduced premature deaths caused by NCDs. Improved mental health and well-being of the population.*

healthcare system by overloading the workforce, reduces its functional capacity, decreases the development dynamic and, subsequently, slows down the progress. On the other hand, it affects the physical and mental health of the general population, including elderly and NCD patients. Although it is difficult to predict the dynamic and the final consequences of the pandemic, it is obvious that the health system, which demonstrated a low level of preparedness and compliance with preventive and treatment measures, will be under further increasing pressure.

Domain 2: Local Governance

Swiss-funded results

The fulfilment of the Swiss-funded targets is satisfactory. Five out of nine targets within the LG domain are achieved, three other targets are highly likely to be achieved by the end of the current strategy and one qualitative target with perhaps highest transformative potential is unlikely to be achieved.

The participation of (vulnerable) women and men in decision-making has increased as a result of the activity of four national thematic civil society platforms and three DPC in the piloted districts. DPCs gathered large groups of population and gave impetus to civil society in the districts. Both policy influencing mechanisms are active and functional, switched their activities to on-line format, as a response to the pandemic, and influence national and district policy-making, including from equal opportunities, inclusiveness, transparency and legal perspectives.

The targets regarding the number of CSOs and people, including from vulnerable groups, involved in policy influencing and local development and the number of direct beneficiaries of advocacy efforts of all participatory structures are achieved. However, the involvement of civil society in (local) governance is limited in case of monitoring procurements, because public authorities are still hesitant and in some cases even reluctant to make procurement processes more transparent.

Civic education is accessible for pupils and is popular among them. The civic education topics are well integrated in the discipline entitled „*Education for society*” and the MECR piloted the new civic education curricula and expanded its network of civic education teacher trainers.

The model of migrants’ engagement in local development is successful, given the high number of the local projects (44) run by them. The amount of mobilised resources (USD 3.3 Mio) by LPAs, migrants, companies and other development actors (e.g. GIZ) and the scaling up of HTAs (74 new HTAs) with and without the SDC support, illustrates the relevance and sustainability prospects. There is no progress regarding the increased public resources in favour of LPAs (fiscal decentralisation), as the additional resources came mainly from migrants, private sector and other donors.

The CALM has enhanced its advocacy capacities in shaping decentralization and local governance policies, but due to political reasons, it is not part of the newly established WG on decentralization. It does not support the scope and approach of the WG, because in its perception the TAR should be considered together with the fiscal decentralization and PAR and not separately. There is no tangible progress in decentralisation and amalgamation, as such.

The most significant changes generated with the support of the Swiss-funded actions are:

- Increased participation of men and women in local decision-making as result of the four thematic national civil society platforms and DPCs in the pilot districts;
- Increased engagement of migrants’ in local development through the HTA;
- Replication of the HTA model with and without SDC support.

Country results

The progress towards achieving the country results is modest. Civic participation and policy dialogue between the public authorities and civil society is generally poor, mostly due to low political will for transparency and accountability and weak capacities of actors. The C-19 crisis made participation in decision-making even more problematic and increased the risks for mismanagement and social exclusion.

TAR and decentralisation are highly sensitive issues for central public authorities, political parties, but also for LPA, especially from small localities. There is neither a strategic vision nor a political will for decentralization. The WG created by the Government in 2020 to develop proposals on central and LPA reform, incl. distribution of powers and tax revenues, and administrative-territorial reform, includes just representatives of parliamentary political parties in an attempt to develop a common political vision on the subjects. Representatives of civil society, including CALM, as mentioned above, are not part of the WG. The interviewed stakeholders are sceptical regarding the efficiency of the WG, considering the complicated political context in the country.

Domain 3: Economic Development and Employment

Swiss-funded results.

The achievements within this domain are satisfactory and three out of seven targets are achieved³¹, one target³² is likely to be achieved and three targets³³ are less likely to be achieved by the end of the CS. The targeted beneficiaries have new jobs and net additional income as result of the jobs created with Swiss –co-funding (46%) to creation of 3'638 jobs³⁴, including 1'000 jobs for ethnic minorities. This contributed to an increase in net-additional income of the employees. However, monitoring of the jobs created is challenging as it is based on one source of information – employers.

The management decision to focus rather on retaining the jobs than on job creation during pandemic seems to be a smart one given the negative effects of the crisis on the private sector. As the short-term effect, it helped to retain about 1,000 jobs, to create 90 additional jobs and to stimulate production and export of the much needed personal protective equipment in support of C-19 response. This is a good example of the adaptive management, which illustrates promptness and flexibility of the management, but also its role as one of the key driving forces.

National policy influencing efforts focused on amendments of the Labour Code to facilitate remote work and payment of unemployment benefits to small and microbusiness owners during the lockdown, as well as on encouraging employment of the PwD, through mainstreaming the PwD employment in the Action Plan of Employment Strategy reflects the C-19 (top-down) response in line with the LNOB Principle.

There is a positive development tendency in dVET, which is becoming more attractive and where both the private sector involvement and the enrolment of students are increasing. The enrolment was positively influenced by the media campaign and online vocational counselling and career guidance. Nevertheless, the target of 2,000 new enrolment places for 2021/22 is less likely to be achieved, given the existing pandemic crisis. The increased attractiveness of the dVET is confirmed by the increased number companies participating in dual VET, which almost doubled from 49 (2017) to 94 (2020).

The most significant changes generated by the EDE domain are:

- Increased number of people, who have new or improved jobs and net additional income;
- Increased relevance and attractiveness of the (d)VET system of the country;
- Extension of the dVET actions in TN region.

Country results

The economic productivity and employment are pretty much affected by the pandemic and, unlike Swiss-funded results, the country achievements present a mixed picture, but still modest. On one side, the average gross monthly salary in Moldova increased³⁵, while the overall annual employment rate decreased

³¹ Nr of persons having new/better employment; Change in yearly net income; Nr of companies that participate in dVET.

³² Nr. of persons earning net-additional cash and/or in-kind income.

³³ In-company apprenticeship enrolment opportunities for dual VET created by enterprises and Nr. of persons enrolled in new or better vocational skills development and Nr of youth who gained access to improved vocational skills.

³⁴ Joint Swiss-German job-creation project.

³⁵ Almost 27% from 5.697 MDL (2017) to 7.234 MDL in 2019

and it is lower than in 2018. The youth unemployment has a similar negative tendency. Both employment rates are getting lower during the crisis.

