



HISTORIC IMPACT CAPITALISATION OF SDC'S BILATERAL COOPERATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

CUBA

DEEP DIVE REPORT | LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

PREPARED BY: SASCHA KUHN

PRESENTED TO

FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FDFA
SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION SDC
ASIA AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN DIVISION
FREIBURGSTRASSE 130
3003 BERN

JULY 2023

Your contact person
within GFA Consulting Group GmbH is
Nadia Kovalcikova

Historic Impact Capitalisation of SDC's bilateral cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean

C u b a

A d d r e s s

GFA Consulting Group GmbH
Eulenkrogstraße 82
22359 Hamburg
Germany

Phone +49 40 6 03 06 – 117
Fax +49 40 6 03 06 – 199
E-Mail nadia.kovalcikova@gfa-group.de

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 METHODOLOGY OF THE DEEP-DIVE	2
3 OVERVIEW OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH CUBA IN THE FIELD OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2003	3
3.1 SUMMARY OF RELEVANT SDC PROJECTS	3
3.2 GOVERNANCE SYSTEM AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING.....	5
3.3 HISTORIC TIMELINE & THEMATIC THEORY OF CHANGE	6
4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS	9
4.1 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH CUBA IN THE FIELD OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS	9
4.1.1 RELEVANCE	9
4.1.2 COHERENCE	10
4.1.3 EFFECTIVENESS	11
4.1.4 IMPACT	14
4.1.5 SUSTAINABILITY	15
4.2 MAIN LESSONS LEARNED.....	17
4.2.1 THEMATIC LESSONS LEARNED	17
4.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL LESSONS LEARNED	19
5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	22
ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND MET STAKEHOLDERS	24
ANNEX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY	26
ANNEX 3: EVALUATION AND CAPITALISATION MATRIX.....	27

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Visualisation of actors map.....	5
Figure 2: Historic timeline for SDC cooperation on local development in Cuba.....	7
Figure 3: Thematic theory of change	8

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Deep Dive Cuba Basic data	1
Table 2: List of projects	4

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTAF	Association of Agricultural and Forestry Technicians
AICS	Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development
AMA	Environmental Agency
ANAP	National Association of Small Farmers
ANEC	National Association of Economists
CENESEX	National Center for Sex Education
CFV	Félix Varela Center
CITMA	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
CIERIC	Community Initiative Exchange and Reference Centre
CUBASOLAR	Cuban Society for the Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources
CTS	University Chair "Science, Technology, Society and Innovation
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences
FNG	Nicolás Guillen Foundation
FMC	Federation of Cuban Women
IGT	Instituto de Geografía Tropical
INCA	National Institute of Agricultural Sciences
INIE	National Institute of Economic Research of the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP)
IPS	Inter Press Service
JRC	Joint Research Center of the European Union
LG	Local governments
MEP	Ministry of Economy and Planning
MES	Ministry of Higher Education
MINAG	Ministry of Agriculture
OAR	Oscar A. Romero Center
PA	Afroatenas Project
PP	Palomas Project
PT	Todas Project
PQ	Quisicuba Project
RIAM	Ibero-American and African Network of Masculinities
TTIB	Integral Neighborhood Transformation Workshops
UH	University of Havana
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNJC	National Union of Jurists of Cuba

1 INTRODUCTION

The Historic Impact Capitalisation (HIC) project is embedded in a comprehensive **institutional knowledge management initiative** accompanying the gradual phasing out of the bilateral cooperation activities of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) until 2024. The HIC project has three main components: 1) a meta-analysis covering Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba and Haiti, 2) five **thematic deep-dives** in Nicaragua, Honduras, Bolivia, Cuba and Haiti, and based on that, 3) the development of communication material showcasing the key results and lessons learned identified in the framework of the project.

In line with SDC's HIC Approach Paper, the **deep-dives** serve to analyse SDC's engagement in selected sectors in the current five priority countries along the OECD DAC evaluation criteria (all except for efficiency) and to identify relevant **thematic and institutional lessons learned**. The analysis focuses on the **last two decades** in order to ensure continued relevancy and data availability. The deep-dives build on the results of the preceding meta-analysis. Although the deep-dives have a specific thematic focus, it is expected that further overall insights on SDC's engagement will be gained, which will then be taken up in the final summary meta-analysis and capitalisation report. It must be stressed that the **deep-dives are not an evaluation**; rather, they are a reflection on information received from relevant actors in the field, triangulated with evidence available in reports, evaluations and other documents that were reviewed.

In Cuba, the thematic deep-dive focused on **Local Development**, as decided by SDC Bern and the SDC Cooperation Office in Havana, given SDC's strategic engagement in this thematic area for more than 20 years. Local development has been **at the heart of bilateral cooperation** since day one and remains **high up on the agenda of the Cuban government**. At the same time, promoting local development is a significant area of work for SDC worldwide, adding to the **relevance of the chosen thematic focus**.

The table below provides the basic data of the deep-dive's in-country mission.

Table 1: Deep Dive Cuba | Basic data

GFA TEAM	MISSION DATES	PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THE DEEP-DIVE	DATA COLLECTION AND SOURCES
Sascha Kuhn Yadan Figueroa Felipe	13th – 24th February 2023	PAAS - Project to Support Sustainable Agriculture ; HABITAT - Implementation of strategies for municipal habitat management; APOCOOP – Programme to support cooperative management in the agricultural sector; PIAL - Programme to strengthen Agricultural Innovation for Local Development; PRODEL - Programme for strengthening municipal capacities for local development; PADIT - Coordinated Platform Programme for the Comprehensive Development of the Territories; PROFET - Programme for Strengthening Vocational and Professional Education and Training; GEPAC - Local participatory management in the rehabilitation of the historical centre of Havana, PYE - Participation and Equity Platform	29 interviews with current and former SDC officials, Cuban Government officials (national, provincial, local), SDC partner organisations, direct beneficiaries (e.g. cooperatives, SMEs, self-employed, groups, collectives, local projects). 15 field exchanges with direct beneficiaries and verification of results (municipalities, provincial governments, local platforms, local production sites, VET schools) Approx. 100 documents reviewed (including ProDocs, interim and final reports, technical reports, internal and external evaluations, project publications and knowledge products etc.)

2 METHODOLOGY OF THE DEEP-DIVE

In the context of **deep-dive planning**, already at the beginning of the meta-analysis phase, SDC together with the HIC team examined whether the deep-dive sectors initially selected in the approach paper were still reasonable or whether they had to be adapted in order to guarantee current and future relevance of the topics for SDC. In the case of Cuba, most of bilateral cooperation has been focused on **local development**, covering a range of projects in the areas of **local governance**, **local economic development** and beyond.

Based on the thematic focus, and in consultation with the SDC Cooperation Office, the projects to be included in the deep-dive were selected, and interviews were arranged with government representatives, development partners, public and private economic actors, civil society organisations, implementers and beneficiary groups. A joined kick-off meeting with SDC Bern, SDC Cuba, SDC technical focal point and the HIC Team was organised.

During the **deep-dive implementation**, relevant (project) literature was analysed, and structured, semi-structured or open interviews with implementing and partner institutions, beneficiaries, independent experts and other stakeholders were undertaken, in addition to focus group discussions, workshops and debriefing sessions. Some of the deep-dive interviews were conducted as online interviews before or after the field trip. The majority, however, was carried out as in-person interviews in the countries. For those projects that were still ongoing, selected project visits were organised.

As was the case in the meta-analysis, the HIC Team used an **evaluation and capitalisation matrix** including guiding questions (categorised by the OECD DAC criteria plus lessons learned), assessment criteria, and methods of data collection and data sources. All collected data including relevant documents, interview protocols etc. were analysed applying elements of **qualitative content analysis**, a method for deductive systematic text analysis. The coding of the text material was done using the software MAXQDA.

Based on the literature review and interviews a **thematic theory of change** and **historic political timeline** per country and deep dive topic was developed showing the assumed impact logic and important political framework conditions. On the basis of the models, elements of **contribution analysis** were applied, meaning that through the collection of empirical evidence it was sought to gauge whether and to what extent contributions to observed changes can be attributed to SDC's engagement in the respective sector.

3 OVERVIEW OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH CUBA IN THE FIELD OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2003

3.1 SUMMARY OF RELEVANT SDC PROJECTS

SDC has been present in Cuba since 1997, initially focusing on humanitarian projects. In 2000, SDC set up a cooperation office in Havana and developed a special cooperation programme. From the very start up to now, SDC activities have been **addressing development at the local level** – understood both in terms of support to **local economic development as well as local governance**. While strategy papers and programmes took different approaches in defining thematic areas – sometimes separating between the two, sometimes not - the focus on local development has been a **continuity**. Since 2011 the transversal issue of **gender** gained prominence in programme design; at the same time, work on **anti-discrimination** was extended to include issues of racial prejudice and marginalisation. The Cooperation Strategy 2017–21 eventually joined all of SDC's work under the umbrella of local development.

To define a manageable scope that allows for in-depths analysis, a **list of priority projects** was agreed with the SDC Cooperation Office. They reflect a wide range of different activities relevant to the deep dive topic and can therefore be considered representative for the purpose of capitalisation.

This report puts a clear emphasis on the selected projects; however during the mission (compare Annex 4), also stakeholder from other projects were visited and interviewed to capture as much of the greater picture as possible. In many cases, government counterparts and other implementing partners were involved in various SDC financed projects throughout the years and thus could provide insights into more than one project and effectively help trace the evolution of interventions and results over time.

Projects such as

- AgroCADENAS - Development of agri-food chains at local level
- BASAL - Programme for environmental Basis for Local Food Sustainability
- BIOMAS - Biomass as renewable energy source for rural areas
- FODEAL – Support for agricultural cooperatives and small farmers through an investment fund
- PDHL - Local Human Development Programme,
- PEGIN- Promoting Gender Equity with National Advocacy, and most recently the
- Fund for Young Art

have/had important links to local development and, in some cases, provided the foundation for subsequent work undertaken in later projects. Many of them were primarily designed by other donors and received SDC co-financing. While **not being subject to in-depth study**, the HIC team has **taken into account information relevant to the projects whenever reference was made to results or learnings** derived from them.

The following table provides basic information on the projects prioritised during the deep dive.

Table 2: List of projects

Project Title	Period	Budget SDC (m)	Implementer	Main Partners	Geographical focus
PAAS - Project to Support Sustainable Agriculture	2013-23	CHF 9.3	ACTAF, NGO Hivos	MINAG	Municipalities in 8 provinces
Objective: Strengthening food sovereignty through development of sustainable and resilient local agro-food systems.					
HABITAT - Implementation of strategies for municipal habitat management	2012-22	CHF 7.4	Faculty of Construction of the Universidad Central de las Villas (FC-UCLV)	Institute for Physical Planning (IPF), Ministry of Construction (MICONS), UN Habitat	6 provinces
Objective: Strengthening participatory and inclusive local planning for improved housing in municipalities with a special emphasis on disadvantaged groups and women.					
APOCOOP – Programme to support cooperative management in the agricultural sector	2012-24	CHF 9,2	ANAP, Oxfam International	MINAG, MINCEX, MEP, FMC, ANEC, Municipal and provincial governments	4 provinces
Objective: Contributing to food security in municipalities by improving the management of and cooperation between agricultural cooperatives.					
PIAL - Programme to strengthen Agricultural Innovation for Local Development	2012-22	CHF 9,1	INCA, in partnership with Welthungerhilfe and selected NGOs (e.g. iCRA)	MES, MINAG, CITMA, MEP, LGs, ANAP, academia	12 provinces
Objective: Supporting production, productivity, diversification and sustainability of agricultural value chains for improved food security and local socio-economic development.					
PRODEL - Programme for strengthening municipal capacities for local development	2012-24	CHF 9,0	CEDEL	INIE, CTS, ANEC, IPF, UH, CUBASOLAR, municipalities	14 provinces
Supporting systemic change towards participatory local governance, incl. through the preparation and implementation of local development strategies and political dialogue.					
GEPAC - Local participatory management in the rehabilitation of the historical centre of Havana	2012-23	CHF 5,5	Historian of the City of Havana	Provincial branches of the Historian's Office	5 provinces + selected towns
Objective: Strengthening participatory governance in relation to the rehabilitation of the historical centre of Havana as well as urban planning in the wider sense, incl. with the aim to improve housing and encourage economic activity					
PADIT - Coordinated Platform Programme for the Comprehensive Development of the Territories	2014-23	CHF 12,7	UNDP	INIE	Country-wide
Objective: Strengthening management capacities for local development based on improved coordination across government levels and with the private sector for improved social services, employment opportunities and production.					
PROFET - Programme for Strengthening Vocational and Professional Education and Training	2019-24	CHF 8,9	UNDP, Humanity and Inclusion (H&I)	MES, polytechnic schools	Country-wide
Improving access of young people to income and jobs in their specialties by raising the quality of vocation education in line with labour market needs, with emphasis on women and vulnerable groups.					
PYE - Participation and Equity Platform	2012-24	9,420,000	CIERIC, FLACSO, CFV, FNG, OAR, PQ, PT, PA, TTIB, IPS, FMC, CENESEX, RIAM, PP, UNJC	National, provincial and municipal authorities in culture, gender, sex, education, planning, employment and social security.	Country-wide
Objective: Contribute to respect for human rights and anti-discrimination (ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, etc.) through work with government, civil society and communities.					

3.2 GOVERNANCE SYSTEM AND STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

Cuba is ruled through a **one-party system** in which the Government is organising the country's economy according to **socialist principles**. The **state continues to own most of the means of production**. The large majority of **economic actors** is therefore **public**; **private economy activity (e.g. SMEs, single entrepreneurs) has been legalised only recently and makes up a small portion of the official economy.**¹ Cuba's **political-administrative division** defines 15 provinces, 168 municipalities and the special municipality of the Isla de la Juventud. The country is characterised by a **strong central state**, even though recent years have seen increased efforts to decentralise competences (see 3.3.). The Cuban constitution grants the rights to association and assembly "in accordance with the goals of the socialist society." In practice, **civil society is subject to significant government restrictions.**² Independent civic groups form and gather but they are not permitted to acquire legal status or organise protest.

Over the past two decades, SDC has been engaging with a **vast range of stakeholders** in their support for local development in Cuba. While the SDC strategic approach in Cuba has always been firmly prioritising **support to subnational actors**, in line with the **multi-level governance** approach, it recognised the importance of actively involving all levels of government as well as **non-state actors of both local and national character** to maximise impact.

