

SDC's engagement

in Basic Education / Lifelong Learning



Portfolio Review 2017 – 2020

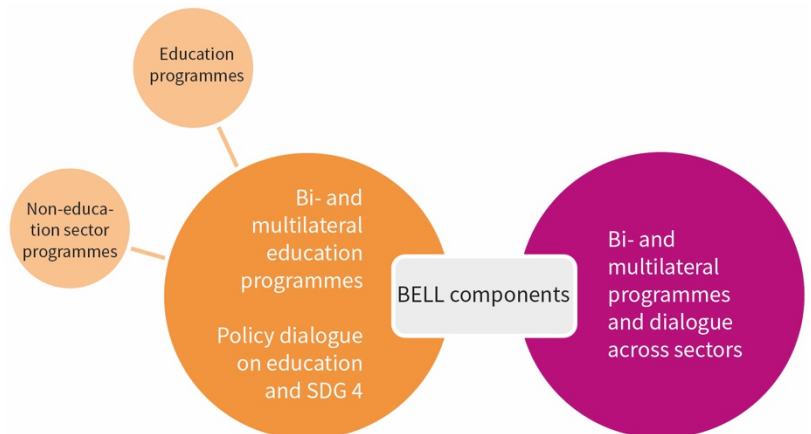


Basic Education/ Lifelong Learning as a cornerstone of Swiss development cooperation

Basic Education (BE) establishes the foundation for individual, social and economic development and political participation. It aims to meet basic learning needs and build related competencies and basic skills for people of all ages – children, youth and adults. Basic Education comprises primary and secondary formal education as well as non-formal alternative or continuing education in the context of lifelong learning for basic life skills development. As a key enabler for sustainable development, basic education / lifelong learning (BELL) is a priority of Swiss development cooperation.

Scope of SDC's BELL engagement

SDC's BELL engagement encompasses bi- and multilateral cooperation programmes and policy dialogue on education and SDG4. It comprises both education programmes as well as cross-sectoral activities such as non-education sector programmes that are taking place in education settings (e.g. a health programme that takes place in schools) or programmes that include educational components for people of all ages (e.g. BE components such as basic skills development, education for sustainable development, civic or human rights education, literacy and numeracy).



BELL activities are implemented in development, transition and humanitarian contexts spanning all three SDC framework credits¹ (Humanitarian aid; Technical cooperation and financial aid for developing countries; Transition aid and cooperation with Eastern Europe).

Why look at SDC's engagement in Basic Education / Lifelong Learning from 2017 to 2020?

The SDC Education Unit and Focal Point undertook this analysis to provide a visualised narrative of SDC's BELL engagement in the period from 2017 to 2020.

Both SDC's Education Strategy as well as the 2017-2020 Federal Council's Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation were launched in 2017. In the latter, the Swiss Parliament instructed SDC to increase its financial commitment to basic education and vocational skills development by 50% compared with its commitments for the 2013-2016 Dispatch. This increase was to be reflected by gradual adjustments of resources in bi- and multilateral engagement and global programmes by way of three implementation modalities: (i) larger investments in education programmes in BE and VSD; (ii) scaling up education components in other sectors; and (iii) thematic specific policy dialogue in multilateral organisations.

This analysis presents the evolution of the BELL portfolio throughout the implementation of the 2017-2020 Dispatch providing an opportunity to monitor the gains made. The analysis also presents some comparative elements to gauge the evolution of the BELL portfolio in relation to the previous Dispatch period from 2013-2016.² By including several project examples spanning both Dispatch periods, it goes beyond a statistical overview of SDC's BELL engagement to also tell the stories behind the figures.

¹ As per Dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation 2017–2020

² Note that the goal of 50% increased commitment was monitored and [reported on](#) by SDC's Evaluation and Controlling Section. This Portfolio Review does not look at commitment figures. It is based on expenditure figures shared by SDC's Statistics Team.

The analysis in this brochure is presented in five sections.

The first section provides a snapshot overview of SDC's BELL engagement from 2017 to 2020 looking at overall spending and project numbers, framework credits, education thematic priorities, countries and partnerships.

Section 2 provides a visualisation of the geographic expansion of SDC's BELL engagement providing information on the number of projects and spending per region.

The third section looks at the distribution of projects per strategic orientation of SDC's Education Strategy and provides figures on their evolution from 2016 to 2018.

Section 4 looks at implementation modalities of SDC's BELL engagement looking at progress along the three implementation instruments as set out in SDC's Education Strategy (i) larger investments in education programmes in BE and VSD; (ii) scaling up education components in other sectors; and (iii) thematic specific policy dialogue in multilateral organisations.

The last section is dedicated to broader programmatic considerations including synergies between BELL and Vocational Skills Development (VSD), SDC's BELL engagement in fragile and conflicted affected countries, humanitarian and migration contexts and in urban areas as well as innovative projects under the Education Fund.

How was this analysis conducted?

This Portfolio Review is an update of a previous review carried out in 2019.

The earlier version looked at SDC's BELL portfolio in 2016 and its evolution in 2017 and 2018. It included both quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis identified projects featuring at least one of the below listed SAP codes (as their first, second or third priority area). The qualitative analysis looked at SAP project descriptions, SDC's public project database and various project documents and reports. Based on this, short project narratives were drafted providing additional information on the profile, features and achievements of each project.

The present Portfolio Review includes some of the findings of the earlier qualitative analysis and in addition to this, provides an update on the quantitative elements to include numbers of projects and expenditures for the entire latest Dispatch period from 2017 to 2020.

To capture the characteristics and evolution of SDC's BELL portfolio between 2017 and 2020, this quantitative analysis also makes comparative reference to the previous Dispatch period (2013-2016). The analysis is entirely based on SDC's SAP database.³ Projects were selected based on a list of the following relevant SAP codes representing thematic features that represent BELL activities.⁴

SAP codes until 2016	SAP codes as of 2017
12725 Formal basic education	20001 Education policy and administrative management
12726 Non-formal basic education	20002 Education facilities and training
12727 Education Policy	20003 Teacher training
12730 Tertiary education	20004 Primary education
	20005 Basic life skills for youth and adults
	20006 Secondary education
	20007 Higher education
	20092 School feeding <i>[added in 2020]</i>

³ The SAP database is the most important source for financial, thematic and geographic characteristics of the SDC portfolio used for internal management and external reporting. This analysis is strictly limited to the scope and quality of data available in SAP as shared by SDC's Statistics Team in April 2021.