The situation is similar regarding the *Share of employers who state they lack workforce with relevant skills*. Despite the efforts to promote an enabling regulatory framework and to introduce new professions, and despite the increased share of dVET students in relation to total secondary VET students, there is no progress regarding the *Share of employers who state they lack workforce with relevant skills*.

Small Action and Culture Program

Apart from the three main domains, tangible results were achieved via the SA&C Program, which, despite relatively modest funds (compared to strategic domains) is perhaps the champion in terms of visibility, popularity³⁶ and outreach to the remote communities of Moldova, including TN region and Gagauz Yeri.

The Program scores well on inclusion the vulnerable groups, especially PwD and ethnic minorities, who were actively involved in the recreational, sport, debate and a wide range of cultural events (marathon, concerts, documentary film festival, art gallery etc.). In addition to the adults and adolescents, the SA&C events also included a significant amount of children, for instance in the *La-la Play* concerts. The cultural events, beside the visibility and socialisation effects, positively influenced the future of the performing adolescents and children, as some of them decided to become artists and got enrolled in the musical schools.

Besides supporting the (underdeveloped and contemporary) arts, cultural, recreational and social inclusion events, the SDC used the opportunity to support innovations that transferred arts into the digital space, to encourage cross-river joint events to include TN region, to increase awareness and to stimulate discussions on governance-related topics, such as: transparency, corruption, corporate interests over human rights etc. This illustrates the transversality of the SA&C Program, which represents an added value and should not be underestimated and a response of SCO to the set back of the culture sector caused by the C-19 crises.

Support to national and regional media outlets provided during the political turbulences and pressures was important as it stimulated highlighting of the good governance issues, corruption, human rights and social inclusion. And the MTR would recommend to maintain such support.

Support for the National Statistical System

The SDC-funded and UNFPA-implemented project focused on improving the national demographic statistics helped the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to finalise processing and validation of the much needed and significantly delayed 2014 Census results.³⁷ The Census generated a wealth of data, including number of people and households, their spatial distribution, age, ethnicity, gender structure, living conditions, educational level etc. The Census revealed that the population of Moldova decreased (from 3.4 Mio to 2.68 Mio in 2014) by almost one million since the last 2004 Census³⁸, caused by high emigration, mortality rate³⁹ and the negative natural population growth. The demographic structure by gender almost stayed the same, while the share of persons older than 60 years increased from 14.3% (2004) to 17.4% (2014), which demonstrates that the population of Moldova is ageing. The education gap between rural and urban population persists⁴⁰.

The gathered data is critical for development of the country, particularly for good governance, evidence-based policy formulation in education, health, social protection, as well as risk reduction, crisis response,

³⁶ Given the high number of applications, the SA&C Program spent the entire budget during the first year of implementation.

³⁷ The 2014 Census was organized by NBS. The cost of the Census was about 89 mio MDL funded mostly by the state budget, and co-funded by development partners – SDC, Government of Romania, Government of the Czech Republic, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP and EU. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=en&id=5582&idc=30>. The Census did not cover TN region, which postponed its census for 2 years citing financial difficulties. Its estimated TN population as of the beginning of 2014 was 505.1 thousand people. <http://www.infotag.md/rebellion-en/199035/>

³⁸ For additional information: <https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=295&id=2234>

³⁹ For additional information: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/countries/republic-of-moldova/data-and-statistics>

⁴⁰ In the urban area, persons with higher and vocational training accounted for 51.3%, while in the rural area - 22.9%.

economic development and business market analyses. In other words, it has a clear cross-sectorial and transversal character and needs further disaggregation at the district level.

The amended Law on Official Statistics offers to NBS the authority to manage individual data and facilitate data exchange between state institutions, which is problematic to be implemented. The Border Police and the Personal Data Protection Bureau are reluctant to share information about migration with the NBS. This affects the accuracy of data about the level of migration and emphasizes the weakness of the statistical system, which needs further capacity strengthening support.

5.4.2 Cross-cutting issues.

The cross-cutting issues / transversal themes (gender equality, social inclusion, HRBA) are well mainstreamed in the CS and through the project management cycle. Both women and men have equal access to and benefit from the Swiss-funded interventions. One of the SDC-funded projects analysed within the MTR (Cervical Cancer Screening) is focused mostly on women, which biologically is explainable, while the communication campaigns among other aspects, highlighted the role of men, fathers, brothers.

The CS and its portfolio uses LNOB principle and the most excluded / the most at risk groups (PwD, elderly people, ethnic minorities, youth, ex-prisoners) benefit from the Swiss-funded actions. The CS, through the projects/program, contributes to a reduction of their vulnerabilities and increasing social inclusion by supporting provision of the accessible primary health care services, involvement in policy-making and local development, creating employment opportunities, supporting their involvement in cultural events. There are difficulties in collecting the disaggregated data about ethnicity, which is a sensitive topic.

All three CS domains consider and tackle migration, development issues, institutional and regulatory framework and governance processes, including the reforms. These aspects are regularly analysed and reflected in strategic and project documents, annual reports, project reports, MERV, monitoring reports etc.) through the PCM.

5.4.3 Sustainability

In terms of planning, each project/program document contain a sustainability strategy. The sustainability and scaling-up/replication aspects are considered through the project management cycle, i.e. from the planning phase to reporting. Progress towards sustainability is regularly monitored, analyzed in the projects' reports, reflected in the management responses and integrated in further planning.⁴¹

Policy sustainability. In addition to the sustainability strategies, the projects from *Health* and *LG* domains have policy influencing strategies, while the projects from *EDE*, despite the policy-level implications – not yet (still working on it). The adopted and/or adjusted policies, legal and regulatory framework⁴² have promising policy sustainability prospects, because those acts became part of the normative framework of the country or the districts, which means that they are valid for undefined period of time and are applicable either countrywide or regionally/locally. Focus on qualitative healthcare services remains a priority in the policy documents, but it is challenging to operationalize. Therefore, the level of implementation of those adjusted and/or adopted normative acts will represent the ultimate policy sustainability indicator, proved by data delivered by the evidenced-based M&E system. Hopefully, the data generated by the 2014 Census will be used by the national policy makers and other stakeholders and will contribute to a better and evidenced-based policy-making, which subsequently will consolidate the policy sustainability prospective.

