



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

**BOLIVIA**

## DEEP DIVE REPORT | SECTOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**PRESENTED TO**

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

**Bolivia**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 METHODOLOGY OF THE DEEP-DIVE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3 OVERVIEW OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH BOLIVIA IN THE FIELD OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1 SUMMARY OF RELEVANT SDC PROJECTS IN THE SECTOR.....	3
3.2 STAKEHOLDER MAPPING .....	6
3.3 THEMATIC THEORY OF CHANGE & HISTORIC POLITICAL TIMELINE .....	7
<b>4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH BOLIVIA IN THE FIELD OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS .....	11
4.1.1 RELEVANCE .....	11
4.1.2 COHERENCE .....	12
4.1.3 EFFECTIVENESS .....	13
4.1.4 IMPACT .....	16
4.1.5 SUSTAINABILITY .....	19
4.2 MAIN LESSONS LEARNED.....	22
4.2.1 SECTORAL LESSONS LEARNED .....	22
4.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL LESSONS LEARNED .....	24
<b>5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>ANNEX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>ANNEX 3: EVALUATION &amp; CAPITALIZATION MATRIX .....</b>	<b>31</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Visualisation of actors map .....	6
Figure 2: Timeline of major events (political, social, economic) relevant for the rural development sector in Bolivia .....	7
Figure 3: Thematic theory of change .....	9

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Deep Dive Bolivia   Basic data .....	1
Table 2: Information of projects included in the deep dive .....	3
Table 3: List of projects in the thematic field.....	4

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ABDS</b>	Asociación Boliviana para el Desarrollo Sostenible
<b>APMT</b>	Autoridad Plurinacional de la Madre Tierra
<b>ASDI / SIDA</b>	Agencia Sueca de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo / Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>BDP</b>	Banco de Desarrollo Productivo
<b>CIPCA</b>	Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado
<b>COSUDE</b>	Cooperación de la Embajada de Suiza en Bolivia
<b>DANIDA</b>	Danish International Development Agency
<b>GAIOC</b>	Gobierno Autónomo Indígena Originario Campesino
<b>GAM</b>	Gobierno Autónomo Municipal
<b>GIA</b>	Gestión Integral del Agua
<b>INIAF</b>	Instituto Nacional de Innovación Agropecuaria y Forestal ( <i>National Institute of Agricultural and Forestry Innovation</i> )
<b>MMaYA</b>	Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Agua.
<b>MDRyT</b>	Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural y Tierras
<b>PIAACC</b>	Programa de Investigación aplicada para la adaptación al Cambio Climático.
<b>PIC</b>	Programa de Innovación Continua
<b>PRO Rural</b>	Entidad administradora del Proyecto Biocultura y Cambio Climático,
<b>SLIMs</b>	Servicios legales integrales municipales
<b>VRHyR</b>	Viceministerio de Recursos Hídricos y Riego
<b>UMSA</b>	Universidad Mayor de San Andrés
<b>UMSS</b>	Universidad Mayor de San Simón
<b>UPF</b>	Unidad Productiva Familiar / family productive units
<b>WCS</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society

# 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 **sectoral/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 **sectoral 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 the concerned actors in the field, triangulated with literature review.

In **Bolivia**, the sectoral deep-dive topic was **Rural Development, with focus on climate change and agro-ecology**, as decided by SDC Bern and the SDC country office in Bolivia, given SDC's strategic engagement in this sector for more than 20 years. The table below provides the basic data of the deep-dive's in-country mission.

**Table 1: Deep Dive Bolivia | Basic data**

GFA TEAM	MISSION DATES	PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THE DEEP-DIVE	INTERVIEWS & DOCUMENTS
Denise Paladines, Tomas Keilbach and Alba Gamarra	28.02.2023 – 10.03.2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mercados Inclusivos (III Phase, previously named as Mercados Rurales)</li> <li>2. Biocultura (III Phase)</li> <li>3. PIAACC I and II</li> <li>4. Gestión Integral del Agua – GIA</li> <li>5. Apoyo Sistema de Innovación Agropecuario (continuation of the Programa de Innovación Continua – PIC)</li> </ol>	20 interviews, including two focus group discussions with Revision of Project's ProDocs, interim and final reports, technical reports, internal and external evaluations, among others.