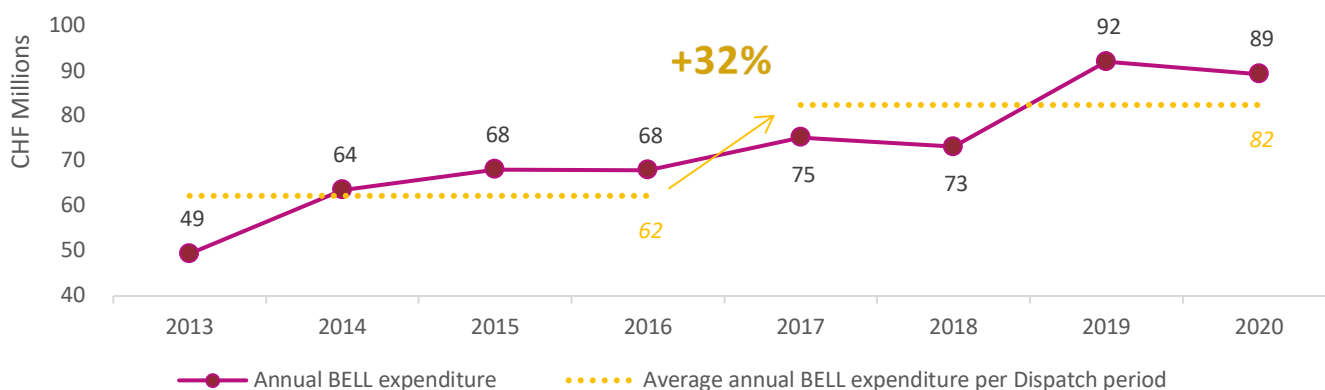
⁴ Each SAP code refers to one specific thematic area. Based on a list of SAP codes, each SDC project is identified by a first, a second and a third priority thematic area. See the methodology note for definitions of each SAP code.

1. Snapshot of SDC's Basic Education / Lifelong Learning engagement

SDC's annual spending in BELL has seen a steady increase

SDC's annual BELL spending has climbed steadily over the past eight years with an average annual expenditure of CHF 82mio for the 2017-2020 Dispatch period. This presents a 32% increase compared to the average annual expenditure of CHF 62mio for the 2013-2016 Dispatch period.⁵ COVID-19-related restrictions and delays on project implementation led to lower than expected expenditure rates in 2020.

The average annual BELL expenditure increased by 32% between the two Dispatch periods



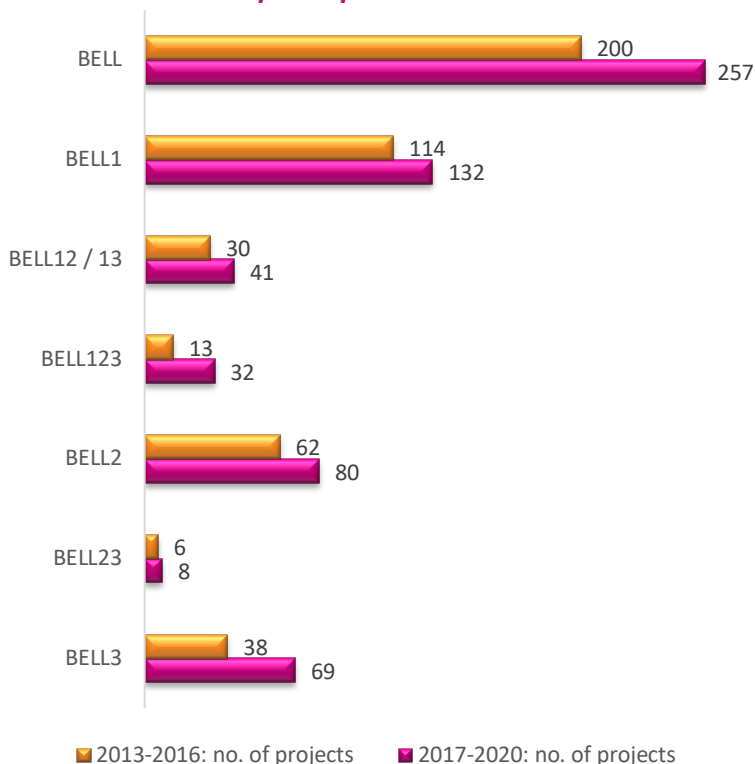
The number of BELL projects increased by 29% between the two Dispatch periods

Some 339 projects with at least one of its three thematic priorities being BELL were active in the period from 2013 to 2020. Amongst these, 200 were implemented during the 2013-2016 Dispatch period. This number increased to 257 in the 2017-2020 period, representing an increase of 29%. Some 118 projects thus ran across the two Dispatch periods.⁶

Project numbers increased most significantly for 'pure' BELL projects, i.e. those that only focused on BELL (BELL123).

BELL projects that include other sectors (BELL1 or BELL12/13) also saw their numbers increase.

A sharp increase can be observed for projects where education is only a second and/or third priority (BELL3, BELL2, BELL2/3), i.e. non-education projects with education components.



⁵ This analysis provides figures on actual spending (as reported in SAP) rather than commitment to BELL. Figures refer to all projects included in the analysis and take into account annual spending for the years from 2013 to 2020.

⁶ Projects are measured at the level of ID-Actions, i.e. counting distinct 7-F numbers in the SAP database regardless of their size or duration. Projects can span across two Dispatch periods: these are counted twice here and in the following, unless otherwise indicated. Projects are counted to one or both Dispatch periods when expenditures were recorded for the corresponding years.

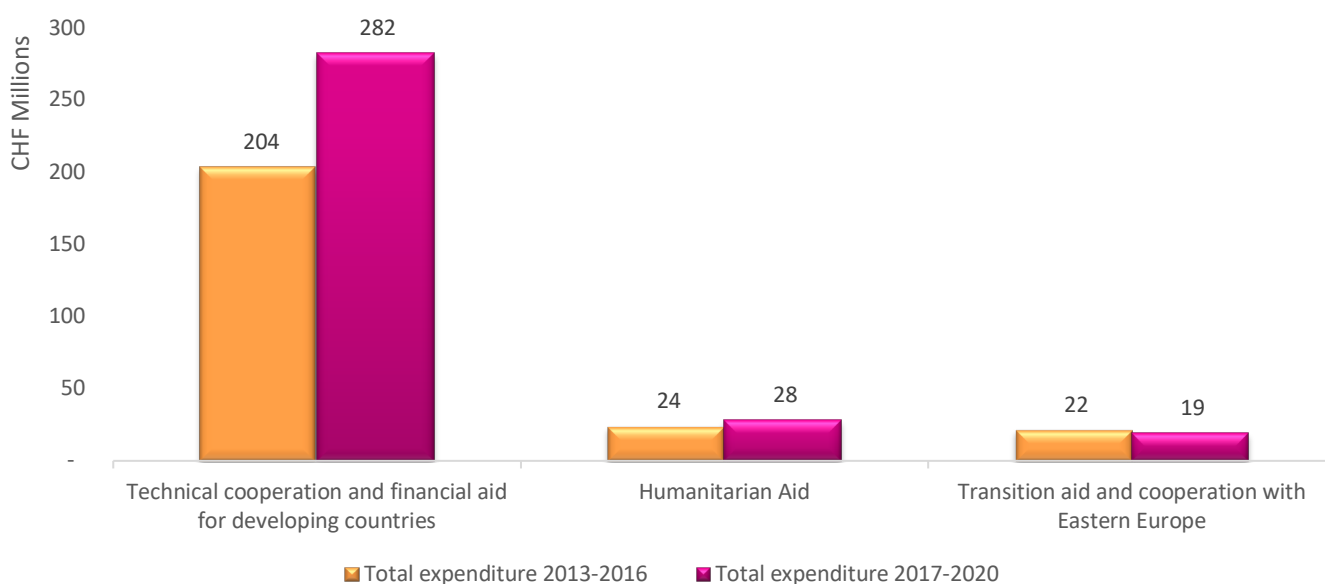
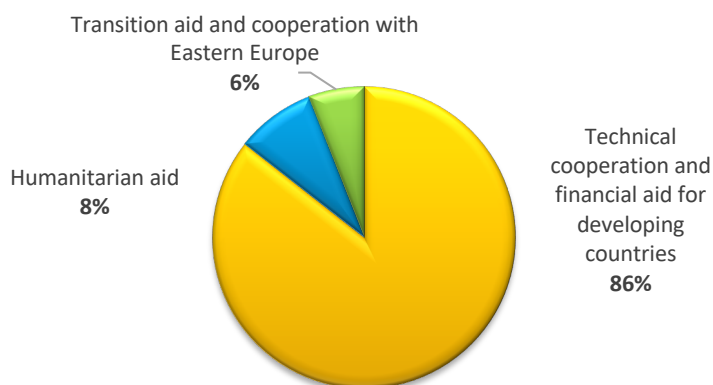
Most BELL spending occurred in Development Cooperation