Institutional sustainability. The CS and its portfolio, among other strategic orientations, is geared toward enhancing the national functional capacities of the preponderantly existing state (e.g. NPHA, MECR, BRD, NBS, PHCs, YFHCs, CMHCs, YCs, dVET institutions etc.) and non-state actors (CALM, policy influencing national civil society platforms, HTAs, CSOs). In some cases, SDC supported the establishment and

⁴¹ For instance, the *Healthy Generation* and *MensSana* projects advanced tailored recommendations regarding sustainability, which has been taken into account during the development of the next phase.

⁴² E.g. Labour Code, Action Plan of Employment Strategy, Tax Code, Regulation on dVET, WSS Strategy, district policies, territorial health profiles, etc.

development of new structures, such as DPCs in three piloted districts and HTAs, and provided institutionalisation support to MARDE. Generally, the institutional sustainability is influenced by: staff turnover, institutional memory, knowledge management, organizational management procedures, financial basis and enabling environment.

However, the MTR findings highlight some promising institutional sustainability perspectives. Thus, PHCs, YFHCs, CMHCs (*Health* domain), YCs, HTAs, national policy influencing civil society networks and DPCs (*LG* domain) and targeted national line ministries and agencies increased their functionality⁴³ as they benefitted of the tailored capacity development support (consultancy, guidance and training) and technical assistance. Those achievements have long-lasting perspectives, but their sustainability depend on the above mentioned factors. The DPCs, as consultative bodies, are institutionalized on yearly basis by the decisions of the District Councils, which on the one hand represents partially an ownership indicator, but on the other hand also a fragility aspect, because the legitimacy of the DPCs is given by and depends on the political will of the district authority.

The developed curriculum on Cervical Cancer screening is also institutionalized, as it is mainstreamed in the curricula of the medical educational institutions. Monitoring of curriculum implementation will allow for assessing its relevance, effectiveness and sustainability.

Financial sustainability is mixed. It is in place in case of the YFHCs, CMHCs, which, according to the data provided by the Health Insurance Company of Moldova, slightly increased during the last two years.⁴⁴ Similar promising financial situation is with the YCs and the institutionalized cervical cancer screening curriculum. However, as revealed by the consultations with stakeholders, public funds for continuation of SDC-funded primary healthcare services are not guaranteed. The increased visibility of the primary healthcare services and enhanced capacities of the actors might convince local authorities to support the primary healthcare, on the top of the funding provided by the mandatory health insurance system.

As for the financial sustainability of the DPCs, it is weak, as the operational costs of the DPCs are fully dependent on project funds and, in case of replication of the successful district policy influencing models, the financial sustainability issues should be tackled.

Impressing sustainability and scale up achievements were scored within the *Migration & Development* component (*LG* domain), where, since the beginning of the M&D program in 2015, additional 135 municipalities created HTAs without the SDC support. The first edition of the Governmental Program DAR 1+3⁴⁵ (*Diaspora Succeeds at Home*) launched in 2020 institutionalized the HTA-model promoted by SDC. The Government allocated 20 Mio MDL for the program for the 2020-2021 period.⁴⁶

Environmental sustainability was not specifically targeted by the CS and its portfolio, as the SDC-funded initiatives were mostly designed as non-environmental interventions. The MTR did not remark any actions, which would produce harm or affect the environment; on contrary within the EDE domain, SDC promoted so called „green economy”, which is focused on the environmental friendly business development.

⁴³ Proved by the KAP studies and periodical reviews.

⁴⁴ The budget for YFHS increased from 23.6 Mio MDL (2019) to 24.7 Mio MDL (2020), while the budget for CMHC increased from 24.5 Mio MDL (2019) to 28.5 Mio MDL (2020).

⁴⁵ Where „1” is Government, and „3” are: LPAs, migrants and donors.

⁴⁶ For additional information: <http://brd.gov.md/ro/content/apel-privind-lansarea-programului-diaspora-acasa-reuseste-dar-13-2020>

6. CONCLUSIONS and LESSONS LEARNT

This chapter of the report summarizes key conclusions and lessons learnt based on the analyses of collected data and elaborations along the review areas.

6.1 Conclusions

The CS is well positioned and the strategic orientation and domains of the interventions are highly relevant and aligned to the country context and development priorities of Moldova, as well as to the policies of the current FCD. The context analysis is systematic, qualitative, evidence-based and relevant and takes into account the broad political, economic, social and cultural contexts. Some of the initial political, economic and social assumptions of the strategic domains are still valid and were reconfirmed during the MTR, while some of them are not or are questionable and, perhaps need rethinking.

The projects/program portfolio is relevant, interlinked with the CS and combines both *bottom-up* and *top-down* approaches, which are adequate for achieving the strategic results. The RBM, HRBA and the LNOB principles are well integrated, while the ToC approach and the political economy analysis are only partially mainstreamed in the project cycle management.

The adaptive management is widely used by the SCO and represents one of the key management-related strengths. Implementation and, subsequently, the performance of the CS is affected by several political, economic and social factors, including the pandemic crisis, which, beside the set back of all strategic domains, generated also some opportunities that might be used by SCO and its stakeholders in future programming.

Analysing the existing set of indicators and mid-term achievements, the performance represents a mixed picture, i.e. mostly modest in terms of country results, and satisfactory regarding the Swiss-funded results. Despite the above mentioned factors, the achievement of the Swiss-funded results is mostly on track. Within all three strategic domains, there are some targets, which are already achieved, some that are likely to be achieved, while several targets will be difficult to achieve by the end of the current strategy.

There are some promising sustainability prospects in terms of policy sustainability (e.g. adjusted and adopted national and local regulatory and normative frameworks) and institutional sustainability (e.g. integrated educational curricula, replicated HTA model). The ultimate sustainability will be measured based on the level of implementation of those adjusted and/or adopted normative acts, as well as the functionality of the institutionalized models, proved by data delivered by the evidenced-based M&E system.

6.2 Lessons Learnt

The MTR suggests the following three lessons that may be of value to SCO and its partners:

- A change-oriented strategic document and projects/program portfolio needs a well integrated and regularly monitored and adjusted Theory of Change. Adaptive management shall result from iterative reviews of the ToC. This lesson is applicable to all three strategic domains. See additional information in the *Recommendations* part of the MTR report.
- Adaptive management and promptness – are vital during constantly changing environment as eloquently demonstrated SCO management and described in the MTR report (e.g., support for the C-19 crisis response).
- Retaining achievements might be a more adequate approach than struggle to increase fulfilment during the crisis period. This lesson is provided by EDE domain. See additional information in the *Recommendations* part of the MTR report.