The following analysis sets out to illustrate the stakeholder landscape in which SDC operates:

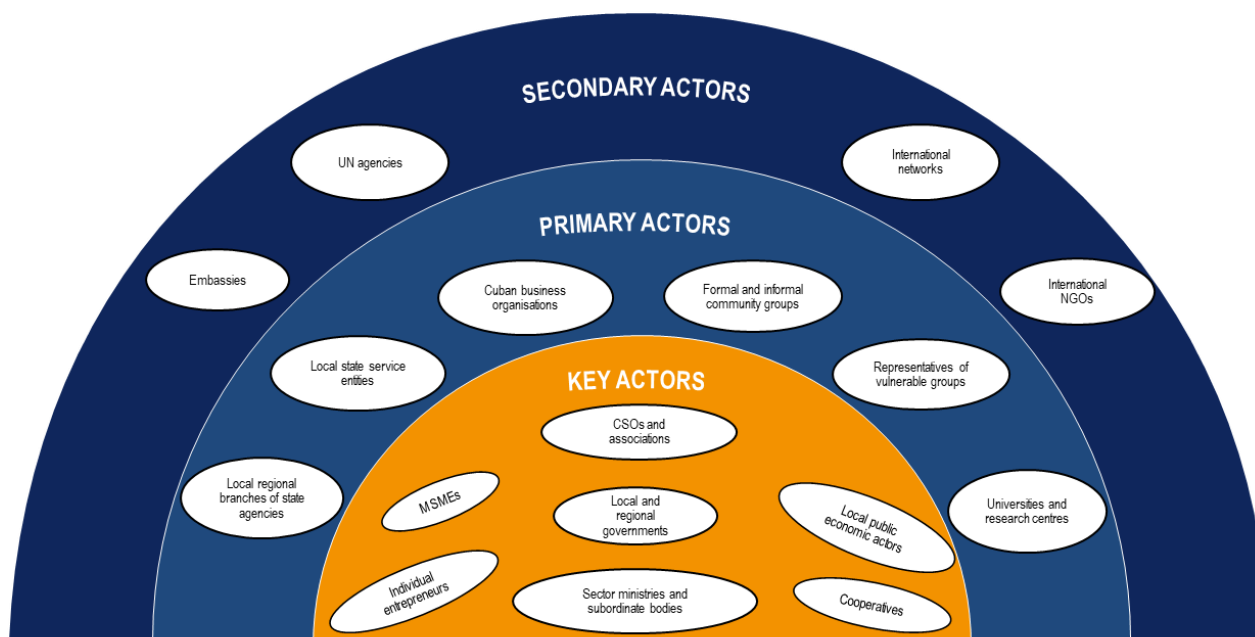


Figure 1: Visualisation of actors map

Key actors

- **Ministries and subordinate bodies:** MINCEX, MINREX, CITMA, MEP, MINAG, MES, MINCULT, CEDEL, CENESEX, CFV, INIE, Office of the Historian of Havana (OHCH), Network of Offices of the Historian and Conservator of Cuba (ROHCC), others
- **Local governments:** Municipal Assemblies of People's Power, Municipal Administration Councils, Municipal and community groups for local development
- **Regional governments:** Provincial Administration Council, provincial local development groups
- **Local public economic actors:** state-owned enterprises, basic business units, and others
- **Cooperatives:** Producers (agricultural, construction materials, etc.)
- **MSMEs,** incl. so-called *mini-industrias* (packaging, conservation etc.)

¹ [Aprobadas las primeras 35 MIPYMES en Cuba \(MEP, 2021\)](#)

² [Parlamento cubano. Constitución de la República](#); [Human Rights Watch – Cuba \(2023\)](#)

- **Individual entrepreneurs:** incl. self-employed (*cuentalpropistas*)
- **Civil society organisations, associations** e.g. CIERIC, ACTAF, ACPA, CUBASOLAR, FMC

Primary actors:

- **Formal and informal groups:** Mass and social organisations (FMC, CDR, CTC, others), Neighbourhood and thematic networks, socio-cultural and community projects)
- **Vulnerable groups:** Women, children, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities
- **Local State Service Entities:** e.g. cultural houses, social assistance, education
- **Cuban business organisations:** OSDEs (higher business management organisations), provincial and national state-owned enterprises
- **Universities and research centres:** UH, UCLV, UPR, INCA, EPFIH, Gedel, FLACSO, others

Secondary actors:

- **International NGOs:** OXFAM, Humanity & Inclusion, and others
- **International agencies:** United Nations Development Programme, World Food Programme, etc.
- **International networks,** incl. COSUDE projects outside Cuba
- **Embassies/international cooperation departments:** EU Delegation, Spain, Italy, Canada, etc.

3.3 HISTORIC TIMELINE & THEMATIC THEORY OF CHANGE

Bilateral cooperation in Cuba has been widely described as quite unique as the social situation in Cuba has, in contrast to most countries of the region, **until recently not been marked by extreme poverty or inequalities**. A number of interviewees with insight knowledge of SDC called the decision to launch a Cuba Programme “**political**” in the sense that diplomatic considerations rather than acute need for aid was what tipped the balance. Since the revolution, Switzerland had maintained close relations with the Socialist country, acted as protecting power for US interests (1961–2015) but took a critical stance on the **US embargo on Cuba**. Bilateral cooperation was openly communicated as an important **strategic instrument to further deepen relations**, become a strong international partner during the **anticipated political and economic opening**, and contribute to a **peaceful change process**.

Due to extreme dependencies on the Socialist bloc, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in a decade of severe economic crisis (“Período especial”). Nevertheless, judging by GDP per capita (PPP)³ and other indices, including the HDI⁴, the lower middle-income economy was faring better than many of its neighbours. **Political isolation** had it that international cooperation was very limited, amounting in 2002 to a mere US\$ 58 m. It was in a context of adopted measures to boost the economy– including the opening up to foreign investment, the lease of public land for commercial purposes, and the **legalisation of self-employment and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)** – that SDC launched its pilot programme in Cuba. After a major government crackdown on dissidents in 2003, the EU and Spain temporarily suspended their international cooperation. Cuba’s track record in **guaranteeing civil rights, including freedom of association and freedom of press, has been poor** throughout and is regularly subject to international criticism.

In 2008, following the international financial crisis and in the midst of a severe economic downturn, Raúl Castro took over as Head of State from his brother Fidel and nourished hopes for comprehensive reforms. In 2011, the Government approved a **reform package** that commentators widely described as ambitious. In response to the ongoing severe economic crisis and in an effort to reduce economic dependencies, the measures foresaw cutting red-tape, **new possibilities for private entrepreneurship** as well as **de-centralisation efforts** that aimed at strengthening the role of decentralised government both at provincial and municipal level. Even though **new pockets of private economic activity** benefited some and government commitment to continue the reform process is regularly affirmed, efforts have thus far **failed to**

³ [Data.Worldbank \(2023\)](#)

⁴ [Human Development Report: Cuba \(2022\)](#)

significantly stimulate the economy and internal structural barriers persist. At the same time, analyses show **inequalities on the rise**, including across regions as well as based on sex, ethnicity, age and access to foreign currency.⁵

Despite **introducing important legislation to strengthen subnational government**, above all the widely positively received **new Constitution of 2019** as well as key policy documents such as the **2020 Municipal Development Strategy**, the state continues to be characterised by a **strongly centralised system of governance and control**. External factors, such as the state crisis in Venezuela, a long-term ally and source of economic support, and the **tightening of the US embargo**⁶ after a period of normalised relations, put a serious strain on the Cuban economy. In 2020, the outbreak of the **COVID-19 pandemic** significantly affected Cuba's economy that relies heavily on the tourism industry. In response to dwindling foreign reserves, the Government eliminated its dual currency system in 2021. In early 2023, the country finds itself in a **serious crisis spurred by inflation, depleted monetary reserves, a heavy shortage of goods and service**. The result is an **increase of poverty and inequalities**⁷ as well as a **crisis of confidence**, which is expressed increasingly openly, including in terms of high levels of **outward migration**.⁸

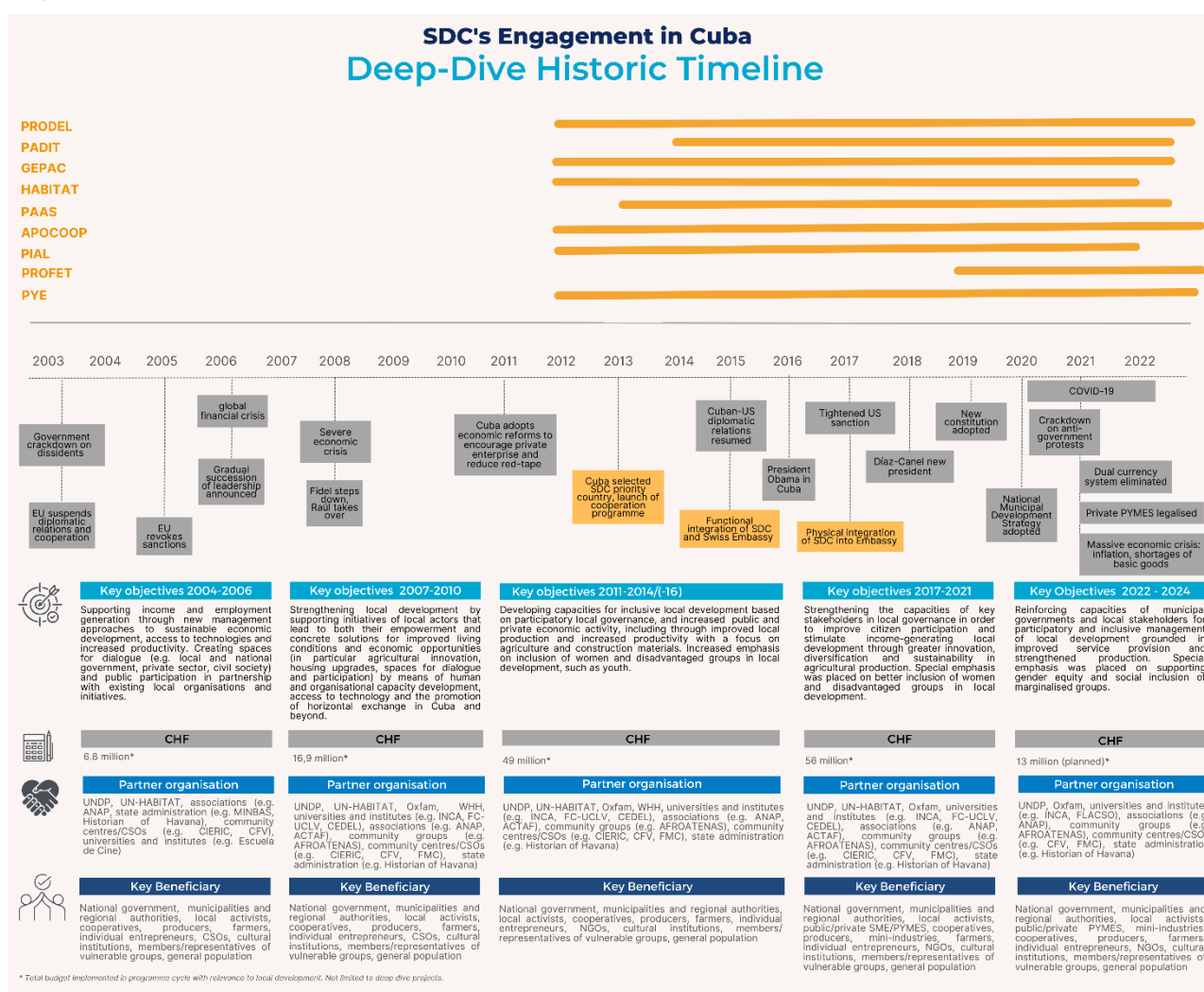


Figure 2: Historic timeline for SDC cooperation on local development in Cuba

⁵ Example: [The Return of Race-based Inequalities in Contemporary Cuba \(GIGA, 2021\)](#)

⁶ [U.S. Announces Designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism \(2021\); Cuba Sanctions \(US Department of State\)](#)

⁷ Exact data are unavailable but official sources have repeatedly recognised the challenges posed by rises in poverty and inequalities; for instance: [Para que Cuba se reanime y avance: ¿Cuánto más hacer? \(Gobierno de Cuba, 2021\)](#)

⁸ [Analizar problemáticas demográficas de 2022 que influyen en el presente año \(Granma, 2023\)](#)

SDC efforts in local development have undergone a clear evolution from various rather isolated one-off initiatives, often with an emphasis on procurement of technology (e.g. metal silos for seed preservation, bamboo for construction, biogas), to more comprehensive programmes and platforms with an **even stronger focus on individual and institutional capacity development**. Likewise, **governance topics were gaining increasing prominence in the SDC portfolio**. This roughly coincided with the decision to launch a full-fledge Cooperation Programme with a whole **new level of funding** attached to it (before 2013, average < CHF 4 m, and after ~ CHF 11 m annually). More comprehensive programmes with strong local governance, i.e. municipal planning, local participation mechanisms, multi-stakeholder cooperation, value chains, local food production) were brought underway which, despite different focus areas and at time geographical coverage, had/have **in common their subnational territorial focus** so that **strands of different programmes often converge**, e.g. in the local development group of a municipality.