## 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 **Bolivia**, there was an overall agreement regarding the deep-dive topic, as Swiss cooperation in Bolivia is clearly marked by its work with the rural sector. Based on the sector selection, and in consultation with the SDC country office, the projects to be included in the deep-dive were selected, and interviews were arranged with government representatives, development partners, private sector, civil society organisations, implementers and beneficiary groups. A joint kick-off meeting with SDC Bern, SDC country office, SDC technical focal point and the HIC Team was organized.

During **deep-dive implementation**, the 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 already conducted as online interviews before or after the field trip. The major part was, however, carried out as in-person interviews in the countries. For those projects that were still ongoing, selected project visits were organized

As was the case in the meta-analysis, the HIC Team used an **evaluation and capitalisation matrix** including guiding questions (categorized 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 sector 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 BOLIVIA IN THE FIELD OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

#### 3.1 SUMMARY OF RELEVANT SDC PROJECTS IN THE SECTOR

The below table provides the basic information of the projects that were included in the deep dive. As indicated above, the selection was made jointly by the SDC Country Office and the HIC Team, based on the projects' proximity to the sector. Table 3 provides a more detailed review of these projects.

**Table 2: Information of projects included in the deep dive**

PROJECT NAME	JUSTIFICATION
<b>BIOCULTURA</b> (III Phase, 2020 – 2023)	Both programs are currently in their third phase. We aimed to look at the success factors that allow them to replicate.
<b>Mercados Rurales</b> (III Phase, 2022 – 2023)	The projects are thematically relevant and allowed us to see the place in practice of the systemic approach. These two projects also evidence important aspects about: donor coordination, multi-level dialogue, the continuity of Swiss cooperation guidelines in Bolivia within the sector, etc.
<b>Apoyo Sistema de Innovación Agropecuario</b> (continuation of the Programa de Innovación Continua – PIC)	Thematically relevant as it deals directly with rural development through Agricultural Innovation. Considering that the project is already closed, we encountered valuable findings in terms of sustainability and impact.
<b>Investigación aplicada para la adaptación al CC</b> Phase I and II	A research-oriented project that showed us another perspective of the bilateral cooperation, as well as the perspective of 'external' actors such as the involved universities, researchers, among others. We found how these linkages between cooperation and research can also contribute to capacity development in climate change related challenges.
<b>Gestión Integral del Agua</b>	By analysing this project, we were able to see its relevant contribution to the comprehensive management of water resources, where agricultural production systems and mining activities coexist. This experience also allowed us to reflect on specific cooperation instruments (such as the basket fund and the thematic round tables) and other good practices.

Table 3: List of projects in the thematic field

Project Title	Period	Budget SDC	Implementer	Main Partners (selection)	Geographical focus
Biocultura y cambio climático	Phase 1: 2009 – 2014 Phase 2: 2015 – 2019 Phase 3: 2020 – 2023	Phase 1: CHF 13.4 mio Phase 2: CHF 13,6 mio Phase 3: CHF 2.05 mio	ProRural	Public sector: APMT, local municipalities, MMAyA Private sector, NGO and other donors: COMPAS, PROINPA, PROSUCO, PROMETA, WCS, AGRUCO, MIGA Universities: UMSA, UMSS. Rural and Indigenous Communities	Tarija, Potosí, Chuquisaca, La Paz y Cochabamba
	<b>Objective:</b> Building resilience and adaptation to climate change in vulnerable communities in the Andean region of Bolivia to improve the economic, social and cultural situation of indigenous and peasant communities, in line with the Bolivian National Development Plan and the <i>Vivir Bien</i> paradigm. The last phase seeks to consolidate, at the national and subnational level, the biocultural territorial management approach.				
Mercados Rurales / Mercados Inclusivos	Phase 1: 2013 – 2018 Phase 2: 2017– 2021 Phase 3: 2022 – 2025	Phase 1: CHF 10.3 mio Phase 2: CHF 3.2 mio Phase 3: CHF 1.0 mio (SDC); USD 7 mio (SIDA)	Swisscontact and ProFin	Public sector: MMAyA, MDRyT, local governments Private sector: CIFEMA, PROINPA, PLAGBOL, UNITAS. Rural and Indigenous Communities	La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca y Tarija
	<b>Objective:</b> The project seeks to improve the income level generated in agricultural production units so that they are linked to the market in a competitive yet sustainable way, promoting the intensification of agroecological agriculture. Phase II implemented a co-financing modality between the Swiss and Swedish cooperation agencies. The last phase incorporated the improvement of resilience capacities understood as resources within the program.				
Apoyo Sistema de Innovación Agropecuario	Phase 1 (PIC): 2007 – 2013 Phase 2: 2014 – 2017	Phase 1 (PIC): CHF 7.0 mio Phase 2: CHF 8.7 mio	SDC Field Office INIAF	Public sector: MDRyT, INIAF, SEDAG, local governments Private sector, NGO and other donors: PROINPA, CARE, Centro de Investigaciones de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT-Santa Cruz), GIZ, MIGA, FCBC, ECOCLIMA, Fundación Vida, ATICA, CIP Local organizations and platforms	National level with focus on Tarija, Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz y Cochabamba on the first phase, national scope on the second phase.
	<b>Objective:</b> To promote technological, commercial and institutional innovation and to create added value in the agricultural development of Bolivia, raising the agricultural income levels. The second phase aimed to transfer this knowledge and know-how to the legal instance defined by the State (INIAF) responsible for leading innovation processes in Bolivia.				
Proyecto de Investigación Aplicada para la Adaptación	Phase 1: 2014 – 2018 Phase 2: 2019 – 2023	Phase 1: CHF 4.7 mio Phase 2: CHF 1.8 mio	UMSA-UMSS Wildlife Conservation Society - WCS	Public sector: MMAyA (Vice-ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change), local governments, Ministry of Education (Department of Science and Technology)	La Paz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, Tarija, Santa Cruz, Oruro