The MTR recognizes that there might be additional (project) specific lessons analysed and reflected by SCO and its partners. Nonetheless, given the aspects described in the report, the list of lessons learnt is restricted three overarching and most striking ones.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the MTR report provides a manageable number of recommendations, based on the findings and conclusions of the review. The MTR recommendations are classified in two groups: 1) *General recommendations*, which are valid for the entire CS and its portfolio and 2) *Domain recommendations*, i.e. tailored for each of the strategic domains. Both groups contain operational recommendations, which might be implemented by the end of the current strategy, and strategic ones, i.e. for the next cooperation program for Moldova, if considered feasible.

7.1 General recommendations

Rec. 01

Capitalize on the achievements and continue implementation of the CS within the same strategic framework.

Capitalize on achievements and, despite pandemic situation, continue CS implementation within the same strategic framework supporting bottom-up and top-down approaches and inter-sectorial collaboration and synergies between projects and domains. Keep the initial targets reflected in the results framework, because their achievement under the current CS is mostly on track. Include two indicators focused on retaining the mid-term achievements. (See *Recommendations* for EDE domain).

Rec. 02

Extend the current CS with one year.

As mentioned above, the achievement of CS results is mostly on track (with some exceptions) and the SDC-funded projects are not chronologically synchronized with the CS. However, there are at least two interlinked core reasons in favour of extending the current CS rather than developing a new strategic document: 1) delays caused by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic situation and more delays are to be expected, as the crisis will most probably continue next year; and 2) a much needed post-COVID response for recovery from the (long-term) consequences of the crisis. In other words, the next cooperation program should contain a response to the negative impact of the crisis, which at this stage are just partially known, because the pandemic still persists and is even increasing.

Rec. 03

Mainstream the ToC and the regular political economy analysis through the PCM.

As the name suggests, a Theory of Change (ToC) is a change pathway and a hypothesis of how we anticipate change to occur. The ToC is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a certain context. Therefore, it is advisable to mainstream the ToC through the project management cycle of the portfolio, i.e. in the project proposals, monitoring & evaluation system, and in progress reporting. The process might include: identification of the readiness for change, monitoring to what extent the assumptions are still valid and the expected changes are generated as predicted in the ToC, as well as identification of the resistances to change, and how to overcome those resistances, using the organizational and individual change management approaches.⁴⁷ A common vision on the ToC and change management is necessary. Some thematic consultations/trainings might be needed.

⁴⁷ Two recommendable (one for organizational and one for individual) change management model with the toolkits are:

- 1) *Kotter's 8 steps change model* (developed by the Harvard Business School Professor, John Kotter) consisting of: *Create a sense of urgency - Build a guiding coalition - Form a strategic vision and initiatives - Enlist a volunteer army - Enable action by removing barriers - Generate short-term wins - Sustain acceleration- Institute change*. For additional information: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_82.htm and
- 2) The *ADKAR* model for individual change consisting of five stages, which „cannot be skipped or reordered“:
 - Awareness of the need for change
 - Desire to participate and support the change
 - Knowledge on how to change
 - Ability to implement required skills and behaviors
 - Reinforcement to sustain the change

For additional information - *ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government and Our Community*: <https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/why-the-adkar-model-works>

Conducting regular political economy analysis⁴⁸ (general or/and per sector) could be helpful to review the initial assumptions. For aid activities to achieve sustainable changes, they need to be both technically sound and politically possible.

Rec. 04	<i>Further support for the development of the statistical system.</i>
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The NBS is the central public agency, which produces official statistical data needed for adequate policy-making in all key sectors, including: health, governance and economy. A strong, independent and credible official statistical system is a precondition for an evidenced-based and relevant development. Therefore, the MTR recommends the SCO to establish direct communication and relationship with the NBS and to provide support aimed at enhancing institutional capacity of the NBS, especially in the areas of outmost importance for the Swiss portfolio, such as: population, incl. health, migration, and socio-economic data. Further institutional capacity development areas might include: forecasting capacity, e.g. population development forecast; integrated quality management system of the Census operations; analytical capacity for processing demographical data, such as those resulted from the 2014 Census. NBS needs support in getting access to public registry data⁴⁹, especially for the Census planned for 2023 – the SCO could help with advocacy and policy influencing (under the next cooperation program).

Rec. 05	<i>Use the increased awareness on digitalization for mainstreaming it as a transversal topic.</i>
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Modern information and communication technologies (computers, Internet, cell phones) are revolutionizing how individuals communicate with each other, seek and exchange information. Access, equity, quality, and cost-effectiveness are key issues related to public service provision, including in healthcare, education, employment, and governance.

Digitalization, on the one hand helps overcoming distance and time barriers between services providers and community/beneficiary/client, and on the other hand, as highlighted by the pandemic crisis, it can increase the divide between rich and poor and impede the access to the services of the latter, as they have less or no access to modern technologies. Therefore, implementers engaged in digitalization initiatives need to be aware of the country and local context (i.e. available resources, e-governance opportunities, needs, strengths, weaknesses and vulnerability levels), in order to prevent and address possible further exclusion and ensure equitable access.

Identification of the potential barriers and risks, collaboration, technical assistance, basic conditions (internet access, working tools: computers, smartphones) and capacity development are fundamental to the success and sustainability of digitalisation.

7.2 Domain recommendations

Health domain:

- ***Continue supporting the Health domain***, because the emergency preparedness of the health system of Moldova is still weak, as revealed by the pandemic, which increasing the pressure on the healthcare system. Flexibility and receptiveness are important. Considering the ongoing crisis and unpredictability of its dynamic, additional support and reallocations might be required.
- ***Support a dedicated study on health system of Moldova*** to: 1) Assess the impact of COVID-19; 2) Understand the national response; 3) Identify the lessons to be learnt, as well as 4) Develop recommendations for post-COVID period, which could be reflected in the next cooperation program.
- ***Focus on both policy influencing, especially on advocacy for increasing and optimizing the budget allocations for health system, and maximizing the national healthcare capacities.*** A political economic

⁴⁸ Political economy analysis is about understanding the political dimensions of any context and actively using this information to inform policy and programming. For additional information: *Political Economy Analysis in Action. A Training Course provided for Swiss Development Cooperation*.19-21 .09.2016

<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLG/ Documents/COURS.pdf>

⁴⁹ See the described bottlenecked information sharing among NBS-Boarder Police -Bureau for Personal Data Protection.

analysis of the sector might be beneficial to identify entry points for more effective policy dialogue, as well as potential barriers.