While Basic Education and Lifelong Learning activities took place across SDC's three framework credits, the vast majority (86%) fell under Development Cooperation (Technical cooperation and financial aid for developing countries).

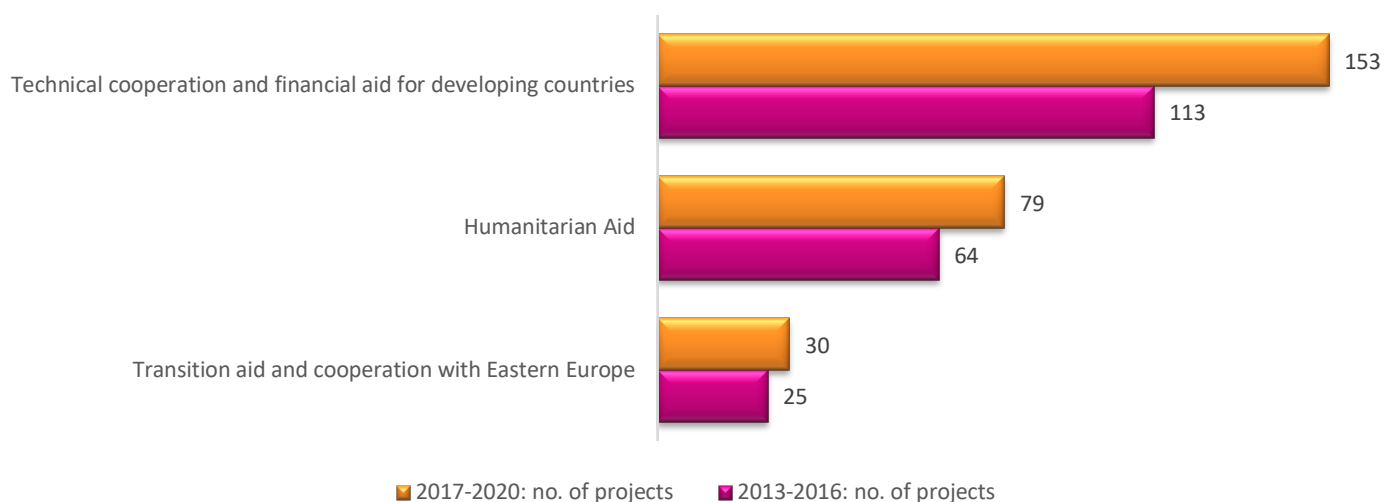
Spending for Development Cooperation also saw the biggest increase when compared to the previous Dispatch period (39%). Spending for Humanitarian aid increased by 17%.

Transition aid and cooperation with Eastern Europe saw a slight decrease in spending over the two periods falling from CHF 22mio to CHF 19mio.

Total BELL expenditure 2017-2020

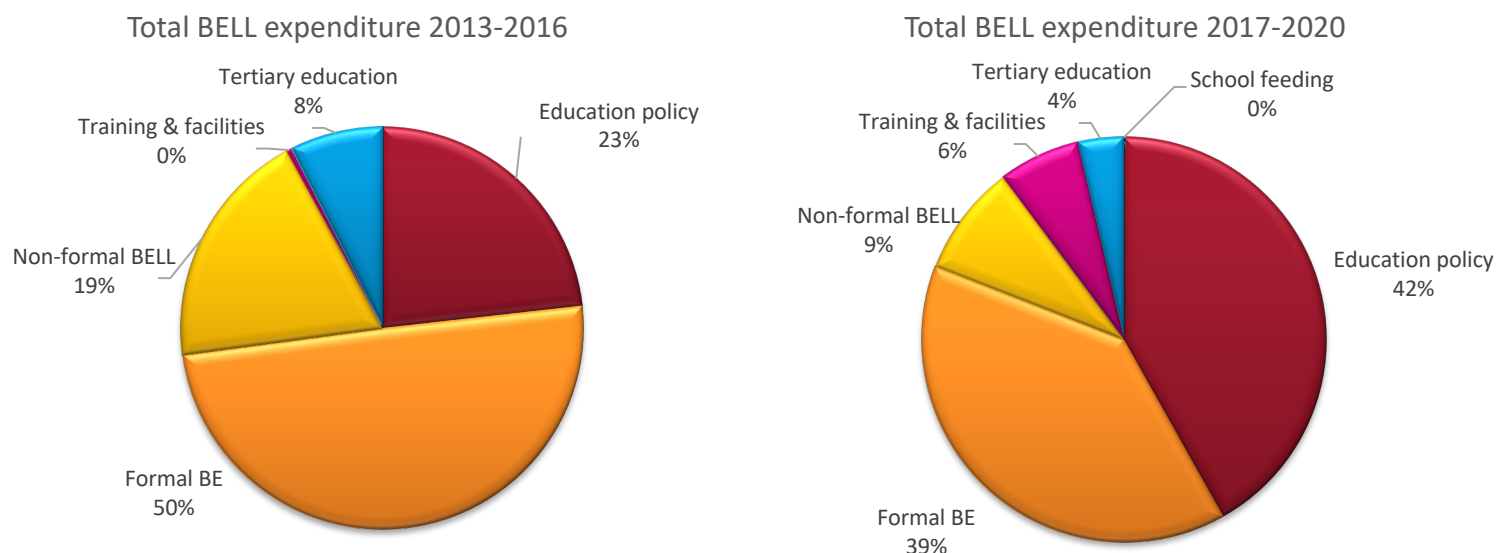


The spending trends are largely reflected in the evolution of project numbers which increased by 35% in Development Cooperation and by 23% in Humanitarian aid. The number of projects however also increased by 20% in Transition aid, which points to slightly more, but smaller projects.