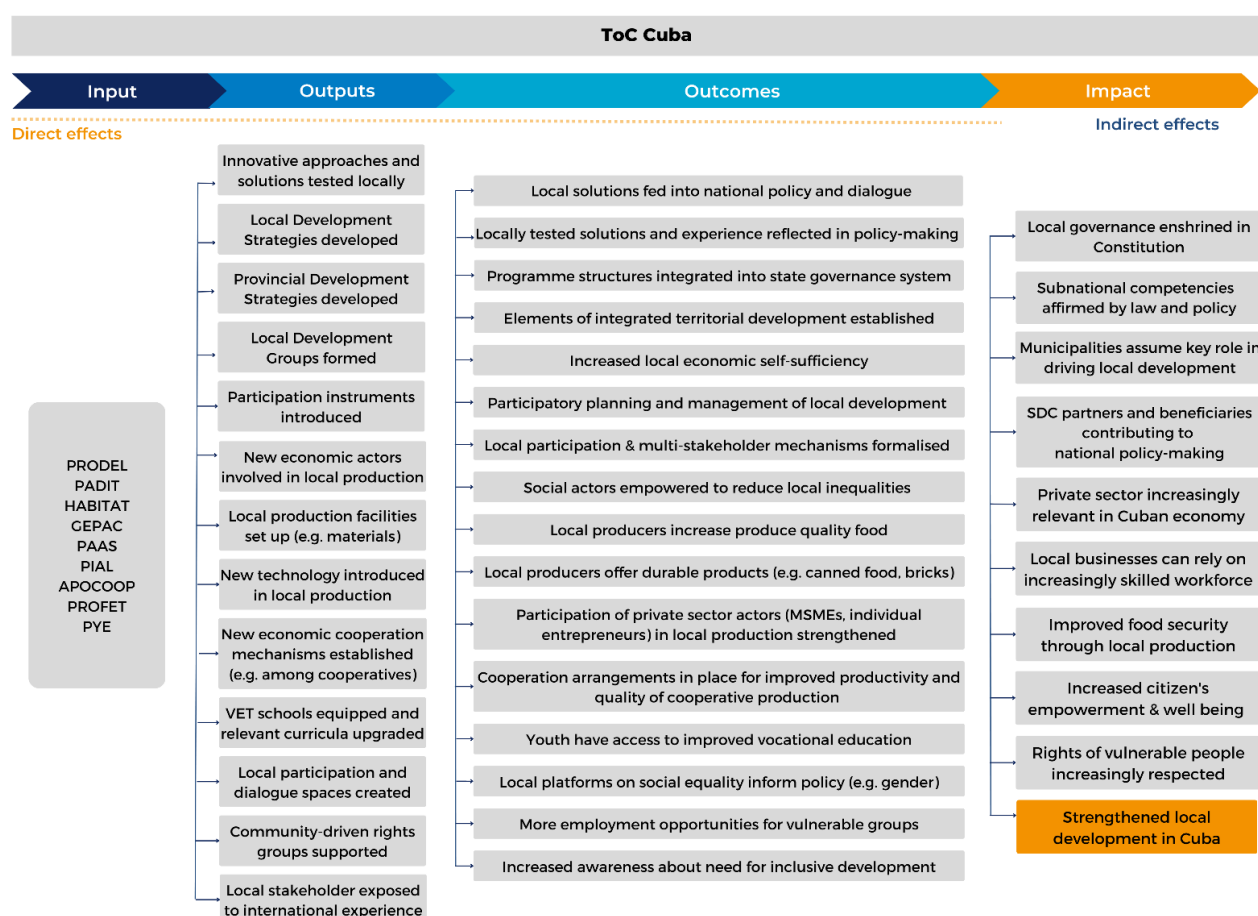


Figure 3: Thematic theory of change

4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In the following, the deep dive results are being presented against the OCED DAC criteria. Detailed references can be found in Annex 1.

4.1 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH CUBA IN THE FIELD OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

4.1.1 RELEVANCE

SDC cooperation departed from the assumption that a political and economic opening of the socialist country was going to be likely. Despite reform efforts that the Cuban government has rolled out over the past 20 years, interviewed SDC officials widely confirmed that, albeit noticeable, **changes in the political and socio-economic context fell short of expectations**.

Evidence collected through field work, interviews, document review, as well as earlier assessments by external evaluations confirm however the overall impression that the SDC contribution to local development in Cuba was and continues to be of **high relevance**. Importantly, much of the referenced **policy framework and recent novelties in legislation** have been developed drawing on experience and consultancy from SDC projects (see results and impact).

Project objectives and design have responded to key priorities of the Cuban government. For the current phase, they are inter alia laid out in the (i) the **National Plan of Social and Economic Development 2019 - 2030**: The SDC portfolio directly contributes, among other things, to all four projects under the **Territorial Development Programme (2020)**, i.e. Strengthening of capacities and instruments for the strategic management of sustainable territorial development, b. Decentralisation of competences at different levels, c. Management of local economic development, d. Evaluation, systematisation and communication of the strategic management of sustainable territorial development. Other relevant policy documents include: (ii) the **National Plan for Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Education**, and the **Municipal Food Self-Supply Plan**: SDC has supported activities, for instance, through the projects PIAL, PAAS, APOCOOP and PRODEL, directly contributing to the key policy goal of supporting food sovereignty built on local produce through support to local development planning, innovation in agriculture, improved packaging and storage and other measures; (iii) the **Territorial Development Programme (2020)**, which commits to strengthening municipalities as key actors in the country's socio-economic development, facilitating their empowerment in line with the autonomy and responsibilities granted by the 2019 Constitution; it also formalises the Local Development Strategy as a standard tool for decentralised local management and emphasises the local production of construction materials – all key areas to which SDC local development support is being directed through programmes such as HABITAT, PRODEL and PADIT; and (iv) the **National Plan for Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Education (2020)** and **State Plan to Confront Climate Change (2017)** which favour productive management with local resources, consultations between the public and private sectors, value chains and practices for adaptation to climate change and the use of renewable energy sources; (v) the **National Programme against Racism and Discrimination (2020)** and **Programme for the Advancement of Women (2021)** relevant to the transversal topics integral to SDC local development efforts as well as overarching policy developments in Cuba. Through PYE and other programmes, SDC is supporting numerous relevant local initiatives led by civil society organisations such as CFV, QUISICUABA or AFROATENAS in favour of inclusion and anti-discrimination. Cultural activities (e.g. exhibitions, radio programmes) play an important part in creating awareness for existing inequalities and contribute to social cohesion. Interviews during the field work mission and project visits confirmed the **relevance of the ongoing projects on local development**.

Individual project evaluations further validate this impression, e.g.: “The relevance of PADIT in phase 2 is high, evidenced by the achieved results that correspond to national priorities and the socio-economic model as well as the (expected) results of the National Plan of Social and Economic Development.”. In the same vein, “PAAS 2 is clearly articulated with in state policy, based on the decision to focus on the development of value chains, rather than production chains, for all the advantages it confers on producers, from the first to the last link in the chain, in the quest to promote better economic and food conditions for their families, the other actors in the local food system, and the general population of each municipality.”

The Cuba Programme’s strategic emphasis on local development has always been **fully in line with the overarching SDC development goals of poverty reduction, reduced socio-economic inequalities and sustainable development**. To provide an example: The Swiss Government’s Dispatch on International Cooperation for 2017-2020, for instance, stressed with regard to Cuba: *“[the goal is] to promote citizen participation and fight growing social inequalities. The population at large in Cuba still lives a life of deprivation. [...] Thanks to its historical position and know-how, Switzerland is in an excellent position to accompany this process of transition. The SDC supports Cuban municipalities and cooperatives in developing the local economy in a participatory and inclusive manner.”* The current Cooperation Programme is fully in line with the Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023 and the Human Rights Guidelines 2021- 2024, and making a direct contribution to (1) **promotion of freedom**; (2) strengthening the rule of law; (3) **promotion of equal opportunities**; (4) **support for sustainable development** (in line with the UN 2030 Agenda). Throughout its programmes, SDC has evidently been thorough in applying the principles of **do-no-harm** and **leave no one behind** – which is of particular importance in an authoritarian context.

In summary, according to the HIC Team, the objectives and design of SDC interventions in the area of local development over the past 20 years have **responded to the needs, policies and priorities** of Cuban counterparts, partners and beneficiaries, and were adjusted as needed in the face of changing circumstances.

4.1.2 COHERENCE

Overall coherence is **found to be high**. The Cuban Government prefers **bilateral consultation mechanisms**. Donor coordination rounds hosted by the national counterparts, as common in other country contexts, are not regularly called. Some interviewees alluded to the Cuban government’s scepticism of too close of a collaboration between international actors present in Cuba. According to SDC officials and implementing partners, coordination has for the most part been **ad hoc, informal and project-specific**. Against the backdrop of rather limited donor presence, such modus operandi has been **considered effective by many**, especially with the EU, active member states, and UN agencies, though **not everyone agrees**. **Co-financing and implementation arrangements** with other key development partners added to improved coherence. Cooperation with **UNDP** has been particularly strong since the early 2000. Starting with an initial Swiss financial contributions to the Local Human Development Programme (PDHL) at the time, subsequent programmes have regularly been the **result of joint efforts between the two agencies**. PADIT, for example, was planned and designed in close collaboration – with UNDP then assuming the role of lead implementer. A similar approach, though this time led by SDC, was applied for the programme launched in the area of technical and vocational education (PROFET). In other cases, including local food sustainability (BASAL), Swiss cooperation joined an existing EU/UNDP programme. Based on close cooperation with key development partners and by **identifying niches for own programme ideas** or **adding to existing initiatives**, SDC not only increased coherence vis-à-vis the efforts of other international programmes and agencies, but also **within its own portfolio in Cuba**.

In addition, SDC has been frequently relying **on capable public bodies as main implementer**, such as in the cases of PRODEL (with CEDEL) and GEPAC (with the Historian Office of the City of Havana). This way, coherence of efforts in the respective area of work was further strengthened, as institutional counterparts assumed an important part of the responsibility for steering activities and managing knowledge in a way that would **harness synergies and avoid duplication**.

As outlined earlier, Swiss cooperation in Cuba **initially took the strategic approach of piloting local development initiatives** in a framework that provided maximum **flexibility** to engage with local actors and support a variety of smaller activities with limited amounts of funds. As bilateral cooperation was intensified over the years, and in particular following the decision to make Cuba a priority country in 2013, some of the **characteristics of the early days persisted**. Internal and external evaluations concluded that consolidation was needed and subsequent efforts to pool resources produced visible results. The SDC project portfolio was subsequently **streamlined**.

Interestingly, the large number of projects, in particular in the early days of the Cuba Programme, has also been stressed as **one of the strengths of COSUDE** by some interviewees. Accordingly, COSUDE has like no other foreign agency an **extremely wide network of partners** that helped **build credibility among local actors**, and subsequently allowed for **more effective contributions in local development**.

In practice, the number of relevant local development projects has been **rather large** and there might have been **further room for consolidation** in subsequent years. Nevertheless, the fact that SDC supported projects operated **strongly locally, in most case with local coordinators** (e.g. in municipal local development groups), **efforts to harmonise activities around a specific territorial nexus or the increasingly common platform approach** have yielded very positive results and assured a **high amount of coherence**.

In summary, the HIC team has found SDC cooperation in local development to be **coherent and complementary** in themselves, in relation to other Swiss contributions as well as the efforts of international development actors active in Cuba.

4.1.3 EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness of SDC work in local development is deemed **high**. The overall balance is very positive with **concrete results at the local level** and the appreciation of these results is repeatedly expressed by the Cuban side. At the same time, in line with the multi-level approach, the strategic goal to **support local change and innovation**, and, in a next step, **use products, results and experience to influence normative and systemic change** has, in some of the reviewed cases, produced remarkable results. Both, external evaluators and SDC staff frequently highlighted the **above average value for money**, pointing to the significant results that had been achieved with comparatively small financial resources (*before 2013, average < CHF 4 m, and after ~ CHF 11 m annually*).

Interviewees regularly pointed out that SDC contributed significantly to **shifting boundaries in public discourse**. Swiss cooperation has been widely seen as ready to address issues before others. This applies to a range of policy areas. **Decentralisation and private business activity** were for a long time political no-go's and kept out of the official discourse. During the field mission, key stakeholders of different levels of the Cuban administration confirmed that SDC was **effective in adding new topics to the policy agenda** and to secure relevant buy-in from key actors within the partner system. "Before it was impossible to talk about decentralisation!" – is what the HIC team repeatedly was told.

A long list of examples could be identified that show the **effectiveness of SDC programmes in harnessing local experiences and solutions** and, successfully **introducing them into policy processes at higher level**.

Local good practice turned policy

- The widespread **shortage of construction materials** poses a serious obstacle to housing and infrastructure development. **Local production of building materials** promoted primarily through HABITAT as well as, albeit to a lesser degree, programmes like PRODEL and PADIT is widely considered to be a success story. Despite initial resistance from the national government, **locally organised production has rapidly proved to provide better outputs** than the centrally planned common practice. It has now been taken up as a **national development priority** and receives

- substantial government funding. Importantly, since their legalisation in 2021, there is a **growing number of private mini, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME)** operating in the sector.
- Municipalities and local social actors are well suited to address many of their communities' pressing problems. Thanks to their close understanding of both the territory and the social fabric of the local population, they can identify development potentials. **Municipal local development groups** are an impressive example of participatory local governance in action. Supported through projects, such as PIAL and PADIT, and actively involved as partner and cooperation vehicle in other SDC financed projects (e.g. PRODEL), municipal local development groups are recognised, and by now, **widely established governance mechanisms in Cuban municipalities**. Here, local stakeholders collaborate in the elaboration of the municipal development strategy as well as its subsequent implementation and monitoring. Its main purpose is to harness development potentials (employment, food sovereignty, housing, culture, environment etc.) and operates as multi-stakeholder platform on the principle of inclusive participation and mutual learning. Municipal governments, farmers and innovators access, recognise and participate in the groups to develop, for instance, **agri-food value chains** or **solve housing problems** in their territory. Faced with frequent shortages of goods and services, municipal local development groups have become important **key drivers for local solutions in many municipalities**.
 - To both enable local actors to engage in **effective and inclusive planning** SDC programmes have supported the preparation and implementation of **local development strategies**. Programmes like HABITAT, PIAL and PRODEL have all provided significant support to municipalities, relying strongly on capacity development of local stakeholders (rather than substituting). **Local development strategies** are today recognised and promoted by the national government as **standard tool for decentralised management** and development planning.
 - The new **Decree Law on agricultural cooperatives** was drawing on the successful experiences of APOCOOP and includes for the first time that **agricultural cooperatives can adopt the form of a first-degree cooperative** and recognises the concept and development of **inter-cooperative cooperation** and cooperation with other public and private entities. Specialists from SDC supported projects (i.e. BIOMAS, PAAS, PIAL and APOCOOP) were invited by the President and MINAG to join an expert group mandated to overhaul **agricultural policies and assumed a leading role in the new design**, applying approaches and experiences from the projects.
 - An external evaluation of PAAS II from 2020 found that the programme achieved **excellent results in supporting the production of healthy, agro-ecological food and strengthening local regional value chains** for increased food security in municipalities. Accordingly, producers benefited from increased revenues and **new jobs were created, providing new income opportunities for youth and women**.
 - Generally sceptical of civil society, the Cuban government's has openly recognised SDC's work in PYE and actively drawn on the **good practices emerging from the platform to inform government policy and legislation** (e.g. New Social Code). According to many interviewees, the visibility of SDC activities in the area have pushed boundaries. A range of actors empowered through SDC support were able to play an important role in **contributing to a critical discourse** on topics, until then largely treated as taboos, and actively took part in **shaping policy development** itself.
 - The Government of Cuba has declared the **participatory and inclusive governance model** piloted by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (OHCH), supported through HABITAT and GEPAC, a **good standard and advocates its application throughout the country**. Instruments that were applied included integrated urban/neighbourhood development plans and participatory budgeting. HABITAT has been supporting the local management of the housing sector since 2012. It prioritises the demands of vulnerable groups and women, as well as citizen participation, resilience and the functioning of local production chains, in particular to improve **access to building materials**. The issue of **social responsibility in housing** is now widely recognised and is feeding into the **implementation of the New Urban Agenda** in Cuba.