- **Support monitoring the quality of the primary healthcare service provision.** Facilitate exchange of experience with the healthcare systems of other countries (including Switzerland) on monitoring the quality of the primary healthcare service provision. Among other effects, it will increase implementation of the quality standards and, subsequently, will consolidate the quality management system.
- In the long-term perspective, **keep Health as a distinct domain.** Focus more on determinants of health from different perspectives and on systemic interventions addressing governance issues, such as: access to public services, digitalisation of services, strategic budgeting, results-oriented M&E of policy implementation etc.
- **Retain the sector lead, but make a gradual switch from supporting implementation of the healthcare services to facilitation and consolidation of the sustainability prospects.** For instance, for cervical screening services, among other actions, it might imply: monitoring of the implementation of the cervical screening register; advocacy for enhancing financing mechanism for the cervical prevention; facilitation of introduction of accreditation mechanism for health institutions to be eligible to provide cervical screening services. Similar shift in vision is needed for other healthcare subcomponents.

LG domain

- Under the current strategy, **continue strengthening local governance and multi-level coordination based on the existing administrative structures.** Considering the delayed reforms, put less emphasis on decentralization, **while remaining ready to support the TAR and decentralisation reforms** if the political context becomes more conducive.
- For the next cooperation program, **reshape the LG domain and transform it into Governance domain.** Take advantage on the promising high level political changes in Moldova (e.g., the results of the Presidential Elections, November 2020) to support anticorruption agenda. Mainstream expressly *good governance* and *anticorruption* components in the *Governance* domain and support respective thematic projects and civic platforms focused on national and local governance. Subsequently, adjust the performance indicators and the results framework. Decide what strategic position to give to local governance within a reshaped governance domain (in relation to other interventions like anti-corruption, good governance, statistical capacity, media etc.).
- **Support further civic participation in the local and national policy making alongside with the implementation and public monitoring initiatives** of the civil society and media. Civil society needs capacity development to be able to monitor, among other actions, the budget allocations at the national and local/district levels and to influence the process, given the specific needs of vulnerable groups. This is important both for increasing the transparency and watchdog role of the civil society, but also for promoting good governance principles, independent media, enhancing public participation, social inclusion and consolidation of the accountability mechanisms.
- Prior to scaling up the piloted local policy influencing model (DPCs), **find options / solutions to increase the financial sustainability prospects of these entities**, particularly their operational costs, which are fully dependent on the SDS-funded (EC-EC) project.
- Analyse success factors, lessons learnt, capitalize the good practices and **scale up in the TN region the HTA model, as a local development and diaspora involvement approach.** In other words, extend the positive experiences in TN region just like other strategic domains (Health domain – *Health* component of the CBM Program, EDE Domain – dVET subcomponent). This recommendation is aligned with the SDC intention to extend interventions to the TN region, reflected in the CS.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ „In all three domains, SDC will, in close consultation with the GoM, increase efforts to engage in the Transnistrian Region...Should a window of opportunity open up during the coming four years, SDC stands ready to strengthen its involvement in the region.” Swiss Cooperation Strategy. Republic of Moldova (2018-2021), page 18.

EDE domain

- **Update the existing set of performance indicators** and include *the number of retained jobs* as a strategic indicator in the current results framework. Subsequently, set a target and monitor its achievement. Periodically monitor the sustainability of the jobs created.
- **Replicate the retaining approach during pandemic period** in case on investment attraction, i.e. focus rather on retaining the existing investors than on attracting new ones. This might require adjustment of the initial approaches.
- **Gain momentum of the dVET piloting in TN region** for (more active) involvement of the Chamber of Commerce from Tiraspol, sharing the experiences and encouraging cooperation between the dVET institutions, companies involved in dVET, students, Chambers of Commerce and other relevant actors from the both sides.
- Take advantage of the new regulations and **support development of the financial sustainability plans of the VET institutions** for diversification of their sources of income. **Support capacity strengthening of the VET institutions** for implementation of their financial sustainability plans. There is also need for preparation of private sector companies for dVET, particularly capacity development of the mentors and guidance in creation of working conditions for apprentices.
- **Develop a policy sustainability strategy.** This is necessary given the need to support the government in developing and implementing policies for a more technological, resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

Small Actions & Culture

- **Keep SA&C Program in the portfolio of the next cooperation program and support cultural and independent media development.** The MTR findings illustrated that small does not mean insignificant; on contrary, the number of applications, visibility and popularity level, as well as the wide variety of people involved in SA&C actions justify further support.

8. ANNEXES

8.1 Review Questions

Review Area 1: **Context analysis** (partner country context, the region and to the Swiss context)

1.1 Positioning and adaptation of CS with respect to country and regional context, as well as Swiss policies.

- How well does the CS (strategic orientation, overall goal, domains of intervention and transversal themes, global challenges) reflect the development priorities set by Moldovan Government and the policies of the Federal Council Dispatch 2017-2020?
- How coherent are the Swiss interventions in Moldova with the macro-level priorities set for the region (Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus)?
- Which changes in the context were the most important and what effects may they have caused on the CS? Which adaptations have been taken?

1.2 Quality of context analysis

- To what extent is the context analysis comprehensive and relevant, including sector analysis of CS priority domains?
- To what extent is the broad governance and political context taken into account in the CS and ARs?
- Does the analysis include current issues (e.g. gender equality and social inclusion, global challenges, power relations, and existing territorial disparities)?
- Is the context analysis identifying major sources of conflict and the roles of the main related stakeholders?

Review Area 2: **Relevance and appropriateness of the projects/program portfolio**

2.1 Relevance of the projects/program portfolios

- To what extent are the projects/program portfolios relevant, consistent, and coherent for achieving the results of the CS regarding its domains of intervention?
- To what extent are the approaches appropriate?
- Which approaches can be considered as innovative and why?
- Which innovative approaches produce added value?
- How well the SCO ensures synergies between its projects and other donor's projects?
- Is there anything that SCO doesn't and should be doing?