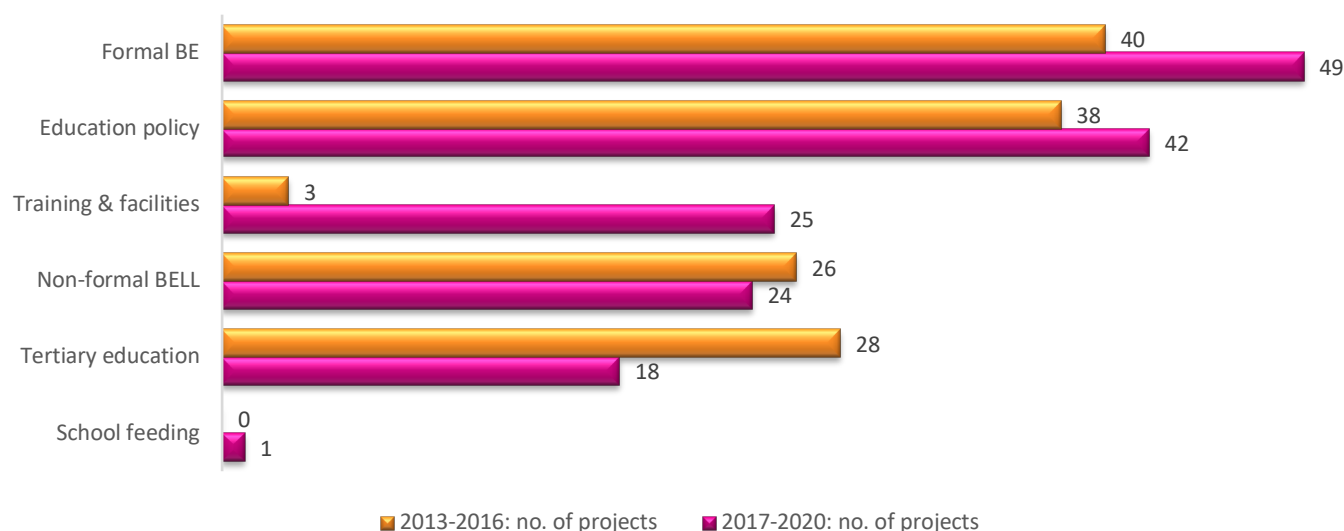


The BELL portfolio has diversified with a continuing focus on policy dialogue and formal basic education

Education policy dialogue and formal basic, i.e. primary and secondary, education took up 81% of the total BELL expenditure in the latest Dispatch period.⁷ Compared to the previous period, the share of education policy dialogue increased, while the share of formal basic education decreased. The share of non-formal BELL also decreased, as did that of tertiary education. Teacher training and education facilities have seen their share increase, and school feeding was added to the diversified portfolio in 2020.⁸



The number of projects citing one of the BELL thematic priorities as their first sector in SAP (BELL1) increased most significantly for training and facilities, followed by formal BE and education policy. In line with expenditure trends, the number of projects in tertiary education and non-formal BELL decreased.⁹



⁷ Considering SAP first sector priorities only.

⁸ Note that labels for thematic priorities have been harmonised for better comparability. Note also that SAP sub-sector codes changed between the two Dispatch periods.

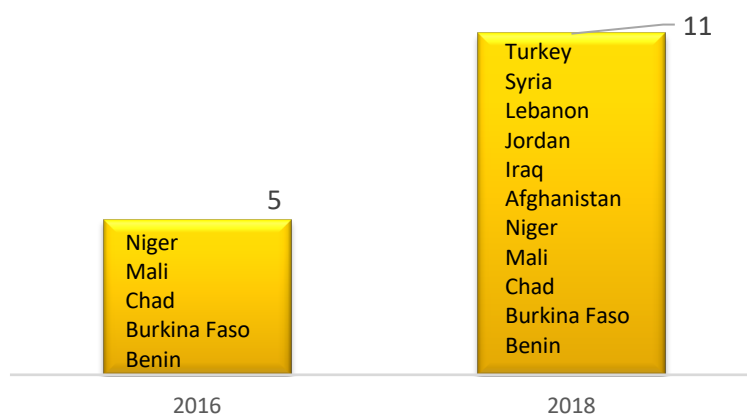
⁹ Note that projects can also be counted twice when they were active (i.e. project-related expenses occurred) in both Dispatch periods.

BELL has entered a growing number of SDC cooperation strategies

In 2016, five countries in West Africa had an Education domain in their cooperation strategies.

In the second Dispatch period, this list had already expanded to eleven countries reflecting the rising importance of education as a domain in SDC country cooperation strategies.

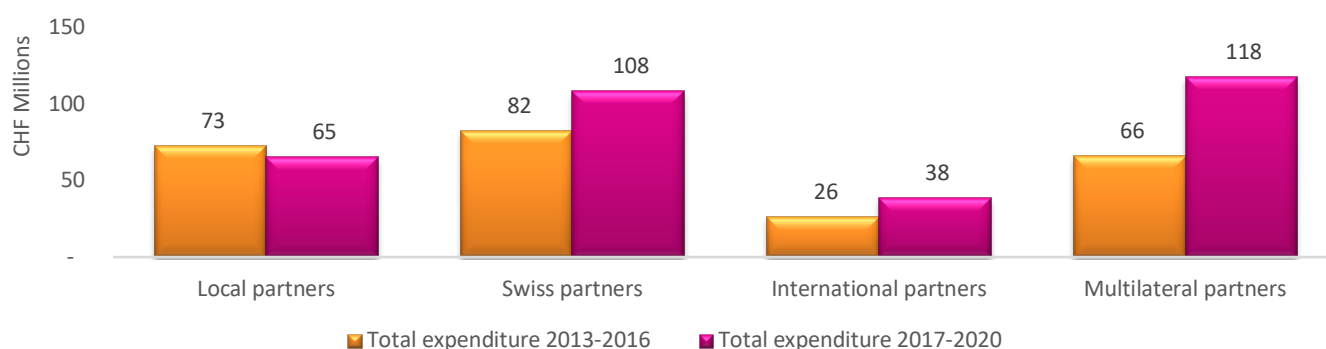
The number of countries where BELL projects were implemented increased from 25 to 35 between the two periods.¹⁰