- Key results of GEPAC, including the design and application of **6 participatory planning instruments** (e.g. local development strategies, participatory budgeting) as well as the **socially responsible management approach to urban rehabilitation** were positively received by leadership of the country and recommended for dissemination as national good standard.
- Stakeholders of SDC programmes have been **actively contributing in consultation processes** in the run-up to the new Cuban Constitution of 2019, which has been widely applauded for its progressive nature, endorsing, for example, **municipal autonomy** but also paving the way for the introduction of a range of legal adjustments related to more inclusive social rights, such as **same sex marriage**.

For the previous programming cycle 2017-2021, evaluators concluded that at the local level, municipalities and institutions participating in SDC local development projects show economic and **social results above the national average**. Concrete examples relevant to local development were identified:

- **67** of the 77 municipalities (**87%**) implementing SDC-supported local governance projects, **raised their local budgets**.
- **Around 3 million people** living in municipalities that participate in agricultural production projects have **access to more and better quality products in local markets**. The **value chains of 9 agricultural products and food production, processing and marketing** capacities were improved. Energy from renewable sources was incorporated into the agro-food chains, increasing the annual electricity generated by 5 times.
- **18,630 people benefited from the improvement or creation of jobs**, 500 of them in cooperatives or private enterprises. These jobs are occupied by 89% women, 42% youth, 17% disadvantaged groups, 30% black population.
- **1,277 women victims of gender-based violence (439 black women and 406 young women)** have received care in specialised services set up by SDC projects.
- **13,707 students** in agriculture, construction and services (4,695 women, 1,218 socially disadvantaged and 76 with special educational needs) and **3,196 teachers** in 8 out of 11 provinces are **benefiting from improvements in TVET (e.g. new curricula)**.

Further review of recent annual reports and evaluations provide facts and figures that give additional insights into the effectiveness of ongoing or recently concluded SDC support programmes.

In numbers: Specific project results as of 2022

- In municipalities supported by APOCOOP, **73 percent of the population confirm that access to locally produced food has been improved**, which marks an increase of 44 percent over the past three years. 102 cooperatives have newly engaged in cooperation arrangements for improved productivity and quality.
- In 2022, **8.7 percent of consumption** in the regions supported through PAAS III relied on **products from local value chains**, which almost doubles the 2021 baseline value (4.9%). Support includes management consultancy, facilitating accreditation processes, as well as awareness raising among the local population. Moreover, in 8 municipalities, local governments financially support 17 initiatives actively **promote inclusion and empowerment**; along the value chain, 36 women hold leadership positions.
- In 19 municipalities supported by HABITAT 2, the issue of **housing is integrated into local development strategies**, **multi-stakeholder groups** are engaged in participatory and inclusive governance processes, and **gender focal points** are in place. Additionally, 45 new or improved local production facilities for construction materials are operating.
- Key results from PADIT: **169 local development groups** established (15 provinces and 154 municipalities), 10 Provincial Development Strategies and 163 Municipal Development Strategies updated, approved and being implemented, Territorial Development Toolkit formally applied and institutionalised (16), more than **14,400 stakeholders trained**.

In summary, the HIC team, based on the available information, has concluded that the **effectiveness of SDC interventions can be considered high**.

4.1.4 IMPACT

Measuring the impact of development cooperation is **notoriously difficult**. Over the past decades, SDC has not regularly performed rigorous ex-post impact assessments; this is true also in the case of Cuba. Statements about specific attribution can therefore not be made. Yet there is significant evidence to conclude that SDC efforts in local development have **contributed positively to systemic changes**.

i. Public debate and discourse

SDC local development projects in Cuba have had an important impact on **public debate and discourse** in the country. In particular, SDC efforts to **promote decentralisation and the rights of vulnerable groups** have helped to **elevate these issues to the forefront of public discussion**. By working closely with local communities and government officials, SDC has helped to **raise awareness of the importance of decentralisation in promoting sustainable and inclusive local development**. This has led to a more **robust and nuanced public debate around the role of municipalities as engines for positive change**. Similarly, by engaging with civil society organisations and promoting dialogue between diverse groups, SDC has helped to create a more informed and engaged public, and **strengthened local organisations and activists** in their ability to advocate for their own rights and those of others (e.g. AFROATENAS, CENESEX, Paloma Project). Work around **culture and arts** turned out to be effective in **creating awareness for different forms of inequalities and discrimination**.

ii. Policy and legislation

There is substantial evidence that SDC cooperation on local development has achieved its in many instances its goal to feed local experience into the wider policy framework. In some cases, this is being reflected in **contributions to key legislative processes**, including the 2019 Constitution, the Family Code or the Plan for Food Security and Sovereignty. Both specialists and beneficiaries of SDC supported programmes have played at times leading roles in the legislative process as well as the development of selected policies, including the Agroecology Law, the Plan for the Advancement of Women, Government Programme against Racism, the Law on Small Enterprises and Cooperatives, and most recently the Law on Education. This impression has widely been confirmed through interviews with key stakeholders both from the project as well as the government side. For example, the Council of Ministers' decree on the **strategic management of territorial development** that inter alia grants local councils greater powers to oversee the development strategy and requiring active efforts to assure inclusive participation has been **drawing on the experience as well as direct advice** of specialists and key stakeholders of SDC programmes. The new Family Code, recently adopted via a public referendum, is rather liberal in nature, effectively legalising same sex marriage, addressing gender-based violence – and thus taking up topics that continue to be rather sensitive in society. Civil society actors, associations and social activists who have been longstanding partners of SDC – most recently through PYE - were closely involved in the preparation of the Code and thus were able to **transfer results and experiences** from cooperation with SDC into the legislative framework.

These contributions have had a **positive impact on the overall legal and policy framework**, and have the potential to influence real and lasting change that can improve the lives of the Cuban people.

iii. Institutionalisation and ownership

Further, SDC supported programmes and their spin-off structures have in some cases become **integral to policy delivery in Cuba**. Prominently, PADIT was created under the leadership of the MEP and the IPF, with the support of UNDP, SDC and the Italian cooperation AICS. While for the time being in part reliant on donor financing, the **level of institutionalisation in the multi-level stakeholder landscape** (e.g. the earlier discussed municipal local development groups) **signals systemic impact**. **Legal impulses** have directly been come out of the structures of PADIT and later been adopted, such as Decree Law 33 on the Strategic Management of Territorial Development - Spatial and Urban Planning Plan. In

addition, other **project implementation vehicle have transitioned into forming part of the general governance** at local level. A good example are locally anchored groups focused on advancing agricultural development through innovation that were initiated by PIAL.

iv. Strengthened capacities

As frequently pointed out during interviews, capacity development in Cuba has had a crucial impact. **Skill transfer and new experiences** can be assumed to have an impact on future developments in the country. In the case of Cuba, it is well documented that many specialists and former beneficiaries that directly benefitted from SDC programmes over the past +20 years, have since taken on roles where they can influence policy at national scale. Some examples include former or active PRODEL, PADIT, HÁBITAT and GEPAC stakeholders who are now associated with the National Institute of Territorial and Urban Planning (OTU), the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), Ministry of Education (MINED) and others. The **contribution to the internationalisation** of Cuban stakeholders must not be underestimated. Cuba is **a rather closed country** with limited access to **technical knowledge from other countries**. As outlined before, international cooperation is much less prevalent as in other countries. **International exchanges** – allowing Cuban stakeholders to travel and experience hands-on common practice in other country contexts – has been repeatedly highlighted by interviewees as an enormous contribution by the Swiss Cooperation.

v. Small initiatives, great impact in local communities

The impact of small local development initiatives supported by the SDC had in some cases a **profound effect on poverty-reduction and the quality of lives of the benefitting communities at hand**. Initiatives such as AFROATENAS have made significant strides in addressing taboo topics like gender identities and racial discrimination, contributing to informed public debate beyond the limits of their neighbourhood. At the same time, concrete work at community level has led to **visible development in disadvantaged areas**. Infrastructure upgrades, the establishment of community spaces, as well as income opportunities through tourism have transformed a poor and difficult neighbourhood in one of the most interesting areas in the city of Matanzas– without pushing out former residents, but in active collaboration with them. Such examples prove that neighbourhood transformations do not require vast financial resources and even though the **results may be small in scale, the impact on the ground is significant** and can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those involved.

In summary, in spite of the lack rigorous impact assessments, the HIC team has found substantial evidence – both in available reports as well as the insights provided through interviews and field visits – to confirm that SDC interventions in local development had a **positive systemic impact**. More methodologically diverse assessments would however be needed in order to draw robust conclusions about the **degree** to which SDC achieved impact on, for instance, poverty reduction.

4.1.5 SUSTAINABILITY

SDC local development projects in Cuba have per se a **relatively high chance of sustainability** due to its participatory and **inclusive approach, strong alignment with government priorities, firm reliance on local resources** – that is, staff of subnational governments, private sector actors, CSOs and others – as well as **individual and institutional capacity development** at the heart of its support. All this generally increases the likelihood that project activities and results persist and/or continue to be moved forward even in the absence of future SDC support. However, Cuba currently finds itself in the middle of a **heavy social and economic crisis, which poses a considerable threat to the sustainability of project results**.

One key aspect to highlight is that SDC cooperation in Cuba moved towards implementing through so-called **platforms as a way to increase the effectiveness and sustainability** of its development interventions in the country. In the first years, SDC had implemented in Cuba through the project-based approach. The identified limitations included a narrow focus on short-term goals and limited impact beyond the project cycle. The platform approach is based on the idea of creating a **space for dialogue and**

collaboration between different actors, including civil society organisations, government institutions, private sector actors, and academia. In this sense, platforms serve as a hub for coordination and cooperation, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, resources, and expertise, whilst **strengthening the ownership of participating stakeholders**. The SDC platforms in Cuba, such as PADIT, PYE, or PIAL, the latter to advance agricultural development locally, were designed to drive local development and involve a range of actors, including civil society organisations, government institutions, private sector actors, and academia. They aim at building **long-term partnerships and networks** which, thanks to their **firm anchoring among local actors**, are then hoped to continue to work together beyond the project cycle. The level of institutionalisation of some existing platforms gives reason to assume that they indeed will, which makes their **sustainability rather likely**.

Examples:

- Various groups have been created within the framework of the projects, most notably **multi-stakeholder platforms** under PIAL and PADIT, which are by now **integral part of the institutional landscape of provinces and municipalities**. **Municipal local development groups** are a prime example for increased participation of actors traditionally not involved in local planning and decision-making processes. The groups now bring together community representatives as well as public and private producers (*mini-industrias*, *MYPYMES*, *cuentapropistas*) to discuss and prioritise development needs and investment priorities. The **strong ownership of municipalities and participating local stakeholders** and the solid **integration into standard local practice** make continuation likely.
- SDC's common practice of implementing programmes through **so-called integrated territorial groups**, usually rooted in the local communities and staffed with people working within or closely with local institutions, **adds to the likelihood of sustained progress in local development** as the people continue to apply their skills and experience even after the programme ends.
- Civil society organisation that were empowered initially through projects like PEGIN, are strengthened in their capacities to a degree that, over the past years, they largely **self-organise** within PYE. It has been common practice for years that SDC no longer provides mini-grants to individual NGOs but to a single lead organisation only, who would then manage financial contributions to other platform partners and **take responsibility** for overall coordination of activities. Interviews with NGOs participating in PYE stressed that these changes were not easy at first as they required more **independent and proactive collaboration among Cuban organisations** but that ultimately this led to important institutional learning, **reduced donor dependency** and overall increased **ownership** that increases the odds for a successful continuation of their work. Increased recognition of national government gives further reason to believe that key civil society stakeholders today are strong enough to defend the rights and needs of vulnerable groups; partners such as PQ, TTIB, PP, CIERIC, FNG, CFV and OAR, for instance, have been prominently involved in national dialogue formats and policy processes.
- The Historian's Office, a public body of the status of a Ministry, is today **championing the governance model** that was piloted in the Old Town of Havana with the help of SDC HABITAT and GEPAC across its network of offices all over Cuba to make urban planning more participatory and socially-inclusive, whilst harnessing local development potentials without jeopardising the cultural heritage of the cities. Even though the Historian's Office will continue to be up against influential competing interests (a problem far from being unique to Cuba), **participatory governance respectful of the needs and rights of the most vulnerable** (largely impoverished) parts of the population is now **firmly anchored in the institutional set-up**, making lasting impact of the SDC contribution realistic.

A **word of caution** is however warranted: The **reduction or lack of funding is likely to be a real challenge**. Much will depend on the ability of participating stakeholders to mobilise international, national and local resources. The **exit of key development partners** (along with SDC, with OXFAM another major actor is leaving the country) will be **painful**. All this happens at a time of a **deep social and economic crisis that jeopardises the achievements made so far**. As **poverty and need for external support**

are on the rise, Cuba is intensifying its cooperation with authoritarian governments, such as China and Russia.⁹

In summary, owing to the peculiar country context that demands tight integration into the formal structures of government – where without the green light of the authorities, little can be done – SDC programme activities in local development are characterised by a high degree of **absorption into the national governance system**. While this is **no guarantee for sustainability, it does increase its likelihood substantially**. Where SDC has been operating in less formalised spaces, for example, with activists and civil society, sustainability is subject to government support. Predictions about the course of events can of course not be made; but **what surely will stay** – as a majority of interviewees was adamant to point out – are **individuals and organisations** that today have **stronger capacities** to drive community development than they would have without the support of SDC.

4.2 MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

In the following, a range of learnings derived from the deep dive research are being summarised. They are divided into **two categories – thematic and institutional**. The first is specific to the SDC cooperation on local development in Cuba, whilst the second includes issues that are, in part, more general in nature and not always limited to SDC's work in the thematic focus area.