2.2 Theory of change (ToC) approach

- To what extent the ToC is integrated in the CS approach/ projects/program portfolios?
- To what extent the key assumptions are still valid?
- To what extent the expected changes are happening as predicted in the ToC?
- What should be adjusted in the ToC to reflect the tendencies and the development changes?

2.3 Involvement of the key stakeholders

- To what extent the relevant state and non-state stakeholders (e.g. private sector, governmental institutions and political parties, civil society, development partners) are involved in the strategic partnerships?
- Are there any other actors, which could bring added value, but are not involved so far?

Review Area 3: **Implementation of the CS and its portfolio**

3.1 Management performance

- How effective is the portfolio management of the SCO (regarding transversal themes, policy dialogue, collaboration with the global programs, financial and human resources, aid diplomacy/policy influencing, coordination efforts, the mix of instruments)?
- What are its contributions to the achievement of results?
- What management aspects can be improved?

3.2 Consistency and quality of the CS monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system

- What types and methods of monitoring are used?
- To what extent is the process management of the CS M&E system relevant and effective, in order to provide evidence-based data for accounting for results (reporting) and CS steering?
- To what extent the learnings and recommendations generated by the M&E system are incorporated in the management decisions?

3.3 Coordination and aid effectiveness in the country set up

- Which role does the SCO play vis-à-vis the national government and the donor community?
- How well is the Swiss CS harmonized with and complementary to national development plans and the global efforts of other development partners? What are the added values of the support provided by Switzerland to Moldova?
- What is the role of the SCO in aid-coordination with the Moldovan government and with other partners in order to improve the aid effectiveness and avoid duplication of efforts?
- How well does the SCO identify and promote synergies within the Swiss cooperation program, as well as with interventions of other donors/development partners?

3.4 Key factors influencing implementation of the CS and its portfolio

- What are the internal and external key driving forces/factors (KDF), which enhance implementation of the CS and its portfolio and, subsequently the performance?
- What are the factors, which hinder implementation?
- What is the management response of the SCO to the KDF and hindering factors?

Review Area 4: Results of the CS – in relation to the results at country level

4.1 Domain results, effectiveness and contribution to country results

4.1.1 What are the most important preliminary results achieved under the current strategy at the outcome level (LG and EDE) and at the impact level (Health)?

- To what extent:
 - Men/boys and women /girls effectively enjoy essential healthcare services and act responsibly with regard to their own health?
 - Health institutions ensure equitable access to quality and affordable PHS, responsive to the users' needs, and with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention.
 - Men/boys and women/girls have increased health awareness, make healthier lifestyle choices, improve their healthcare-seeking behavior, and actively hold health institutions accountable for delivering quality services.
 - Women and men, with a special focus on excluded ones, effectively participate in local decision-making processes, demand the respect of their rights, and hold LPA accountable?
 - LPAs have increased access to resources, allocate and spend funds in line with the population's priorities and provide sustainable and quality services in an inclusive and accountable way.
 - A broad-based coalition of different stakeholders actively advocates for effective decentralization and advances the decentralization reform agenda.
 - Women and men, with a special focus on excluded ones, have new or improved jobs and/or net additional income.
 - VET, lifelong learning and job mediation systems match relevant skills with jobs in demand on the labour market.
- What are the most significant changes generated so far per each of three domains?
- To what extent the use of country systems has increased as the result of development support?
- Are there any implementation delays? If Yes, what are the reasons?
- Are there any significant unintended results (positive and negative)?
- What are the perceptible indirect positive and/or negative consequences (environmental, social, cultural, gender, etc.) derived from or induced by the Swiss interventions?

4.1.2 To what extent the objectives set for the new domains (LG and EDE) under the current CS are likely to be achieved?

- Are any significant adjustments / corrective measures necessary?
- How did the COVID crisis affect the achievement of the results set for the current CS?
- To what extent the COVID crisis generated opportunities for different sets of results?

4.2 Cross-cutting issues

- To what extent the gender and social inclusion aspects are mainstreamed in the CS and portfolio?
 - Do women and men equally benefit from the results of Swiss interventions?
 - Do the most excluded / the most at risk groups benefit? Does the CS contribute to a reduction of their vulnerabilities and inequality?
- To what extent do the three CS domains consider and tackle sector governance issues including institutional and regulatory framework conditions, governance processes (i.e. good governance principles), governance actors, conflict potentials and intersections between sectors (especially sector decentralization).
- To what extent do the three CS domains consider and tackle specific migration and development issues in their sector of intervention?

4.3 Good practices and lessons learnt

- What are the good practices generated during the CS delivery?
- What should be learned in terms of design/planning and implementation?

4.4. Sustainability and scaling up

4.4.1. Which actions have been taken at country level to enhance the sustainability of the Swiss investments?

- What are the sustainability perspectives of the commitments and achievements in terms of: policy sustainability, institutional sustainability, financial sustainability and environmental sustainability?
- What are the perspectives of the fiscal decentralization reform in Moldova?
- To what extent the generated MSC are likely to be sustainable?
- To what extent increased the use of country systems as the result of the support provided?

4.4.2 Which innovations generated by field experience have been or should be scaled up?

4.4.3 Should the current CS be extended (and if so, for how long?) to allow for the achievement of set results? Or should a new CS be developed? Which strategic and management aspects should be considered.