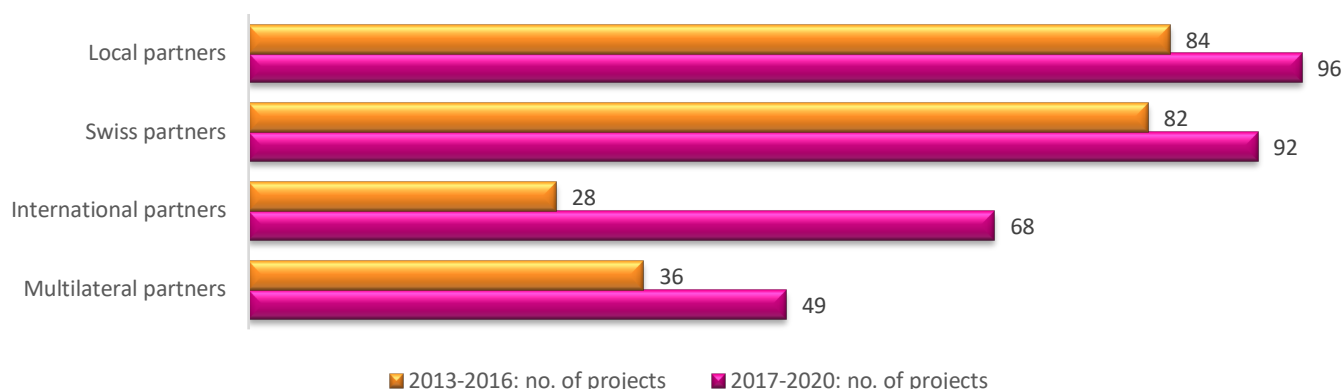
More and more diverse partnerships have been formed in BELL

SDC's BELL projects are implemented by a range of different partners including non-profits and non-governmental organisations, academic and research institutions, state institutions and private sector actors as well as multilateral international financial institutions, UN organisations and other international organisations. Partners are based locally where projects are implemented, in Switzerland or internationally.

In terms of expenditure, multilateral and Swiss partners hold the biggest share followed by local and international partners.¹¹



In terms of project numbers, local and Swiss partners take the biggest share, followed by international and multilateral partners which points to smaller projects for the former and bigger-size project volumes for the latter.



¹⁰ Considering first sector BELL projects only and countries where expenditures of at least CHF 15,000 occurred.

¹¹ **Local partners** include: local non-profits/NGOs, research institutions, central or sub-national state institutions and local private sector actors; **Swiss partners** include: Swiss non-profits/NGOs, Swiss academic and research institutions and Swiss private sector; **International partners** include: international non-profits/NGOs, academic and research institutions and private sector; **Multilateral partners** include: international financial institutions, UN organisations and other international organisations.

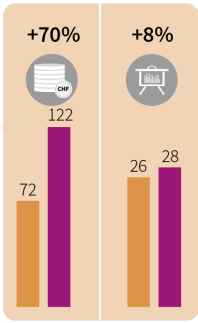
2. Geographic expansion of SDC's BELL engagement

Increased BELL spending in most regions

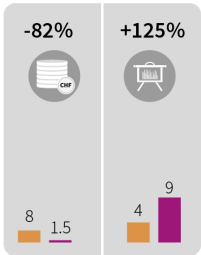
The total spending per Dispatch period increased in all regions apart from Latin America and the Caribbean and Southern, East and Horn of Africa.

More BELL projects across most regions

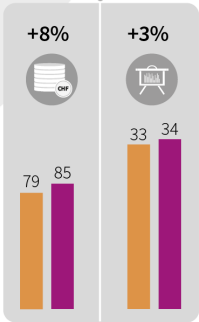
The number of BELL projects increased in all regions apart from Southern, East and Horn of Africa where it remained stable.



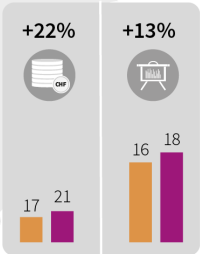
Global



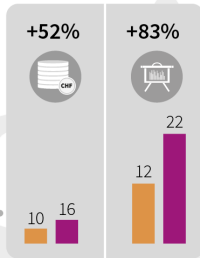
Latin America and the Caribbean



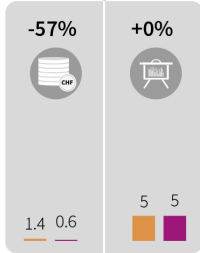
West Africa



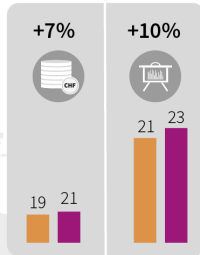
Eastern and Central Europe



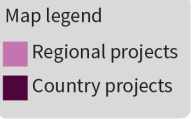
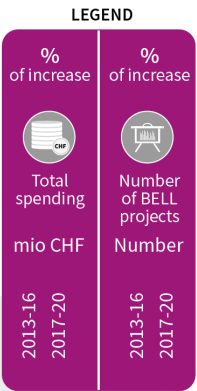
Middle East and North Africa