4.2.1 THEMATIC LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Going local as sound strategy

- Overall, the SDC focus on **local solutions** which can be replicated and fed into higher level politics to influence policy and legislative processes was a **realistic and notably successful approach**. The Cuba Programme shows a **clear evolution** from initially small, purely local projects to a more integrated multi-level approach, rooted in **concrete results** at local level that can serve as models for horizontal upscaling. At the same time, the review of SDC programme documents allows to clearly trace how subsequent phases within the multi-year programme cycle showed an **increasing emphasis on systemic change processes**, signalled both by the formulation of objectives but also, at times, by changes in the partner set-up. Through civil society support, formal and informal networks, as well as SDC staff themselves, SDC managed to provide valuable input into the **public discourse** and political **agenda-setting** (compare 4.1.4).

Lesson 2: Local development groups for increased participation and ownership

- Municipal local development groups**, as has been illustrated earlier, have been successfully piloted in various SDC projects and are today **widely recognised and increasingly replicated mechanisms of participatory local governance**. Not only do they symbolise the **strong local anchoring** of SDC local development programmes; they have also turned into **important vehicles for self-organisation of different local stakeholders**.

Lesson 3: Centralised management questioned but still sturdy

- Over the past 20 years, Cuba has started to question its governance model and successively made steps towards increased subnational autonomy and locally-led development initiatives. Despite the evident progress the country is making in moving past its heritage of Soviet-style centralised management, and the clear positive contribution that SDC cooperation has made in the process, **old habits die hard. Top-down management is still prevalent and it will take time**

⁹ [Cuba y Rusia con pasos concretos para más cooperación \(MINREX, 19.05.2023\)](#); [Intervención en la reunión del Consejo Supremo Económico Euroasiático \(Gobierno de Cuba, 2023\)](#); [Declaración Conjunta sobre la Profundización de las Relaciones Binacionales en la Nueva Era \(MRE de la RP China, 2022\)](#)

to further consolidate decentralisation reforms and further improve the framework conditions for local development.

Lesson 4: Respectful but critical

- SDC has been strongly perceived as an agency that is perfectly capable of **walking the thin line** between **respecting the local context** and **aligning with government priorities** on the one hand, and **tackling extremely sensitive and politically controversial issues** on the other. Interviewees gave SDC enormous credit for its major role in advocating for local governance when no one in government was prepared to speak about decentralisation. SDC has also been promoting women's empowerment, LGBT+ rights as well as the issue of racism, and thereby helped to **catalyse important debate** and, as has been outlined earlier, thereby contributed to remarkable progress in the fields.

Lesson 5: No narrow regional focus

- SDC traditionally tries to concentrate its activities to one or few regions of a country. In the Cuban context, evaluators pointed out that there is more likelihood of impact if an approach or methodology is tested more widely in different parts of the country for **maximum visibility**. Partner institution accordingly have stronger arguments for feeding experience into national policy cycle as possible country-wide approach. Interviewees added also that programmes often expanded in scope over the years and from one project phase to another. The choice of whom to include was thereby strongly **interest driven**. Also, the **capacities of local partners to assume ownership** and coordinate activities in the communities played an important role during programming. Due to their mostly **close integration into the official governance system**, methods and tools promoted through SDC programmes would quite naturally be **replicated and upscaled**.

Lesson 6: Transversal topics well integrated

- The transversal topics gender and anti-discrimination have been **well integrated and visible** in the later cooperation programmes, and proved to be of vital importance. Today every programme has a gender and social inclusion strategy. **Far from only pursuing a mainstreaming approach**, both soon advanced to reflect **key priorities in SDC interventions on local development**. By hindsight, it might be argued that they may have deserved a more prominent role in earlier strategies. Other issues, such as environmental protection/climate change were introduced in more recent strategies and proved to be relevant. Using **culture and arts** as entry point for addressing key issues around **social inclusion, gender stereotypes, racial discrimination and others** has proven to be successful.

Lesson 7: Better late than never?

No one knew at the time that SDC would withdraw its bilateral cooperation by 2024 and major delays caused by pending approvals resulted in an unintended late launch. By hindsight, it is of course unfortunate that the topic of technical and vocational education – addressed through **PROFET** – was not added to the portfolio earlier. As it stands, it will likely not have the time to achieve all its objectives. Nevertheless, with the early announcement of its exit and close cooperation with both governmental and international partners plus NGOs, SDC has assured that a responsible phasing out and smooth continuation of the programme is realistic.

4.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Cooperation built on trust

- Trust was the key word used by literally all stakeholders the HIC team has talked to. Cooperation built on trust is what made much of the success of SDC's work in Cuba possible in the first place. The Cuban Government is wary of foreign actors; only few are allowed to work in Cuba at all. Being able to build trust with partners in the country was mainly attributed to the **transparent and consistent** engagement of SDC, **respect for the Cuban context and acceptance of differences**, as well as the important role of SDC National Programme Officers who have played a **key role as interlocutors and facilitators** that cannot be overestimated. Former SDC staff confirmed that the trustful cooperation that has repeatedly been stressed by government officials during interviews was the result of years of **relationship-building**. At the same time, SDC managed to find the right balance and **maintained critical distance as needed**. While the human rights situation in Cuba is still an extremely delicate topic, SDC's **strong reputation** puts Switzerland **in the position to be able to express concerns**. SDC's successful approach to cooperation in Cuba can serve as a valuable lesson for other authoritarian contexts.

Lesson 2: Flexibility, responsiveness and adaptability.

- SDC cooperation on local development since 2003 has been characterised by a **high degree of flexibility**, which has allowed it to **adapt to changing circumstances** and achieve significant results. One example is when the Cuban government introduced new regulations on private enterprise in 2018, SDC quickly adjusted its support to help MSMEs comply with the new requirements. When the COVID-19 hit in 2020, SDC was **perceived as particularly responsive** as it came to the help of local communities in the most affected areas with food and hygiene supplies. It also provided support in the **elaboration of vaccines** that helped combat the pandemic. Another example is its partnership with local organisations to promote sustainable agriculture practices under PIAL, APOCOOP and other projects. In the face of **natural disaster** (e.g. Hurricane Irma in 2017, and Ian in 2022), SDC quickly pivoted to provide emergency aid and support to help farmers recover their crops and livelihoods.

Lesson 3: Adequate communication with partners and beneficiaries of its actions based on respect and recognition of differences

- SDC has widely been recognised for adopting an approach to development cooperation that prioritises respect and adaptability towards its partner countries. In the case of Cuba, SDC has always been perceived as **working in partnership with the Cuban government and local stakeholders, rather than imposing its own agenda**. Many interviewees expressed the view that, unlike other development agencies, SDC fully respects the needs, priorities and dynamics in the partner country, even where differences in opinion or values exist. Steering the development process in a way that is sensitive to local realities has been frequently pointed out as a major success factor for **SDCs excellent reputation among both state and non-state stakeholders**.

Lesson 4: Cuban Programme Officers with abundant expertise and considerable visibility

- An outstanding feature often highlighted during interviews and project visits is the role of the Cuban Programme Officers. In all cases **recognised experts** in their field (not sheer administrators), sometimes with **considerable popularity and visibility in the country** prior to joining SDC, they were and continue to be instrumental in forging cooperation with government stakeholders. Against the background of an environment often described as filled with **suspicion towards foreign actors**, the trustful relations SDC maintains with the Cuban government – albeit

not free of tensions - are to a considerable degree made possible thanks to the **above-average national staff** working for SDC programmes, who are able to **navigate smoothly in the complex Cuban context**.

Lesson 5: Readiness to take risks and work on sensitive issues

- One of the strengths of SDC cooperation in local development in Cuba, as frequently pointed out by interviewees, has been its **willingness to take on topics that at the time were considered taboo**. In the Cuban contexts, this includes the very idea of decentralisation, which for a long time has been described by stakeholders as political minefield. At the same time, SDC has been careful to approach these topics in a way that is **not offensive to key stakeholders**. This has allowed the organisation to build coalitions for change across levels of government, and make a significant input to the considerable **changes in the legislative normative framework** of the country that as been described earlier.

Lesson 6: High visibility at a comparatively low cost

- SDC cooperation in local development has generated an **enormous amount of visibility for Switzerland** in Cuba. Compared to other country contexts in LAC and elsewhere, SDC operated in Cuba on a **fairly modest financial commitment** (*before 2013, average < CHF 4 m, and after ~ CHF 11 m annually*). While the HIC team did not engage in any detailed cost-effectiveness analysis of the Cuba Programme, **reputation gains** have been significant – and shared invariably by all types of counterparts interviewed or visited.

Lesson 7: The Head matters

- Perhaps little surprising but indeed a central topic that emerged from the deep dive is that the **preferences and initiatives of the top manager** in charge do indeed strongly shape programmatic developments. While it seems that some thematic adjustments were closely linked to overarching shifts in the development discourse or new priorities set in Bern, the role of **individuals pushing certain topics** has been regularly highlighted. Examples include the increased emphasis on gender/empowerment of women in the second half of the 2000s or the introduction of TVET into the Cuba Programme.

Lesson 8: Implementation modalities

- Available implementation modalities are decisively different in Cuba than in other countries of Swiss Cooperation. Besides cooperating with UN agencies and in rare cases with international NGOs, for the most part, SDC relied on national stakeholders – both state and non-state – as implementing partners. **State supervision** of SDC activities was reported to be **tight**, as with all other foreign actors in Cuba, slowing down implementation of activities and entire programmes as approvals were pending for extended periods of time. It was therefore sometimes argued that in the Cuban context, **local mandates, even where capable partners were won**, did not reduce the SDC in-house workload as expected, since **wary government partners** made regular **time-consuming troubleshooting necessary all the same**. Different ways of **co-financing with other donors** allowed to leverage action and **reduce the administrative burden on the Cooperation Office**. At times, **NGOs** were involved to play an important role in **taking over project manager functions** (see lesson 9).

Lesson 9: Platform approach for increased sustainability

- The increasingly applied **platform approach** (discussed in detail in 4.1.4. and 4.1.5) shifted **gradually managerial responsibility to partners from within the Cuban partner system**. On the

one hand this was reported to reduce the workload for SDC staff (see previous lesson). More importantly, local partners engaged in platforms such as PADIT or PYE repeatedly raise the issue of **increased ownership** (not without a sigh at times, considering the additional work that came with it). At the same time, they all pointed out that, though far from easy, this strengthens the **much needed collaboration and cooperation between Cuban stakeholders** like no project managed by an external party would.

Lesson 10: Long-term commitment as outstanding feature

- SDC is not only recognised for **long-term planning of project cycles** but also its transparent and **clear communication about future commitments**. While maintaining always sufficient flexibility to respond to changing needs and contexts, SDC is perceived to be a very reliable partner that can be counted on, even or especially in difficult times. Identified as a **key strength of SDC**, interviewees also appreciated the **early notice** about the closure of the Cuba Programme, and the **responsible withdrawal** over the period of three years.

Lesson 11: Integration of Embassy/SDC

- The functional and physical integration of SDC into the Swiss Embassy in Cuba was intended to streamline development efforts and improve efficiency. In the perception of some, this had two consequences: some local partners reported that the move made SDC **seem less accessible** to them when compared to the previous location (a yard shared with other development agencies, such as UNDP). In the words of one interviewee: “Before we would just quickly drop by at their offices, which now no longer seems to be adequate.”

Lesson 12: Increasing administrative burden for Cooperation Office

- Over the past decade, the Cooperation Office in Cuba has experienced a **steady increase of administrative tasks** – partly deemed to be linked to new reporting requirements for greater accountability but also to what is perceived by some as rolling back the **traditionally decentralised management of SDC in favour of more central control**.

Lesson 13: Monitoring and impact assessments

- Past evaluations had requested to improve the monitoring of projects and the Cooperation at large. Notable efforts have since been undertaken and led to better availability of data. Rigorous impact assessments on the SDC contribution however have not been performed, leading to **scarce information about the possible impact on poverty reduction**. Generally it would be useful to assure **reporting against indicators with explicit reference to the running as well as previous project phases**, even in cases where indicators have undergone substantial change from one phase to the next. In some cases, this has already been done, in others **aggregate data** were not readily available. Capitalisation as well as communication work would benefit from reporting aggregate data as a standard practice

Lesson 14: Knowledge management

- SDC (projects, programmes, regional and thematic departments in Bern) produces a great number of valuable materials. However, **availability of documents is limited**. At times, evaluations, final reports and other key material was found to be not available, or only available with the Cooperation Office but not SDC Bern. Institutional learning in general and future capitalisations in particular would benefit from an **up-to-date unified data base**.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This deep-dive has summarised SDC's bilateral cooperation with Cuba on local development over the past 20 years. It has done so in the context of SDC's learning and knowledge management initiative accompanying the gradual phasing out of the bilateral cooperation activities in Cuba and other LAC countries. Methodologically, the deep-dive relied on triangulated interviews and literature review, made use of an evaluation and capitalisation matrix structured along the OECD DAC criteria and added lessons learned that are divided into those most relevant to the thematic area of local development on the one hand and others focusing on institutional learning for SDC. The deep-dive further applied elements of qualitative content analysis and contribution analysis. It was not an evaluation but rather detective work aimed at capitalising on available information and identifying lessons learned.

Contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable development – in particular through efforts at the local level - lies at the heart of Swiss international cooperation outlined in its 2022-2024 exit strategy. It seeks to promote equal opportunities, human rights and “contribute to sustainable economic growth, market development and the creation of decent jobs” with thematic priorities in employment creation and private sector engagement.” The thematic deep-dive has demonstrated that more than **20 years of cooperation with Cuba have clearly reflected these overarching priorities over time, and identified substantial contributions.**

Moreover, this report has shown that while the cooperation with Cuba – in view of the nature of the country's political and socio-economic system - may be atypical in many ways, there **is much to learn from the experience of SDC bilateral cooperation.**

By means of concluding, a few recommendations may be offered. They can serve as key take-always but should not replace a closer examination of the lessons learned discussed in the previous section.