8.2 MTR Agenda with the consulted stakeholders

AGENDA MTR of the CS (2018-2021), 02 - 20 October, 2020

Time	Stakeholder
Day 1 - Friday, 02 October 2020	
10.30-11.15	Christine Honegger Zolotukhin - FDFA Political Division
Day 2 - Monday, 05 October 2020	
11.00-11.45	Aliona Pistruga- Head of Public Health Center, Edinet
12.00-13.00	Valeriu Sava- NPO Health, SCO-M
13.30-14.30	Radu Danii - NPO LG, SCO-M
15.00-16.00	Cristina Cojocaru-Parsons, NPO EDE, SCO-M
16.15-17.00	Natalia Cernat- NPO SA/C, SCO-M
17.15-17.45	Victoria Dunford- HTA, Mihaileni village, Riscani district, SAC grant recipient
Day 3 - Tuesday 06, October 2020	
09.00-10.00	Simon Pidoux- Deputy Head of Mission, Swiss Embassy in Ukraine
11.30-12.15	Ala Curteanu- Local Team Leader, <i>Healthy life</i> Project
12.30-13.30	Andrei Darie- UNDP Program Specialist, <i>Inclusive Growth</i> Cluster Lead, <i>MidL</i> Project Zinaida Adam- <i>MidL</i> Project Manager, UNDP
13.45-14.30	Valeriu Sava- NPO Health, SCO-M - 2 nd meeting
14.45-15.30	Thomas Foerch- Program Manager, <i>MEPA</i> Project, GIZ
15.45-16.30	Valeriu Turea- State Chancellery, Head of BRD Nadejda Zubco- Deputy Director BRD Valeriu Sajin - Senior Consultant BRD Violina Donu - Senior Consultant, <i>DEH</i> Program Diana Cucus - Senior Consultant, <i>DAR 1+3</i> Program
16.45-17.30	Alexandre Ghélew - Desk Officer for Moldova, SDC HQ
Day 4 – Wednesday, 07 October 2020	
9.00-09.45	Constantin Rimis - State Secretary, MHLSP Tatiana Zatic - Head of Department of Primary, Emergency and Community Care Policies, MHLSP
10.00-11.00	Anna Gherganova - Head of Department for Employment Policies and Migration Regulation, MHLSP
12.00-12.45	Doina Maria Rotaru - Head of Economic Planning and Funds Monitoring Department, National Health Insurance Company
13.00-13.45	Dorin Andros - State Secretary, MARDE
14.00-14.30	Valeriu Gutu – Mayor, Cioresi village, Nisporeni district
14.45-15.15	Ion Carpineanu – Mayor, Carpineni village, Hincesti district
16.30-17.15	Corina Lungu - Civic Education Focal Point, MECR
19.00-19.30	Lidia Golubas - Head of Primary Health Center Magdacesti village, Criuleni District
Day 5 – Thursday, 08 October 2020	
09.00-09.45	Ion Şalaru - Deputy Director; National Agency for Public Health (NAPH) Angela Anisei - Head of Quality Management of Health Services Department; NAPH
10.00-10.45	Lilia Plugaru - National Employment Agency
11.00-11.45	Lilia Palii - General Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure
12.00-12.45	Rodica Verbeniuc – CEO, Moldovan Investment Agency; Elena Oleinic-Slivinschi - Deputy Director, MIA
13.00-14.00	Aurelia Spataru - Deputy Director of the National Bureau of Statistics Natalia Bargan - Head of Population and Migration Statistics Valentina Istrati - Head of Census Department

15.00-15.30	Lucia Caraiman - Director VET School no. 5, Balti city
15.45-16.15	Rogoti Elena - Deputy Director Serghei Munteanu - Director, VET School no. 2, Orhei town
16.30-17.00	Natalia Cebotar - Civic Education teacher, Sircova Gymnasium, Rezina town
17.30-18.30	Andrei Brighidin - EC & EC Project Manager, East Europe Foundation
Day 6 – Friday, 09 October 2020	
9.00-09.30	Ghenadie Vieru- Manager, CMHC, Soroca town
09.45-10.15	Iulia Roșca - Coordinator/Manager, YFHC, Sangerei town
10.30-11.15	Silviu Gîncu - Head of VET Department, MECR
11.30-12.00	Tatiana Ivanova - Coordinator/Manager, YFHC, Comrat city, UTA Gagauzia
12.15-13.00	Viorel Gorceag - Country Representative, Swiss Red Cross, <i>Universal Health Coverage</i> Project
13.15-14.00	Ion Bolboceanu - Head of Public Health Center, Orhei town
15.00-17.00	Caroline Tissot – Director, SCO-M Viorica Cretu - Deputy Director; SCO-M
Day 7 – Monday, 12 October 2020	
9.15-9.45	Diana Celac- Program Manager Water & Environment, Austrian Development Agency
10.00-10.45	Viorel Furdui - Executive Director, Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova
11.00-11.30	Cristina Panzari- HTA, Diaspora Focal Point, Cimislia town
12.30-13.00	Carolina Furdui- HTA, Cotiujeii Mari village, Soldanesti district, member of CALM
13.15-13.45	Siluoana Fitocarev- <i>Lala play</i> beneficiary
14.45-15.15	Valentina Jamba- District Participation Council, Soroca
15.30-16.00	Ion Drangoi- CSOs representing Roma/ activist of the “Roma Voice” NGO, Cania village, Cantemir district
16.00-16.30	Vlada Pașcan- YFHC & YC volunteer
16.30-17.00	Ludmila Vasilov- CSO representing Elderly/ DVV International Moldova
17.30-18.00	Nicoleta Meaun- Final Beneficiary/ Dual VET Student, Balti city
Day 8 – Tuesday, 13 October 2020	
9.00-9.45	Parascovia Munteanu- CSO representing PwD/ Keystone Moldova
10.00-10.45	Sergiu Harea- President, Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCI) Natalia Caleinic- Deputy President, CCI
11.45-12.15	Svetlana Stanciu- Director, local transportation company for Fujikura’s transportation needs, Comrat town
12.30-13.00	Veronica Kolpakchi- Leader, Community Group of Mothers, Taraclia town
13.15-13.45	Viorica Moldovanu- ICT non-formal trainee who became a trainer
13.50-14.40	Natalia Plugaru- UNFPA Deputy Representative Eduard Mihalas- <i>Strengthening Statistical System</i> Project Coordinator Ion Donea- <i>Youth Centres</i> Project Coordinator Violeta Prepelita- <i>Cervical Cancer Screening</i> Project Coordinator Igor Condrat- Project Analyst;
14.45-15.45	Igor Pokanevich- World Health Organization Representative to Moldova Larisa Boderscova- NPO, Health Systems, WHO Country Office / <i>Confidence Building Measures</i> Program, <i>Health</i> component
16.45-17.30	Simon Springett- UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Laura Fiorotto, Head of the Resident Coordinator Office, UNRC
17.45-18.15	Andrei Frățescu- YFHC & YC volunteer
Day 9 – Wednesday, 14 October 2020	
9.00-9.45	Diana Cazacu- Project Manager, Specialist <i>Democracy and Governance</i> , USAID
10.00-10.30	Danu Roșca- Youth Specialist, Youth Center, Ungheni town