Project Title	Period	Budget SDC	Implementer	Main Partners (selection)	Geographical focus
al Cambio Climático - PIAACC				<u>Universities:</u> Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA) – DIPGIS, Universidad Mayor de San Simón (UMSS), and other national universities.	
	<b>Objective:</b> To generate knowledge, capacities and technologies that promote resilience of the rural population against Climate Change; while at the same time strengthening research capacities of the Bolivian University System. Implementation of applied research projects and incidence in public policies.				
Gestión Integral del AGUA - GIA	<b>Phase 1:</b> 2010 – 2016 <b>Phase 2:</b> 2015 – 2018 <b>Phase 3:</b> 2019 – 2022	<b>Phase 1 (GESTOR):</b> CHF 14.6 mio <b>Phase 2:</b> CHF 15.3 mio <b>Phase 3:</b> CHF 3.8 mio	HELVETAS	<u>Public sector:</u> MMayA (VRHyR), MPD, local governments  <u>Other donors:</u> Belgian Cooperation, GIZ, KfW, World Bank, IADB	La Paz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, Tarija, Santa Cruz, Oruro
	<b>Objective:</b> Improving the sustainable use of natural resources (mainly water) within the framework of municipal territorial management for a better life quality of the Bolivian population. The project aimed to strengthen water governance, and to actively contribute to the creation of sectoral public policies. Towards its last phase, the project sought to consolidate the "National Basin Plan".				