- **Continue long-term commitment in successive multi-annual programme phases.** This quite unique feature of SDC is highly valued by counterparts who appreciate the reliable nature of the Swiss approach. Short-term interventions and ad-hoc measures may seem attractive but will find it hard to generate the trust and respect that SDC enjoys to date. At the same time, a long term vision is likely to increase the chances of achieving the sort of impact SDC is looking for.
- **Maintain flexibility.** In contrast to many development partners, SDC is firm in its strategic approach to pursue overarching objectives with a great amount of flexibility. **“The objective is clearly set out but the path there is not set in stone.”**, as one respondent put it in an interview. This approach evidently yields better results than overly strict adherence to pre-defined activities. Despite calls for more rigorous planning, reporting and control, SDC would be well advised to not rid itself of this strength.
- The **high degree of Cuban ownership is remarkable** and should serve as inspiration also for very different country programmes. **Keep relying heavily on local expertise.** Excellent local experts and networks have regularly been mentioned as one of the **biggest virtues of SDC in the country.** This approach not only increases **relevance in the local context but also sustainability.** Their knowledge stays, and in the case of Cuba, is regularly been made use of in key policy processes. **Use platform experience from Cuba in other country contexts.** In response to the limitations that exist with regard to involving external organisations in the implementation of programmes, cooperation in Cuba has remarkably relied on local actors. While interviews confirmed that this has not always been easy, the amount of **ownership and institutional anchoring** of the SDC programmes is remarkable. **Multi-stakeholder platforms** as pushed by SDC are an important element in the future mix of cooperation instruments and, albeit not a panacea, definitely a viable approach beyond Cuba.
- **Unify knowledge management.** Easier said than done, but certain fairly straightforward steps may be a good start: one could be a unified database maintained jointly by SDC Bern and the Country Office. HIC has demonstrated that many documents, including from recent years, have

not been easy to come by. Even if in the end, a very good amount of key documents could be reviewed, future capitalisation efforts would benefit from a **single database** and a **standard processes by which new relevant project documents** (ProDocs, annual reports, etc.) are being submitted to the system upon approval.

- **Continue learning from the Cuban experience.** Development cooperation in Cuba has – owing to the nature of the Cuban system – played out quite differently than in most other countries. This also means, **creativity** was needed for effective implementation and can inspire other country offices regardless of the national context. Concurrently, Cuba provides a range of learning opportunities for **working in authoritarian contexts**, as those responsible did a remarkably good job in **pushing limits – but not too far**. **Plenty of concrete results** were achieved that **supported the most vulnerable segments of society**. While implementation is often slow and/or inconsistent, **contributing to the recognition of important human rights in the legal framework is an important milestone** and the **prerequisite for effectively claiming them**. Activities addressing the **various dimensions of inequalities and discrimination** through **culture and arts** have proven to be successful in contributing to **greater awareness and debate around human rights**.
- Concrete lessons may be derived from the Cuban experience of risk management and the **successful application of the do-no-harm principle** (e.g. close coordination and dialogue, high level of national ownership, critical distance, and diverse partner landscape) throughout the years.

To conclude, SDC's work on local development in Cuba may only be **at second glance a success story**.

The past 20 years have not seen the transition to a liberal capitalist democracy, as some had expected. Cuba has embarked on reform processes to overhaul its governance model with the goal to increase subnational autonomy in an effort to stimulate local development. Progress is evident – but the Soviet-style centralised public management is still no thing of the past.

It will take time and political will to further advance **local governance** but, as has been pointed out earlier, old habits die hard. **Key obstacles remain** and the **timing for exiting Cuba is more than unfortunate**, considering that the country is in the middle of the **most drastic economic crisis since the 1990s**. In times of shifting geopolitics amid Russia's war against Ukraine, and as Cuba is facing an **increasing need for international cooperation**, there is already evidence that this **void will be filled by authoritarian regimes promoting a radically different model of governance**.

But the Swiss contribution has far from failed. Quite the opposite is true.

Insights of this deep dive have demonstrated that the results and impacts of SDC on local development have been **substantial and of high relevance**. They contributed to systemic changes and improved the lives of many Cubans. In an extremely complicated context – with **many adverse external factors** outside the influence of Swiss cooperation – the results that have been produced and continue to be consolidated over the course of the next 18 months are remarkable.

Again, there is much to learn from SDC's experience in Cuba. This deep dive has tried to make contribution to that end.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND MET STAKEHOLDERS

The following persons were consulted by the HIC team as part of the deep dive on SDC cooperation in the area of local development in Cuba.

NAME	(FORMER) FUNCTION
Markus Glatz	Head of Cooperation, SDC Cuba
Amanda Ammann	Country Manager Cuba, SDC DLAC
Peter Tschumi	Former Head of Cooperation, SDC Cuba
Peter Sulzer	Former Head of Cooperation, SDC Cuba
Sven Stucki	Former Country Manager DLAC, SDC
Adrian Schläpfer	Head of Scoping Mission for Cuba Pilot Programme, SDC
Mauro Reina	Ambassador of Switzerland to Cuba
Lorenzo Suárez	Deputy Head of Cooperation, SDC Cuba
Mayra Espina Prieto	National Programme Officer, SDC Cuba
Sandra Miranda Lorigados	National Programme Officer, SDC Cuba
Julio César Gonzalez Pagés	National Programme Officer, SDC Cuba
Claudia Llera Martínez	Programme Assistant, SDC Cuba
Carlos García Pleyán	Former National Programme Officer, SDC Cuba
Caridad Pereyó Barley	Director of CIERIC, Coordinator of PRODEL
Rolando García Domenech	Coordinator APOCOOP at ANAP
María de los Ángeles Vilaboy Rodríguez & Mirlena Rojas	Centro Felix Varela
Meylin Pacheco	Programme Officer at World Food Programme
Liset Robaina & Yohanka Valdés	Oxfam Cuba
Amélie Teisserenc	Humanity & Inclusion, Coordinator for PROFET
Pablo Fornet	Head of Masterplan, Office of the Historian of the City of Havana, Coordinator for GEPAC
Patricia Alomá	Officer, Masterplan, Office of the Historian of the City of Havana, Coordinator for GEPAC
Jorge Núñez Jover	University of Havana, Advisor to the President
Lisett Fernández Páramo	ACPA, President
Edith Felipe	Coordinator of UNDP
Ricardo Nuñez	Coordinator of UNDP for PROFET
Aymara Hernández	National Programme Officer of UNDP
Vivian Cabrera	National Programme Officer of UNDP for PADIT
Graciela Morales	Former Programme Officer
Juan Pérez Lamas	Coordinator of ACTAF for PAAS
Alexander Manso	Director TVET, Ministry of Education
Mailyn Esther Castro	Programme Coordinator of CIERIC for PRODEL
Norma Vasallo	Gender expert
Ada Guzón Comporredondo	Director, CEDEL

NAME	(FORMER) FUNCTION
Lizette Vila (& colleagues)	Director, Palomas Project
Inalvis Bonachea	Director for Commercial Policy with Europe, MINCEX
Emma Liens	Expert for Commercial Policy with Europe, MINCEX
Manuel Vanegas	Director, Medicuba Suiza
Frank Hernández & Viviana Somoano	Programme Coordinators, Provincial Government of Artemisa
Hubert Somonte	Technical Coordinator PADIT-Artemisa, Provincial Government of Artemisa
Yanitsis Suárez Pedroso	Coordinator PRODEL-Artemisa
Aizel Llanes	National PADIT Coordinator. Director of INIE
Eduardo Ávila Rumayor	UNDP, Coordinador de PROFET, Cárdenas/Matanzas
Eduardo W. Coll Rodríguez	Coordinator of Territorial Development Programmes and Objectives, Province of Cienfuegos
Jesús M. Rey Novoa	Head of the Department of Territorial Development and General Coordinator PADIT
Yanet González Laso	Head of the Department of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment
Dayana Bordón Cabrera	Official in charge of International Relations in the Provincial Government
Lliney Portela	Director of the Centre for Local Development Studies and Business Management at UCF and member of the GUCID-PADIT Study Centre Network
Carlos Díaz Ramos	Director of the PADIT project
Yaima González Menéndez	Economic Administrator, PADIT Cienfuegos
Ebelsys Fernández Calzada	Secretary of the coordinating and purchasing committee, PADIT Cienfuegos
Yainelys González Menéndez	Technical Coordinator, PADIT Cienfuegos
Ailen E. Ortiz Medina	PDL Coordinator, PADIT Cienfuegos
Nelson Suárez Díaz	EDP Coordinator, PADIT Cienfuegos
Immer A. Ramos Reyes and Yoana L. Piedra Sarria	Responsible experts for the population and gender network, PADIT Cienfuegos
Danaisy Brito Hernández	Responsible for the communication for development axis, PADIT Cienfuegos
Arnaldo Cruz Cruz	Municipal Coordinators of Local Development, Municipalities PADIT Cienfuegos, Aguada de Pasajeros and Abreus
Juan M. Pino Alomá	Municipal Coordinator Local Development, Abreus.
Francisco Rodríguez López	Municipal Coordinator Local Development, Aguada de Pasajeros
Daily Pérez Alonso	Director of Maintenance and Construction of the Municipality of Aguada de Pasajeros
Yoelkis Torres Tápanes	Head of Afroatenas, Matanzas
Mariela Mon	CIERIC

ANNEX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROJECT	DOCUMENT
PAAS	2017 Credit Application PAAS I
	2017 Final report PAAS I
	2021 Credit Application PAAS
	2022 Credit Application PAAS
	2023 Annual Report 2022 PAAS III
APOCOOP	2019 Credit Application APOCOOP 2
	2022 Credit Application APOCOOP II
	2022 What we are doing – our methodologies
	2023 Annual Report 2022 APOCOOP II
PYE	2021 Credit Proposal PYE 3
	2023 Annual Report 2022 PYE - AFROATENAS
PADIT	2014 Credit Application PADIT
	2021 Credit Application PADIT
	2022 Annual Report 2021 PADIT
	2022 External Evaluation 2018-2021 PADIT II
	2023 - Draft Annual Report 2022 - Results Matrix PADIT III
GEPAC	2018 Credit Application GEPAC 2
	2021 Credit Modification GEPAC 2
	2023 Annual Report 2022 GEPAC 3
HABITAT	2013 Credit Application Habitat II
	2015 Mid-Term Evaluation of Habitat II
	2016 Position on Mid-Term-Evaluation of Habitat II
	2023 Annual Report 2022 HABITAT 2
PRODEL	2011 Credit Application PRODEL
	(n/a) Local Development Projects – Experiences from PRODEL
	2019 Municipal projects as protagonists in local development strategies
	2021 Credit Application PRODEL
	2023 Annual Report 2022 PRODEL
PROFET	2021 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2021-2023
	2021 Credit Proposal PROFET
	2023 Mid-term Review 2019-2022 PROFET
PIAL	2017 Credit Application PIAL II
	2015 Mid-Term Evaluation of PIAL III
Other	2019 UNDP Local Perspective of Human Development in Cuba
	2018 FES Social Inequalities and Rural Areas in Cuba

* Additional project materials (leaflets, factsheets, etc.) were reviewed as part of the deep dive, as were SDC Cooperation Strategies, (internal, external) evaluations and other programme documents that formed part of the previous meta-analysis performed earlier in the context of HIC LAC.

ANNEX 3: EVALUATION AND CAPITALISATION MATRIX

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
1) Relevance		
1.1 How and to what extent did SDC's aid respond to pressing multidimensional development needs ? Were the investments done coherently and proportionate in relation to the development priorities at specific periods of time?	<p>1.1.1 Strategic documents and formulated objectives therein clearly refer to development needs of the target group.</p> <p>1.1.2 Strategic documents and formulated objectives therein are in line with development priorities of the countries according to national development plans and/or sector strategies as well as to specific needs and requests of relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries.</p> <p>1.1.3 Instruments, methods and chosen thematic focusses of projects are in line with defined overarching objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite the dire socio-economic situation during the so-called "Special Period" (1991-2000), marked by severe economic crisis in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, when comparing with other countries in the regions, Cuba was assessed to be neither a country of extreme poverty or socio-economic inequality when SDC launched its first activities in the early 2000s (see e.g. 1998 Report - Scoping Mission Cuba, 2003 Strategic Orientation Cuba 2004-2006) ▪ Government officials stressed during interviews that the Swiss Programme is fully in line with and actively contributing to key priorities of the Government, including the overarching National Economic and Social Development Plan 2030, or Decree 33 for the Strategic Management of Territorial Development, which highlight strengthening municipalities, stimulating local development and reducing disparities as key objectives (2023 INT 46) ▪ Over the past 20 years, the SDC portfolio has developed responding to emerging needs set by the Cuban government (2023 INT 46). ▪ Throughout the years, local development - understood in terms of local economic development and local governance - with an emphasis on participatory processes and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups marks a clear filière rouge in the programmatic orientation of SDC in Cuba (2023 INT 2, 19, 30) ▪ Officials of SDC partner ministries highlighted reliability thanks to long-term commitments, a clear strategic orientation rooted in actual needs and local priorities, as well as flexibility to respond to changing needs as the great strengths of working with SDC (e.g. 2023 INT INT16, 46, 53) ▪ External interviewees repeatedly stressed that SDC played an important role in pioneering activities on issues that seemed daring at first, incl. decentralisation, discrimination based on sex, race etc., which were later taken up by key stakeholders and are now part of government policy and regular political discourse (e.g. 2023 INT 2, 49 – repeatedly highlighted in internal and external evaluations) ▪ Individual local development projects have continuously been externally evaluated and their relevance assessed to be high, e.g. "The relevance of PADIT in phase 2 is high, evidenced by the achieved results that correspond to national priorities and the socio-economic model as well as the (expected) results of the National Plan of Social and Economic Development." (2022 External Evaluation Phase II 2019-2021, PADIT); "PAAS 2 is clearly articulated in state policy, based on the decision to focus on the development of value chains, rather than production chains, for all the advantages it confers on producers, from the first to the last link in the chain, in the quest to promote better economic and food conditions for their families, the other actors in the local food system, and the general population of each municipality. (2020 Mid-Term Evaluation of PAAS II) ▪ The proposal for Phase II PROFET is framed within the National TVET Strategy in Cuba. This would make it possible to order the strategy promoted through the innovative ideas in PROFET and with it the possibility of advancing in its consolidation processes according to the scope of each idea and its importance as an integral process for a proven reference polytechnic centre and its territorial functioning network. (2023 Mid-term Review 2019-2022 PROFET) ▪ PROFET is coherent in its programmatic scope to contribute to enhancing youth access to employment by promoting inclusion, raising the quality and ensuring the educational relevance of TVET by influencing and responding to the priorities of educational improvement, its alignment with the current situation of transformative changes in Cuba and the correspondence with the agenda of international cooperation in compliance with the SDGs 2030; however, elements were lacking in the planning process to improve its consistency (2023 Mid-term Review 2019-2022 PROFET)