10.45-11.15	Nonna Mihalcean- Manager of Youth Center, Balti city
13.00-13.45	Achim Mortier- Head of Cooperation, German Embassy, BMZ/GIZ
14.15-14.45	Stefan Albu- <i>Lala play</i> beneficiary, Donduseni town
15.00-15.45	Alexei Buzu- Director, Centre Partnership for Development, Coordinator for community mobilization outcome <i>EC-EC</i> Project
16.00-16.45	Pius Frick- ex-Country Director, Lichtenstein Development Service
17.00-17.30	Elena Moraru- Head of HTA, Selemet village, Cimislia district
18.00-18.30	Betisor Adriana- Beneficiary / Dual VET Student, Balti
Day 10 – Thursday, 15 October 2020	
9.15-9.45	Angela Anisei- Head of Quality Management of Health Services Department; NAPH
12.15-12.45	Silvia Feraru- Roma Mediator
15.30-16.00	Svetlana Colesnic- President, NGO that implemented a Community Health Project, Boscana, Criuleni District Iurii Colesnic- Beneficiary of Self-management of Chronic Diseases Program, Boscana village, Criuleni District
16.15-16.45	Edgard Duscov- <i>Lala play beneficiary</i> , Comrat town
Day 11 - Friday, 16 October 2020	
9.00-9.45	Adrian Ermurachi- State Chancellery, Deputy Secretary General of the Government
10.00-11.00	Dima Al-Khatib- Resident Representative Andrei Darie - Program Specialist, UNDP Valeria Ieseanu- Program Specialist, UNDP
11.30-12.15	Andrei Chistol- State Secretary for Culture, MECR
12.30-13.15	Stefan Butscher- Deputy Director, SCO-M Management Team
13.30-14.15	Mariana Rotaru- Head of Sectoral Cooperation Division, Deputy Head of Foreign Assistance Department, Ministry of Finance
Day 12 - Monday, 19 October 2020	
9.30-10.15	Galina Lesco- Coordinator of SDC <i>Healthy Generation</i> Project, Manager of Youth Friendly Health Centre “Neovita”/ Resource Center for YFHCs Network
17.00-17.45	Andrei Brighidin- <i>Engaging Citizens & Empowering Communities</i> Project Manager, East-Europe Foundation - 2 nd meeting
Day 13 - Tuesday, 20 October 2020	
9.00-9.30	Olesea Diacenco- Beneficiary of CMHC, Soroca town
10.00-10.30	Vasile Savca- DPC, Causeni district
11.30-12.30	2 nd meeting Natalia Plugaru- UNFPA Deputy Representative Eduard Mihalas- <i>Strengthening Statistical System</i> Project Coordinator Ion Donea- <i>Youth Centres</i> Project Coordinator Violeta Prepelita- <i>Cervical Cancer Screening</i> Project Coordinator Igor Condrat- Project Analyst;
15.00-15.45	Magdalena Mueller-Uri- Head of Development Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova
16.00-16.45	Carolina Odobescu- Senior Country Officer, World Bank

8.3 List of reviewed documents

1. *Swiss Cooperation Strategy Republic of Moldova (2018-2021).*
2. *Strategia de Cooperare a Elveției pentru Republica Moldova (2018-2021).*
3. *Стратегия сотрудничества Швейцарии с Республикой Молдова на 2018-2021 годы.*
4. *EDE Domain Concept Note – Moldova CS 2018 – 2021.*
5. *Republic of Moldova. Annual Report 2018 with planning part 2019.* For internal use.
6. *Management Response to the Annual Report (2018).*
7. *MERV- Monitoring System for Development-Relevant Changes (2018).*
8. *Republic of Moldova. Annual Report 2019.*
9. *Management Response to the Annual Report (2019).*
10. *MERV - Monitoring System for Development-Relevant Changes (2019).*
11. *Economic Development and Employment Backstopping. Mission Report.* Roel Hakemulder, 2 July 2019. 2 -15 June 2019.
12. *Management Response and Review of EDE Opportunities Potentially Leading to New Interventions. Backstopping mandate – Roel Hakemulder 2-15 June 2019.*
13. *MOLDOVA 2020. National Development Strategy: 7 solutions for economic growth and poverty reduction.*
14. *Small and Medium Enterprise Sector Development Strategy for 2012-2020.*
15. *National Strategy for Investment Attraction and Export Promotion 2016-2020.*
16. *Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2013-2020.*
17. *Moldova Policy Notes 2019. Sustaining Stability and Reviving Growth.* World Bank Group.
18. *Republic of Moldova. State of the Country Report 2018.* Expert Group. 2019.
19. *National Employment Strategy and the Matrix of Actions for 2017-2021.*
20. *Labour Market of the Republic of Moldova. Key trends and recommendations.* Iurie Morcotilo. Alexandru Fala. Vadim Gumene. 2020.
21. *Studiul pietei muncii din Republica Moldova.* Chisinau, 2020.
22. *End of Phase Level Assessment of the Water Supply and Sanitation Project (APASAN) using the Most Significant Change Technique.* Evaluation Report. 2019.
23. *Competitiveness Enhancement Project 2. Cost of doing business survey.* World Bank Group. Ministerul Economiei si Infrastructurii. 2019.
24. *Moldova: Rekindling economic dynamism.* World Bank Group. April 2019.
25. *The SDC's Guidance on Governance.*
26. Info about the priorities of new Swiss International Cooperation Strategy (2021-2024): <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-78145.html> and <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/news/dossiers/alle-dossiers/iza-2021-2024.html>
27. *Power Point Presentation: IZA. Message for International Cooperation Strategy.* Department for Cooperation with Eastern Europe/Eurasia. Barbara Jäggi Hasler. 01.03.2020.
28. *Voluntary National Review. Progress Report 2020*
29. *Governmental DECISION no. 725 On the mechanism for coordinating the state policy in the field of diaspora, migration and development.* 8.09.2017
30. *Strategia de Dezvoltare a Educatiei pentru anii 2014-2020, „Educatia – 2020”*
31. *Credit Proposal Nr 7F-04447.08*
32. *Reducing the Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases – Healthy Life Project (“Proiect Viață Sănătoasă”): Review*
33. *Monitoring Matrix CS 2018-2021.* Revised June 2019.
34. *State of Local Democracy Moldova. Assessment Report 2017*
35. *Report: Baseline Study of the FACE (Fostering Active Civic Engagement) Program*
36. *Adapting the 2030 AGENDA ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT to the Context of the Republic of Moldova. Results of the consultation process.* March, 2017