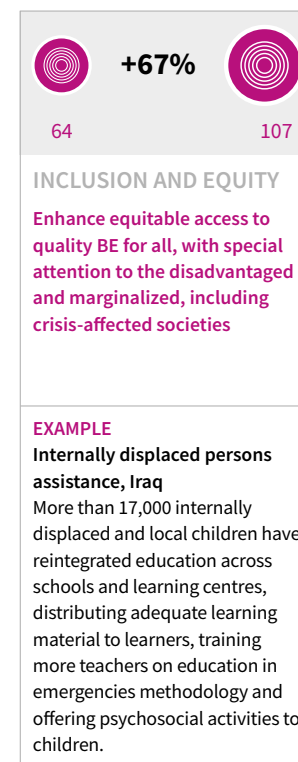
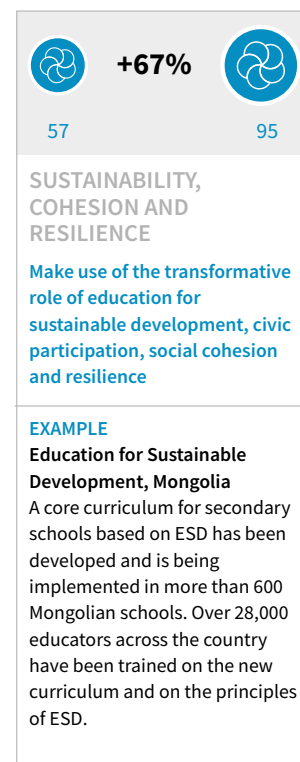
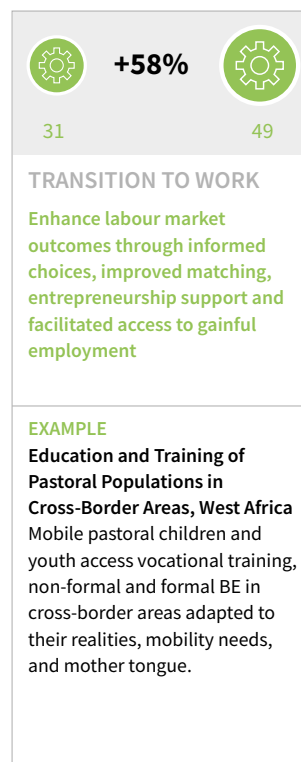
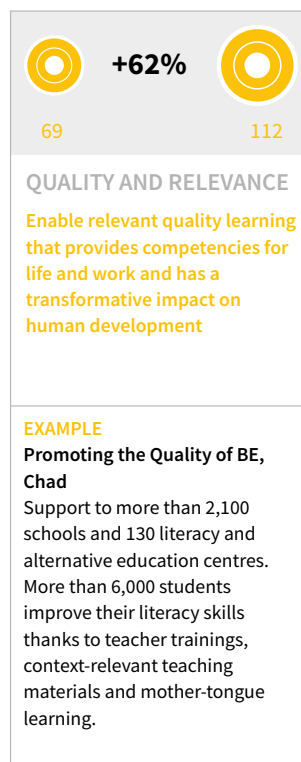
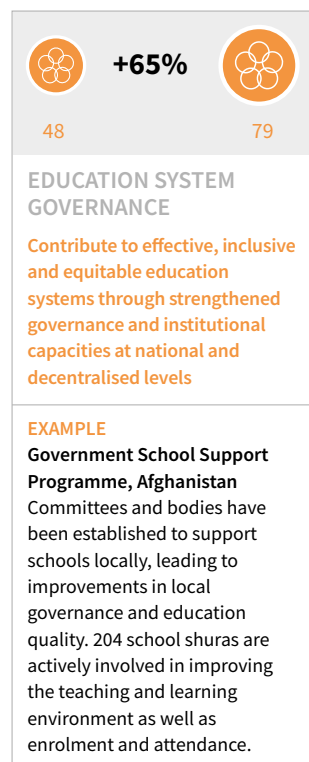
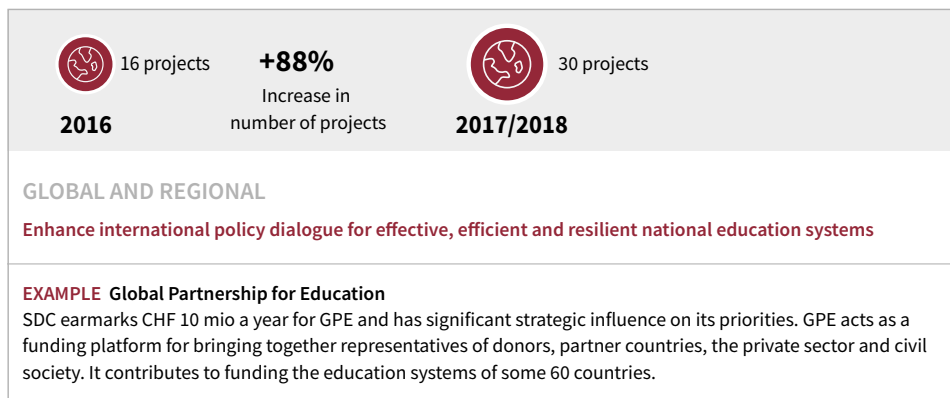
Southern, East and Horn of Africa



Asia



3. Strategic orientations of SDC's BELL engagement¹²



¹² Qualitative project analysis carried out in 2019

4. Implementation modalities of SDC's BELL engagement

SDC's increased commitment to basic education and vocational skills development in the 2017-2020 Dispatch period has been implemented by way of three implementation modalities: (i) larger investments in education programmes in BELL and VSD; (ii) scaling up education components in other sectors; and (iii) thematic specific policy dialogue in multilateral organisations.

(i) Larger investments in education programmes in BELL

SDC's support to education programmes in BELL includes contributions to partners and direct actions through projects in development, transition and humanitarian cooperation. The projects can be implemented at country level or be coordinated across a region or globally.

Country-level project example:

Benin: catching up on missed schooling

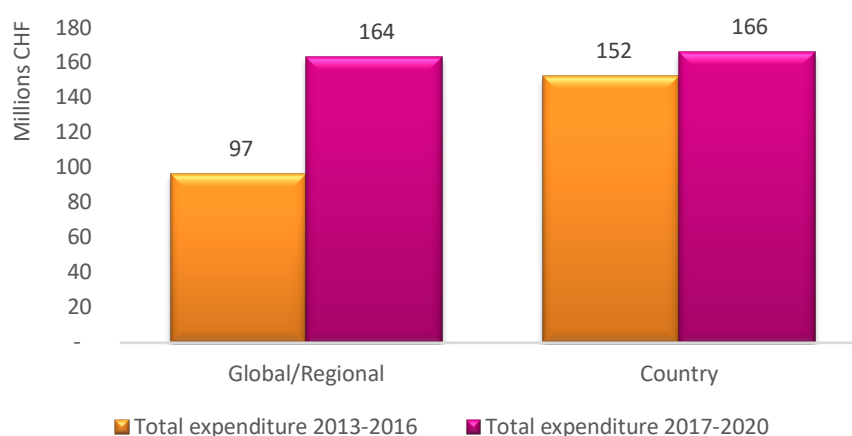
Through mother tongue-based lessons and a curriculum adapted to their needs, 3,200 vulnerable out-of-school children catch-up on their schooling.

Regional project example: West Africa, Regional

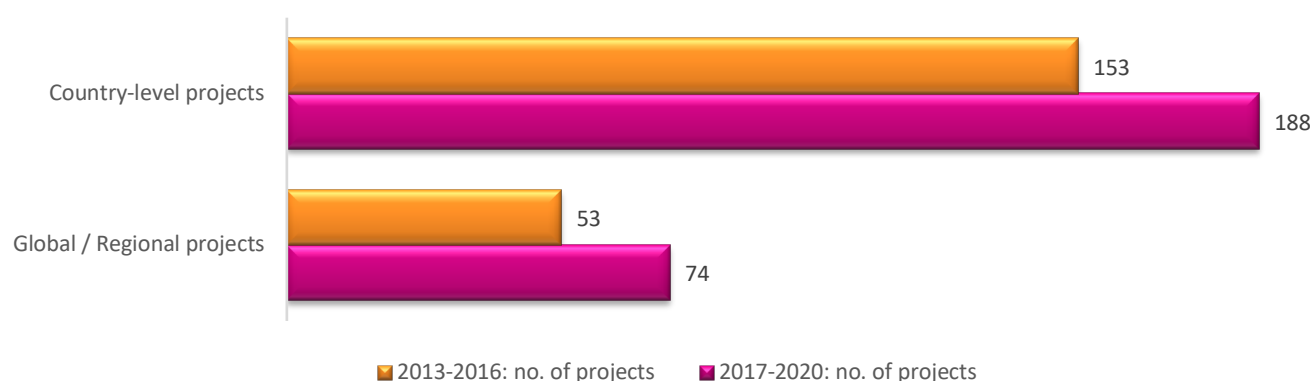
Institutional Programme for the Quality of Education

Trainings adapted to the needs of BE professionals are designed, implemented and disseminated.