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
1.2 In how far was SDC's engagement in local development in line with overall Swiss development cooperation priorities ?	<p>1.2.1 Strategic documents at country or LAC level and formulated objectives therein refer to overall Swiss development cooperation strategies.</p> <p>1.2.2 Strategic documents and formulated objectives therein at country or LAC level are in line with Swiss development priorities according to Swiss IZA strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A joint SDC scoping mission (incl. political and humanitarian departments as well as the Latin America Section) concluded that Switzerland's active presence in this process makes sense in terms of foreign and development policy (1998 Report - Scoping Mission Cuba) Cuba will continue to be a priority country for Swiss cooperation, which is mainly justified by added value that our cooperation can provide in a very particular political context. Cooperation contributes positively to Switzerland's position in Cuba and presents an important basis for strengthening political and economic dialogue. In addition, Cuba is facing an increase in inequalities, poverty and vulnerabilities (2017 Cuba Cooperation Strategy 2017-2021). The current (third) Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023 and the Human Rights Guidelines 2021- 2024 are relevant for Cuba in their four main principles, with which this CP is aligned: (1) promotion of freedom; (2) strengthening the rule of law; (3) promotion of equal opportunities; (4) support for sustainable development (in line with the UN 2030 Agenda). This CP also responds to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Regional Guidelines 2021- 2024 and the Swiss Strategy for International Cooperation 2021-2024, which determine the development objectives as well as the modalities for a responsible exit of Swiss bilateral cooperation in Cuba in 2024. (2022 Exit Cooperation Programme 2022-2024).
2) Coherence		
2.1 Was the development cooperation in local development coherent and complementary to other SDC activities (humanitarian aid, engagement in the field of peace and security, global programmes) as well as with the engagement of other Swiss development actors (e.g. SECO)?	<p>2.1.1 Strategy and project documents illustrate coherence/ complementarity with other SDC/SECO activities.</p> <p>2.1.2 Synergy potentials were used and duplication was avoided during project implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the years, evaluators have pointed to the rather large number of projects and a considerable thematic spread (e.g. 2006 Evaluation of the SDC Special Programme in Cuba). Efforts to consolidate the portfolio were undertaken throughout the years that followed and produce noticeable changes in the structure of the SDC portfolio. "The focus on large projects represents an evolution from previous periods." (2013 Mid-term review of the cooperation strategy). There are synergies between many projects, primarily thanks to the municipal level as a gateway (2013 Mid-term review of the cooperation strategy). This assessment has been confirmed during the field work: projects such as PADIT and PRODEL operate frequently in the same municipalities. Effective coordination and the identification has been assured through a number of measures: a) projects with a similar thematic focus are handled by the same SDC National Programme Officer which helps pool knowledge and identify potentials for collaboration, b) SDC projects come with local coordinators responsible for one or more municipalities in a certain region who are assuring regular exchange with other projects on the ground (2023 INT 34, 25, 40) Coordination between SDC international cooperation and humanitarian aid generally seen as effective and unproblematic (2013 INT 49) SECO without a programme of its own but consulted during annual planning (2022, INT 4)
2.2 Was the project coherent and complementary to the engagement of other international development actors in the sector?	<p>2.2.1 Strategy and project documents illustrate coherence/ complementarity with activities of other international donors.</p> <p>2.2.2 Synergy potentials were used and duplication was avoided during project implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor coordination has for the most part been ad hoc, informal and project-specific. Against the backdrop of rather limited donor presence, such informal coordination has widely been considered sufficient and effective, especially with EU, the active member states, and the UN agencies but also with respect to international NGOs active in the field of local development, such as Oxfam International (2023 INT 2, 3, 46, 49; see also 2021 SDC Cuba Annual Report) The strategic move away from individual small-scale funding towards working in so-called platforms, in which financing is provided to one lead partner that then assumes the responsibility for managing SDC provided resources and coordinate activities of a multitude of organisation participating in the platform not only strengthened ownership of local organisations but also had a positive effect on increasing coherence and exploiting synergies within the SDC portfolio and beyond (2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba; 2023 INT 6) The long-term cooperation with UNDP in the field of local development (e.g. through PDHL, PADIT) contributed to continuity, synergies and harmonisation of activities (2023 INT 46, 50, 54, 2022 External Evaluation 2018-2021 PADIT II)

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial large number of different programmes and project initiatives in local development required consolidation; Recommendation 4: The programme should prioritise projects that have the greatest potential to contribute to SDC's main programme purpose (2013 External Mid-term Programme Evaluation, p. 14) – notably achieved in later SDC programmes; vast number of projects, especially in early days of SDC programme also seen as strength, i.e. the basis for strong SDC network among Cuban stakeholders, incl. at local level (i.e. 2023 INT 56).
3) Effectiveness		
3.1 What concrete development results were achieved in local development?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Swiss special cooperation programme has shown a very good level of results. Although its financial volume is limited (between CHF 5 and 6 million per year), it has succeeded in asserting its presence in the country's 14 provinces. Its positive effects are recognised both at local level and by official bodies and other cooperation agencies present or returning to Cuba (EU, Spain). (2009 Evaluation of SDC Special Programme in Cuba). Consultancy support and evidence produced by SDC local development projects contributing to the preparation of key legislation, incl. 2019 Constitution: recognises municipal autonomy, role of the non-state sector and mechanisms for direct citizen participation. Sanctions discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, colour, etc.; - Territorial Development Programme (2020): formalises the Municipal Development Strategy (EDM) as a tool for decentralised local management.; National Plan for Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Education (2020) and State Plan to Confront Climate Change (2017) favour productive management with local resources, articulation between the public and private sectors, value chains and practices for adaptation to climate change and the use of renewable energy sources; National Programme against Racism and Discrimination (2020) and Programme for the Advancement of Women (2021) recognise equity gaps associated with gender and race and propose targeted actions for their mitigation (2022 Exit Cooperation Programme 2022-2024, also confirmed in 2023 INT 24 and others). Establish a virtual community space for knowledge and information management on issues of equity, community work, human rights and development (2023 Annual Report 2022 PYE - AfroAtenas).
3.2 By means of which development approaches and instruments did SDC and its partners across the decades successfully contribute to improvements in the deep dive topic - and which did not achieve their intended outcomes?	3.1.1 Intended project outputs and outcomes were (not) achieved by means of selected approaches and methodologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reform process of territorial governance has been supported through the National Working Group, to which SDC directly contributed both financially and technically through the multi-donor platform PADIT (2021 PADIT Annual Report) PADIT produced tools, manuals and guidelines related to the decentralisation reform and the financing of local development were developed and turned into national standards (2021 PADIT Annual Report) The territorial index/classification used to compare territories and identify strengths as well as needs for additional support was developed with the support of PADIT experts and experience (2021 PADIT Annual Report) 155 municipal governments received support in improving their communication to citizens, including by means of digital outreach through websites (2021 PADIT Annual Report) At the local level, municipalities and institutions participating in SDC projects show economic and social results above the national average: Of the 77 municipalities implementing SDC-supported local governance projects, 67 (87%) raised their own budgets. Around 3 million people living in municipalities implementing agricultural production projects have access to more and better quality products in local markets. The value chains of 9 agricultural products and food production, processing and marketing capacities were improved. Energy from renewable sources was incorporated into the agri-food chains, increasing the annual electricity generated by 5 times. 18,630 people benefited from the improvement or creation of jobs, 500 of them in cooperatives or private enterprises. These jobs are occupied by 89% women, 42% youth, 17% disadvantaged groups, 30% black population. 1,277 women victims of gender-based violence (439 black women and 406 young women) have received care in specialised services set up by SDC projects. 13,707

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
		<p>students in agriculture, construction and services (4,695 women, 1,218 socially disadvantaged and 76 with special educational needs) and 3,196 teachers are benefiting from improvements in TVET. (external evaluation, referenced in 2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Decree Law on agricultural cooperatives used APOCOOP experience and recognises first-degree cooperative and recognises, inter-cooperative cooperation and cooperation with other public and private entities (2023 INT 61, 22) ▪ Of the 75 municipalities implementing local development projects with SDC support, 61 (81%) increased their own budgets; 59 (79%) submitted their EDM to public consultation; citizen participation increased from 20 to 58% on average; 39 (48%) municipalities created citizen information and advisory services. Around 3 million people in municipalities with agricultural production projects have more and better quality products in local markets. The value chains of 9 agricultural products were improved. Energy from renewable sources was incorporated into the agri-food chains, increasing the annual electricity generated by 5 times. 1,277 women victims of gender-based violence (439 black women and 406 young women) received care in specialised services set up by SDC projects (2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba) ▪ Cooperation on gender gained prominence over time and yielded great success. On the one hand, this can be seen in legislative terms (as evidenced by SDC advisory in preparation of new Civil Code and Family Code). On the other, highly successful formats, such as the Gender Network RIAM (masculinity) with a Latin-America-wide outreach or cultural activities that attracted a large amount of attention and contribute to public discussion that question gender stereotypes (2023 INT 32); ▪ PAAS II – an external evaluation in 2020 found that the programme achieved excellent results in supporting the production of healthy, agro-ecological food and strengthening local and regional value chains for increased food security in municipalities. Accordingly, producers benefited from increased revenues and new jobs were created, providing new income opportunities for youth and women. ▪ Funding of 135 local development projects in 27 municipalities through PRODEL, contributing to issues such as local waste collection, the preservation of cultural heritage for local tourism, and the rehabilitation of production sites for construction materials (2015 Local Development Projects – Experiences from PRODEL) ▪ Specialists from BIOMAS, PAAS, PIAL and APOCOOP formed part of the group of experts who drew up the 63 measures approved by the Council of State, which include the generalisation of the most innovative and successful experiences from the projects (2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba, regularly reiterated during interviews, e.g. 2023 INT 48) ▪ In municipalities supported by APOCOOP, 73 percent of the population confirm that access to locally produced food has been improved, which marks an increase of 44 percent over the past three years. 102 cooperatives have newly engaged in cooperation arrangements for improved productivity and quality (2023 Annual Report 2022 APOCOOP II) ▪ In 2022, 8.7 percent of consumption in the regions supported through PAAS III relied on products from local value chains, which almost doubles the 2021 baseline value (4.9%). Support includes management consultancy, facilitating accreditation processes, as well as awareness raising among the local population. Moreover, in 8 municipalities, local governments financially support 17 initiatives actively promote inclusion and empowerment; along the value chain, 36 women hold leadership positions (2023 Annual Report 2022 PAAS III). ▪ In 19 municipalities supported by HABITAT 2, the issue of housing is integrated into local development strategies, multi-stakeholder groups are engaged in participatory and inclusive governance processes, and gender focal points are in place. Additionally, 45 new or improved local production facilities for construction materials are operating (2023 Annual Report 2022 HABITAT 2).

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key results of GEPAC, including the design and application of 6 participatory planning instruments (e.g. local development strategies, participatory budgeting) as well as the socially responsible management approach to urban rehabilitation were positively received by leadership of the country and recommended for dissemination as national good standard (2023 Annual Report 2022 GEPAC). 169 local development groups established (15 provinces and 154 municipalities), 10 Provincial Development Strategies and 163 Municipal Development Strategies updated, approved and being implemented, Territorial Development Toolkit formally applied and institutionalised (16), 14,412 actors from various levels and sectors trained (2022 External Evaluation 2018-2021 PADIT II, p. 33). There is evidence of the improvement of technical and professional vocational training of the students of the polytechnics linked to PROFET by the enhancement of their educational quality explained by the improvement of the practical teaching-learning process carried out, especially in the speciality families of agriculture, construction and tourism services. (2023 Mid-term Review 2019-2022 PROFET)
<p>3.3 Which stakeholders were reached and how - and which were excluded and why? Which capacities were changed and how?</p>	<p><i>descriptive/illustrative</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to access effectively overarching policy and legislative processes, and thereby draw on results and experiences of SDC local development projects (e.g. constitutional process, new legislation such as the Civil Code and the Family Code) (INT 2, 19) SDC with large and strong network among Cuban stakeholders, incl. at local level (i.e. 2023 INT 56, 5, 37). Cubavisión Channel broadcast thirteen episodes of the programme "Cosas de Hombres" (Men's Things), which addressed high-impact issues such as fatherhood, machismo, feminism, health, sexuality and violence, among others, with an average audience of 5 million viewers per episode. With the collaboration of COSUDE, it served as a tribute to the 15 years of work of the Ibero-American and African Network of Masculinities RIAM, leader of the thematic in the country and one of our partners of PYE. For three months, the Programme maintained a debate not only in traditional media such as the written press but also in social networks, which is very useful for the debates that are taking place around the Family Code and a greater participation of the male population (2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba). Alliances with various actors in the territories and at the national level continue to be strengthened. Local governments, MINAG, ANEC and universities constitute the most strategic alliances. The former to support the implementation of lines and initiatives and their inclusion in the Territorial Development Strategies. Development Strategies. The second from the Directorate of Cooperative Development to achieve a more active participation of its specialists in the inter-cooperation processes and in the tools generated (2023 Annual Report 2022 APOCOOPII). Key results and insights from previous phases: 1- A training program "Social equity for development for local actors" created for Cuban civil society. 2- Reduced equity gaps of 10% of the vulnerable population in three municipalities with affirmative actions to address poverty with an equity approach in gender and race. 3- Directly benefited 3,540 people from socially disadvantaged groups in 12 municipalities in the country by enhancing their capacity to exercise a more active citizenship in topics of equity, and indirectly benefited the entire disadvantaged population of these municipalities. 4- Exchanged and mainstreamed experiences of 6 leading initiatives of local promotion of equity at national and international level. 5- Designed and implemented a reference model in the municipality of Centro Habana, for participatory municipal management of sustainable development with a focus on equity at the local level. 6- Eight social communication spaces in local networks created that promote the equity approach from the perspective of race, gender, sexual diversity and age groups as a condition for development. (2021 Credit Proposal PYE 3) Examples: Main actions developed in the period associated with OUTPUT 2: - Conducting workshops and exchanges with local development groups, local authorities, entrepreneurs and municipal project leaders of the 27 PRODEL municipalities. - I National Workshop of Municipal Project Leaders-Phase III. - Elaboration of Methodology for the development of the production chain approach.

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
		<p>- Advisory workshop on production chains in three central municipalities. - Course-workshop on the management of development projects, aimed at the heads of projects to be implemented through the Prodel fund in the period 2022-2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2022-2024. - Drafting and signing of the supplement to the municipal projects sponsored by PRODEL III. - Construction of a database of technical specifications of equipment and supplies for municipal projects sponsored by PRODEL III. - The equipment and inputs for municipal projects include the following topics: IT, agricultural production, renewable energy sources, risk management centre, knowledge management, fish production, fruit, vegetable and viands processing, quality laboratories, among others. (2023 Annual Report 2022 PRODEL, p. 18). ▪ There is a solid institutional framework, adequate ownership and a participatory, practical and innovative territorial approach based on the formation of training-production networks and their potential articulation to the national teaching-productive strategy on the basis of knowledge management, the gender approach and an orientation to local development in the new context of trans-training in Cuba that require a continuous process of collaboration within the framework of a general strategy of TVE in the long term for its sustainability. (2023 Mid-term Review 2019-2022 PROFET) ▪ Training has been the most widely deployed activity. Training was undertaken for directors, cadres and government reserves on equity and gender, on the perspective and its importance for local development and how to work it from the EDM (Yaguajay, Florencia, Bejucal). The topic has been incorporated into seminars for delegates and working groups on gender equity and citizen participation with an impact on the EDM from the communities, as well as training for presidents of popular councils, science and technology specialists from the entities, project leaders and new economic actors (Mantua). Themes related to social inequities and inequalities have been worked on from the perspective of equity and gender from the curricular point of view in the Sociocultural Management for Local Development (SAS). (2023 Annual Report 2022 PRODEL) ▪ Results: Facilitating access to quality housing and habitat, creating new inclusive public spaces, improving procedures and services for the most vulnerable, improving 19 slums in the central region of the country (2023 Annual Report 2022 HABITAT 2) ▪ A very good use of new production technologies, application of genetic diversity, production and use of good quality local seed, management of bio-inputs such as beneficial microorganisms, among other technologies, was seen in the field. The change to a more organic, sustainable and environmentally friendly production has been perceived (2015 Mid-Term Evaluation of PIAL III). ▪ One of the main characteristics of the proposed value chain management model is that its potential, viability and success lies precisely in the alliances and articulations that it promotes and that serve as the basis for the functioning of each of the value chains. In reality, the number of actors involved at each stage of the chain is very large (2020 Mid-Term Evaluation of PAAS II).
4) Impact		
<p>4.1 How, and to what extent, did SDC's bilateral co-operation in local development contribute to poverty reduction and/or the reduction of inequalities in its priority countries and regions in LAC?</p>	<p>4.1.1 SDC's projects contributed to reducing poverty in relevant dimensions like health, education, basic services and security.</p> <p>4.1.2 SDC's projects contributed to effectively strengthening partner institutions and increasing resilience of the target group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Between 2010 and 2016 there was an average annual increase of 10.7 percent in agricultural production in the 40 municipalities benefiting from Swiss cooperation (2018 IPS - Interview Peter Tschumi). ▪ With its contributions, from 2000 to 2016, SDC has improved access to products and services for an estimated 4 million people, with priorities for women and disadvantaged groups (2021 SDC Cuba Annual Report) ▪ Initiatives supported under the umbrella of PyE, had considerable impact both in terms of addressing taboo topics (e.g. gender identities, racial discrimination) and informing public debate. At the same time, concrete work at local level has often stimulated visible local development in disadvantaged areas, which, thanks to the strong ownership of local organisations, is likely to continue even in the possible absence of SDC funding. (2023 INT 12, 52, 2, 19, 32). "Before it was impossible to talk about gender-based violence." (2023 INT 57, 6)

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
<p>4.2 What other longer-term key changes has SDC's bilateral cooperation in LAC contributed to until today (intended or unintended)? How and to what extent did the interventions in Cuba cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)? How did the interventions contribute to changing society in Cuba for the better?</p>	<p>4.2.1 SDC projects effectively contributed to changes in norms/systems (e.g. on gender and social inclusion). 4.2.2 SDC projects contributed to aggravating/improving conflicts. 4.2.3 SDC projects contributed to other significant (positive/negative) changes in the lives of the intended beneficiaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inter-cooperation with new economic actors (LDPs, MSMEs and others), both state and non-state, is also increasing as new forms of management in the current Cuban context, which also contributes to the sustainability of the processes. (2023 Annual Report 2022 APOCOOPII) ▪ The promotion of dialogue and debate at the local level, including on controversial issues, as well as access to new knowledge, as made possible through projects like PRODEL, PADIT and PyE contribute to increased citizen participation in local development issues (2023 INT 27, 8, 15) ▪ New Family Code: Defines marriage as the union of two people, effectively legalising same sex marriage. Clarifies the distinction between gender-based and domestic violence and recognises the economic contribution of domestic work. These four legal instruments with an impact at the country level were part of the actions promoted by SDC in alliance with the Federation of Cuban Women FMC and through institutions that we support such as the UNJC, RIAM, Proyectos Todas y Palomas, OAR, CENESEX, among others, all partners of PYE. In 2021 the Council of Ministers approved the National Programme for the Advancement of Women (PAM). The PAM articulates objectives, lines of work and actions, from the economic empowerment of women, their representation in the media, legislation and law, and the fight against gender violence. The comprehensive strategy for the prevention of and attention to gender violence and violence in the family was approved in the same year (compare 2021_SDC Annual Report Cuba). ▪ Specialists involved in the coordination and implementation of most SDC-funded projects participate in commissions and working groups, convened by the authorities, for the elaboration of new laws and policies complementing the new constitution (2021_SDC Annual Report Cuba). For example, in national working group on territorial development (2021 PADIT Annual Report) ▪ PADIT's greatest impact has been to institutionalise territorial development, in its transition from International Cooperation Project to Public Policy. Decree-Law 33 reflects the symbiosis between the priority of decentralisation and the role of PADIT, since it was drawn up within the framework of the Platform itself. Territorially this is reflected in normative, organisational and socio-economic-productive aspects, with consolidated Territorial Development Strategies that incorporate public-private articulations. In addition, contribution to the governance process of the 2030 Agenda through a National Implementation Group (chaired by the MEP and with ONEI as an information pillar) (2022 External Evaluation 2018-2021 PADIT II). ▪ Although the project is only halfway through its implementation, there are signs of its impact on public policies, such as: the inclusion of three new sub-programmes in the guidelines of Urban, Suburban and Family Agriculture (AUSUF) (oilseed production, SPG and mini-industries). Finished products with greater added value have been generated (improving incomes by 5-10%), both for the beneficiaries and for neighbouring producers, especially the most vulnerable, who were losing their production and now have a destination for processing in the area. Jobs were created (more than 80), mostly occupied by young people and women (60%) between cultivation work, mini-industries and points of sale. The average income increased to 650 CUP/month (which is above the country's average wage of 500 CUP). It has been possible to sell the totality of the processed production. Agro-industrial relations and local dynamics associated with the use of waste have been fostered. Also, business opportunities derived from the inputs and support services demanded by the value chains. Additionally, 9 families have benefited from access to electricity as a result of the implementation of the mini-industries. (2016 Mid-Term Evaluation of PAAS).
5) Sustainability		
<p>5.1 To what extent are the benefits of the programmes, including closed</p>	<p>6.1.1 Exit strategies were defined and implemented (e.g. discontinuation or reduction of measures when targets were</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The sustainability and scaling up of PADIT as a country platform is favoured by its institutionalisation, the financial resources it mobilises and the capacities in place [...] The Territorial Development Policy and Macroprogramme 1 of the National Plan 2030 reflects the institutionalisation that PADIT has achieved at the territorial level. The platform has also shown a capacity for innovation and

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
ones, likely to continue after SDC funding ceases (for closed programmes: did the benefits actually continue?)? What were/are the successes and hindering factors?	<p>reached or transfer of responsibility to national structures).</p> <p>6.1.2 Projects concepts generally consider national capacities necessary in order to build on project achievements.</p> <p>6.1.3 National (governmental and non-governmental actors) were closely involved in project implementation as partners/beneficiaries with a high level of ownership.</p>	<p>adaptation to the context. The DGL respondents identify other factors that also contribute to its sustainability, such as: technical (92.3%); institutional (80.8%) and economic-financial (73%). The sustainability that is of most concern is the economic-financial one, a challenge that could be cushioned by various strategies. These range from encouraging the projects themselves to diversify their financing to ensuring that export earnings are returned to the territories. In the longer term, it would be ideal to transform the financial matrix in terms of the degree of dependence on international cooperation. This would require professionalising financial management at all levels and allowing projects and initiatives to be independently accounted for in FTAs. In addition to economic sustainability, institutional sustainability could be guaranteed by consolidating PADIT within the PNDES 2030 and maintaining human resources at the level of local structures (2022 External Evaluation 2018-2021 PADIT II).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a solid institutional framework, adequate ownership and a participatory, practical and innovative territorial approach based on the formation of training-production networks and their potential articulation to the national teaching-productive strategy on the basis of knowledge management, the gender approach and an orientation towards local development in the new context of transformation in Cuba that require a continuous process of collaboration within the framework of an overall TVET strategy in the long term for its sustainability (2023 Mid-term Review 2019-2022 PROFET) ▪ In the interviews both at the local level and with the entities that have a presence in the capital, all stated that the most important thing that remains is the knowledge and the way of doing things. This means that the innovation system approach has great potential to remain, especially at local level (2015 Mid-Term Evaluation of PIAL III). ▪ The potential sustainability of the action is assessed as positive, with institutional and economic sustainability mechanisms that will ensure the maintenance of the capacities promoted. Among the challenges [...] are: the maintenance/sustainability of the capacities created in local public institutions and the actual availability of financial resources that can be locally managed and allocated to improve the housing situation). (2015 Mid-Term Evaluation of Habitat II).
5.2 Did SDC's bilateral co-operation interventions lead to scalable or replicable results (for closed interventions: Were those actually up-scaled or replicated?)?	<p>6.2.1 Project approaches were scaled-up in the priority regions.</p> <p>6.2.2 Project approaches were replicated outside the priority regions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In conclusion, the PAAS articulation model has allowed the Project's results to be rapidly consolidated and disseminated, and to move towards sustainable food models [...]. One of the attributes of the PAAS Project is its multiplier effect. They are closely connected with ACTAF and with political organisations and government in the province and municipality. (2020 Mid-Term Evaluation of PAAS II, p. 57). ▪ Cooperation with new economic actors (LDPs, MSMEs and others), both state and non-state, is increasing as new forms of management in the current Cuban context, which also contributes to the sustainability of the processes. (2023 Annual Report 2022 APOCOOPII) ▪ The overall approach is to achieve sustainability of results beyond SDC's exit from the country by promoting systemic change of practices in the above areas and generating lasting transformations through Swiss-driven good practices in existing or future programmes of current or potential SDC partners. (2022 Exit Cooperation Programme 2022-2024). ▪ Evidence of regular evaluation and measures taken in response to needs to further strengthening sustainability of programmes; e.g. In the context of crisis, expanding inequalities and political pressures that will accompany the start of the 2022-24 SP, supporting the sustainability of progress will require: Include, in the external evaluation of PADIT, the analysis of the sustainability and capitalisation of relevant results in citizen participation and social inclusion. Ensure their incorporation in training (diploma courses, trainings) for specialists and local and national officials. (2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba).

6) Lessons Learned the report)

(full analysis provided in Chapter 4.2. of

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
6.1 What did work well and what are considered the greatest failures of SDC's bilateral cooperation on local development in Cuba?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Going local with ambition to influence higher-level policy developments as sound strategy – confirmed by virtually all external evaluations. Effectiveness confirmed by results presented above. ▪ Another success factor is also its continuity and certainly the professional and human quality of SDC staff. On this basis, the Swiss Programme has acquired a good reputation and high visibility (2006 Evaluation of the SDC Special Programme in Cuba, p. 2) ▪ Interviewees mentioned project initiatives (outside the selected deep dive projects) that ultimately were unfeasible to maintain due to shortages in materials in Cuba, which heavily relied on increasingly expensive imports and were therefore not sustainable. This case seems to have been thoroughly reviewed inside SDC Cuba – similar failures are therefore unlikely.
6.2 What lessons can be learned from SDC's bilateral cooperation in Cuba in order to guide partner governments, other national and international partners in Cuba that may step in after SDC to continue projects and programmes?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Different ways of co-financing with other donors allow to leverage action and reduce the administrative burden on the Cooperation Office (2013 Mid-Term Review of the Cooperation Strategy, p. 5). ▪ There are no undesirable results per se, but there are many lessons learned. For example, to cite just one, the need for more resilient structures in the face of natural events (hurricanes), as well as the adoption of measures to protect equipment and production (2020 Mid-Term Evaluation of PAAS II). ▪ Cuba has successfully managed well developing trustful relations with government stakeholders, incl. top officials, whilst at the same time remaining at a critical distance on issues where differences of opinions exist (2023 INT 24, 52) ▪ Respect and flexibility were mentioned by all external interviewees as SDC strength and comparative advantage ▪ A success factor is the strong network of SDC which allows it to work with virtually all Cuban stakeholders (2023 INT)
6.3 What lessons can be learned for SDC institutionally and/or sectorally that may be relevant for SDC to improve development effectiveness in Cuba and elsewhere? What have been enabling and hindering factors?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monetary realignment and inflation significantly reduce the project's functional financial capacity in national currency (CUP). This has been mitigated with the support of the beneficiaries, although they also have serious limitations (2023 Annual Report 2022 PAAS III). ▪ The country's energy insufficiency intensified in this period, with serious damage to food production in the production, processing and marketing links (2023 Annual Report 2022 PAAS III). ▪ SDC's policy [...] normally tries to limit its activities to one region of a country in order to create an impact at the level of that region. In the Cuban context it seems that there is more likelihood of impact if an approach or methodology is tested in different parts of the country, because in this way the partner institution will have more weight of argument to propose the tested approach as a solution for the whole country. There are indications that this mechanism is working; consequently, a regional concentration is not advisable. (2013 Mid-term review of the cooperation strategy, p. 20). ▪ [Programme budget execution] has been hindered by several factors: the practically non-existent supply of goods and services in the country, which makes it difficult to acquire the indispensable inputs for the management of the budgets assigned to each project; the monetary reorganisation initiated in January 2021, which imposed the circulation of the Cuban peso as the official currency and forced the drafting of new contracts in national currency and in euros for all projects, generating a considerable delay in the payments to be made; the sustained blockade of our bank accounts at UBS and BFI, which makes it difficult to make payments and has forced us to look for slower and more laborious alternatives to make transfers to suppliers and disbursements to partners. (2021 SDC Annual Report Cuba) ▪ Adequate support of partner institutions: SDC programmes in Cuba are formally local mandates in most cases. However, their implementation often requires strong involvement, comparable in terms of workload to programmes run by the SDC itself (2013 Final Report Regula Bähler); yet benefit for strengthening ownership and sustainability appreciated by many (2023 INT 37, 35, 28)