Spending on country-level projects increased by 9% and spending on regional or global-level projects by 69% between the two periods. Country- and regional/global-level project spending have reached similar levels in the latest Dispatch period.



Compared to expenditure increases, the number of projects at country level increased more sharply by 23%. The number of regional or global-level projects by 40%. This is due to smaller size projects at country level.

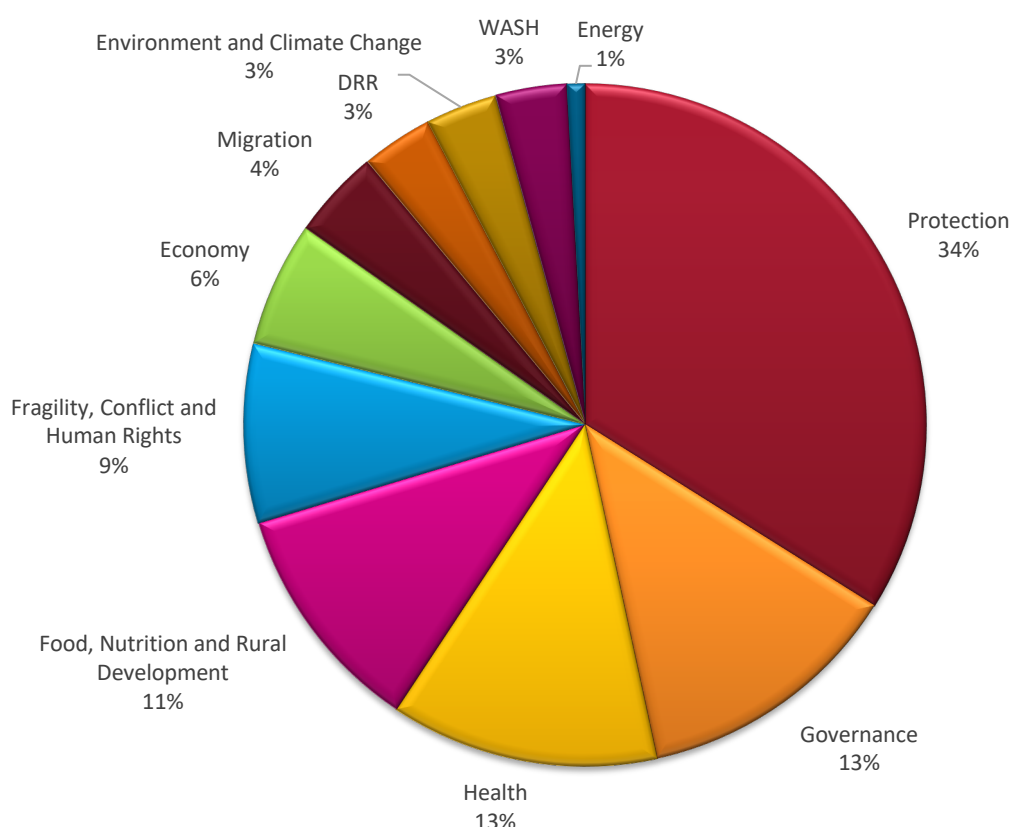


(ii) Scaling up education components in other sectors

As part of its involvement in lifelong learning, SDC enhances synergies between education and other sectors through integrated approaches in education programmes and strengthened education components in non-education programmes. These may include components related to learners' well-being (e.g. health, food security and nutrition, water/sanitation, protection) or to global challenges (e.g. climate change and disaster risk reduction, governance, fragility, conflict and human rights or migration). SDC is committed to scaling up education components in other sectors.

During the 2017-2020 Dispatch period, some 118 non-education projects with BELL components were implemented.¹³ Around one third of these were protection projects, followed by governance and health projects.

Distribution of non-education projects with BELL components by first priority sector



Protection: Nigeria

Children and youth recruited or at risk of recruitment by armed forces have their protection environment and resilience strengthened through psychosocial support, community protection initiatives, and educational and socioeconomic integration services.

Health: Southern Africa

Formal school curricula integrates comprehensive sexuality education. Young people gain knowledge, skills and values at school to reduce HIV infections and improve sexual and reproductive health.

Governance: Ukraine

School students are equipped with competencies and skills to participate more actively in school governance and are motivated towards future engagement as active citizens.

Fragility, Conflict, and Human Rights: Sahel

SDC supports BE for 11,500 herders in seven countries, while promotes civic participation and offering courses on conflict management. As a result, tensions between herders and farmers have abated.

DRR: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Students improve their awareness on disaster response procedures and on their roles in emergency response. School Disaster Management committees have been established and capacitated.

WASH: Benin

Students have gained access to water and are taught concepts such as water cycle and recycling. 160 school gardens have become operational and more than 500 teachers have been trained.

¹³ These are projects where BELL is marked as a second or third priority sector in SAP. Reported are the corresponding first priority sectors.

(iii) Thematic specific policy dialogue in multilateral organisations

The implementation of the education strategy demands stronger international policy dialogue for effective, efficient and resilient education systems, support to regional and national initiatives and multilateral engagement. SDC actively engages in relevant initiatives in multilateral organisations, including board memberships and other steering functions. SDC aims to have a voice at regional and global level.

The SDC Education unit ensures its partner portfolio is aligned with the SDC Education Strategy, is strategic and well-balanced between different areas.

By the end of 2020, SDC had increased its global policy dialogue on education and SDG 4 in global fora, board-seats and through multilateral organisations. By way of example, SDC:

- enhanced its engagement as a board member at the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and substantially increased its financial support to GPE.
- became a Steering Group Member of the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).
- enhanced its involvement on SDG 4 in UNESCO-led initiatives.
- increased its contribution to UNESCO IIEP.
- was instrumental in the creation of the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies.

Examples of SDC's partnerships with multilateral organisations in the field of education:



SDC supports IIEP-UNESCO in advocating, researching and building capacity of UNESCO member states in educational policy, planning and management of education systems through its training, technical assistance, policy research and knowledge sharing programmes.



SDC's contribution to IBE-UNESCO strengthens the organisation's role in supporting Ministries of Education in improving and adapting basic education curricula in developing countries.



SDC supports the research and publication of the Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO. The report monitors progress towards SDG 4, produces widely available education data and raises international debates on education policies and their implementation.

SDC also supports civil society initiatives and research networks promoting SDG 4 in Switzerland and internationally:



**Asia South Pacific Association
for Basic and Adult Education**
Learning Beyond Boundaries

SDC supports ASPBAE as an influential civil society network engaged in the promotion and provision of inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning for the most marginalized populations in Asia and globally. ASPBAE's work has increased capacity of national organizations to provide quality education as well as research and guiding material for evidence and quality programming.

SDC supports the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in enhancing capacity in emergency and crisis situations for strengthened preparedness, response and recovery in the field of education.



SDC supports NORRAG's role in contributing to the production and dissemination of knowledge to support the development of evidence-based education policies at the international, regional and national level. NORRAG organises events, policy workshops and conferences and regularly publishes research and analysis through NORRAG News, NORRAG Special Issues, blogs and working papers.

5. Programmatic considerations in SDC's BELL engagement

Synergies between BELL and Vocational Skills Development

SDC has committed to deepening the complementarity and interconnection between BELL and Vocational Skills Development (VSD) programmes as a comprehensive approach to education enhancing inclusivity and ensuring age-specific learning needs are met.

In addition to three projects launched in the previous Dispatch period (two projects in Kenya and one project in Niger), three BE-VSD projects launched in the latest period: one in Cambodia, one in Eritrea and one in Niger.

United for Youth Employment, Cambodia VSD and BE programmes are coordinated to enhance employment opportunities for youth. The project has trained more than 9,000 young people in technical and vocational skills, as well as in ICT and soft skills.	Basic life skills and VSD improve job opportunities in Eritrea To improve their job opportunities, young Eritreans from underprivileged backgrounds are trained under a curriculum that brings together life skills and relevant content for employers.	Better training to facilitate the integration of youngsters in rural areas into the labour market in Niger 15,000 young men and women have started a vocational training programme in one of the training centres, where they are also acquiring the basic knowledge and skills needed to pursue a professional activity.
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SDC's BELL engagement in fragile and conflicted affected countries, humanitarian and migration contexts and in urban areas

While guided by the same vision and strategic orientation, the type and focus of SDC's education engagement may vary depending on the education demands and vulnerabilities of populations, inclusiveness and performance of countries' education systems, and the demands of the local economy. SDC takes these contextual realities into account in its BELL engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries, humanitarian and protracted crisis, migration, urban and rural contexts and those that are vulnerable to natural disaster.

Fragile and conflict-affected countries

Through education, SDC addresses the underlying causes of fragility and conflict in collaboration with other actors. Between the two Dispatch periods, the number of BELL projects in fragile and conflict affected countries increased by 57% from 42 to 66 projects (in addition, 56 projects ran across both Dispatch periods).

Safe Spaces Gaza

The project provides quality educational and cultural services in safe learning environments for children, youth and women, including persons with disabilities, enhancing the inclusion of marginalised groups in local development and in community-led initiatives. It empowers them to be active change makers in their communities and aims to prevent wider spreading of violent extremism and radicalisation.

Humanitarian and protracted crisis

SDC ensures protection and education needs of children and youth in both crisis-affected and host communities are addressed and to strengthen national education system capacity.

Education for displaced children on the Colombia-Venezuela border

More than six million children and youth who fled instability continue their education thanks to school material, repaired schools and school inclusion activities. Some 620 teachers receive training on teaching during humanitarian emergencies.

Migration

SDC identifies the education needs of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) to enhance their social and economic integration and prospects. By end 2020, there were ten projects focusing on the education needs of migrants, refugees and IDPs.

Reintegration of IDPs and returnees to formal education in Afghanistan

IDPs and returnees are assisted to reintegrate the public education system. Safe environments and learning materials are provided and teachers receive adequate training.

Urban and rural

While SDC continues to focus on rural or semi-rural areas due to still major education and poverty challenges, it is increasing its presence in urban areas in BELL programming.

Youth Alternative Education Programme in Rural Niger

More than 12,000 out-of-school youth aged nine to 14 in rural areas are integrated into social and economic life through an alternative, gender sensitive and empowering education programme.

Education and care in an urban area in Lebanon shared by Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians

Providing basic services, particularly education, to children in a deprived urban area neighbourhood, the project offers homework support and a literacy programme to more than 350 students.

Vulnerability to natural disaster

In contexts prone to disaster, SDC enhances disaster risk reduction in and through education to foster local resilience. The number of SDC's BELL projects addressing vulnerability to natural disasters more than doubled between the two Dispatch periods from 2 to 5, with an additional four projects running across both periods.

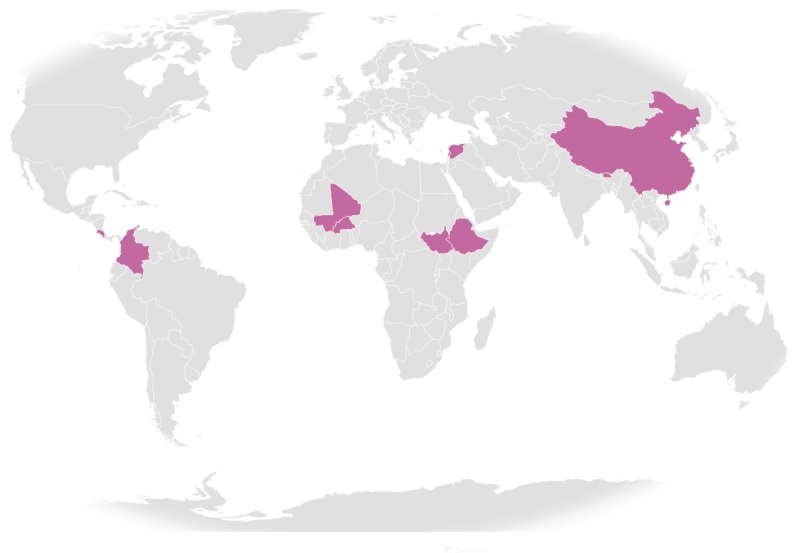
Support to the reconstruction of school infrastructure in Haiti

Students are provided with safe school infrastructure that are earthquake and cyclones resistant. Three school prototypes, including procedures and guidelines, were developed and approved as national standards for the reconstruction of all school infrastructures.

Education Fund

The Education Fund was created in 2019 as part of SDC's increased commitment to education to stimulate innovation in education (BELL and VSD) programming, financing and partnerships. During its first phase, twelve projects with a BELL focus were funded. The majority of these projects focus on the use of ICTs, remote or blended learning and are implemented in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. Projects link education closely to other sectors, mainly to health, protection and migration as well as to resilience and social cohesion.

- **Costa Rica: Education for displaced populations in Central America**
- **Colombia: Equitable STEM (science, tech., engineering and math) education in rural schools**
- **Colombia: I learn, take care of myself and build my future**
- **China: Impact Hackathons Asia Pacific**
- **Bhutan: Uninterrupted access to teaching- learning for hard-to- reach and digitally disadvantaged children**
- **Ethiopia: Mitigating the impact of COVID on the Education Sector**
- **South Sudan: E- Powering South Sudan Higher Education**
- **Burkina Faso: Strengthening education in emergencies through the teaching of minimally digitised curricula**
- **Mali: Digital youth career guidance space**
- **Lebanon: Quality and inclusive learning opportunities for vulnerable children in response to the COVID- 19 crisis**
- **Syria : HOPE: Innovation and Holistic Protection and Education in Eastern Ghouta**
- **Gaza : Access to Basic Education and Vocational Training Services for children with Down Syndrome and Autism (Gaza strip)**



Impressum

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