## 3.2 STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

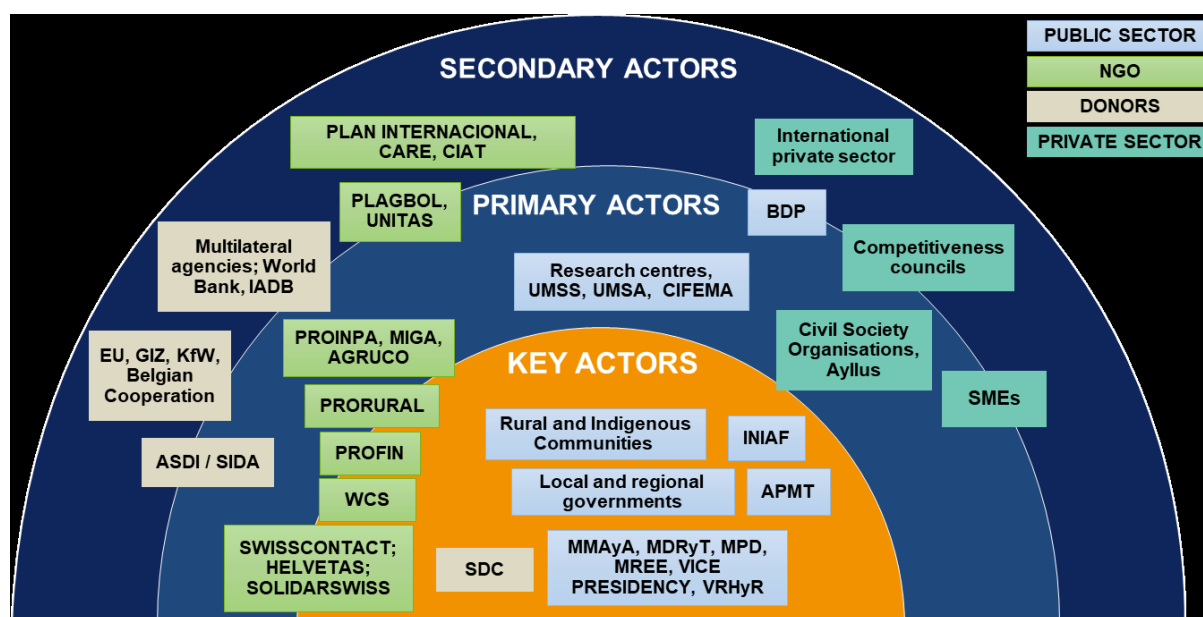


Figure 1: Visualisation of actors map

### Project Partners

During its presence in Bolivia, SDC has worked in line with the country's development priorities. Accordingly, **Swiss cooperation activities have been carried out in close coordination with the sectoral ministries.** For the projects in the rural sector, the key partners have been: the Ministry of the Environment and Water (MMAyA) and the Vice Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, Ministry of Rural Development and Land (MDRyT), the Vice Presidency, Ministry of Foreign Relations, and Ministry of Planning for Development (MPD). The *Autoridad Plurinacional de la Madre Tierra* (APMT) has also been close to SDC since its constitution, although with less technical and financial capacities in comparison to other institutions. National Institute of Agricultural and Forestry Innovation (INIAP) is also part of the key stakeholders, particularly in innovation. At the local level, it stands out the close cooperation with the Municipal Governments of Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, La Paz, Oruro, Potosí and Tarija.

### Implementing organisations

As mentioned in numerous interviews, **implementers have been a key component of the success of Swiss cooperation in Bolivia.** At the international level, Swisscontact, Helvetas, SolidarSwiss and WCS are particularly relevant and acknowledged for their expertise. Local NGO like PRORURAL and PROFIN, as well as public universities (UMSA, UMSS) have also contributed significantly as implementers.

### Target group

The main institutional beneficiaries are MMAyA and MDRyT, who accessed **direct support to implement their sectoral plans.** Local governments UMSA, UMSS and Universities of the national system have **strengthened their innovation departments with this instrument.** Small farmers and micro/small enterprises, producer/farmer organizations from the rural sector have been the other key beneficiaries.

### Other partners

**There has been permanent coordination with other donors active in the sector,** particularly (but not exclusively) with SIDA and DANIDA. SDC also works with research organizations (CIFEMA, IIAEV, AGRUCO) and other **local NGO and Foundations** (some of which have their origins in former Swiss cooperation projects) such as PROINPA, PRORURAL, PROFIN, FAUTAPO, Fundación Valles, AGRUCO, AGRECOL, COMPAS, PROMETA, MIGA, among others. SDC also works with local financial entities, such as the EcoFuturo Bank, the Productive Development Bank (BDP).

### 3.3 THEMATIC THEORY OF CHANGE & HISTORIC POLITICAL TIMELINE<sup>1</sup>

The last two decades in **Bolivia** were marked by an **accelerated reduction of poverty and inequality**. Between 2006 and 2021, poverty went from 59.9% to 36.6%, while extreme poverty dropped from 37.7% to 11.1%<sup>2</sup>, with relatively small increases on both indicators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This significant poverty reduction was framed in the context of the high raw material prices during the commodity boom and the MAS Government, elected in 2005 with Evo Morales and Álvaro García Linera as their candidates. Being **the first president** with indigenous origins in the country, Morales' political mandate answered to the need of vindicating the indigenous, rural population in Bolivia, but also to provide better conditions for the majority of the country. The MAS' economic model was oriented to the **expansion of public investment through the resources obtained from the exploitation of natural resources**, which in turn boosted domestic demand.

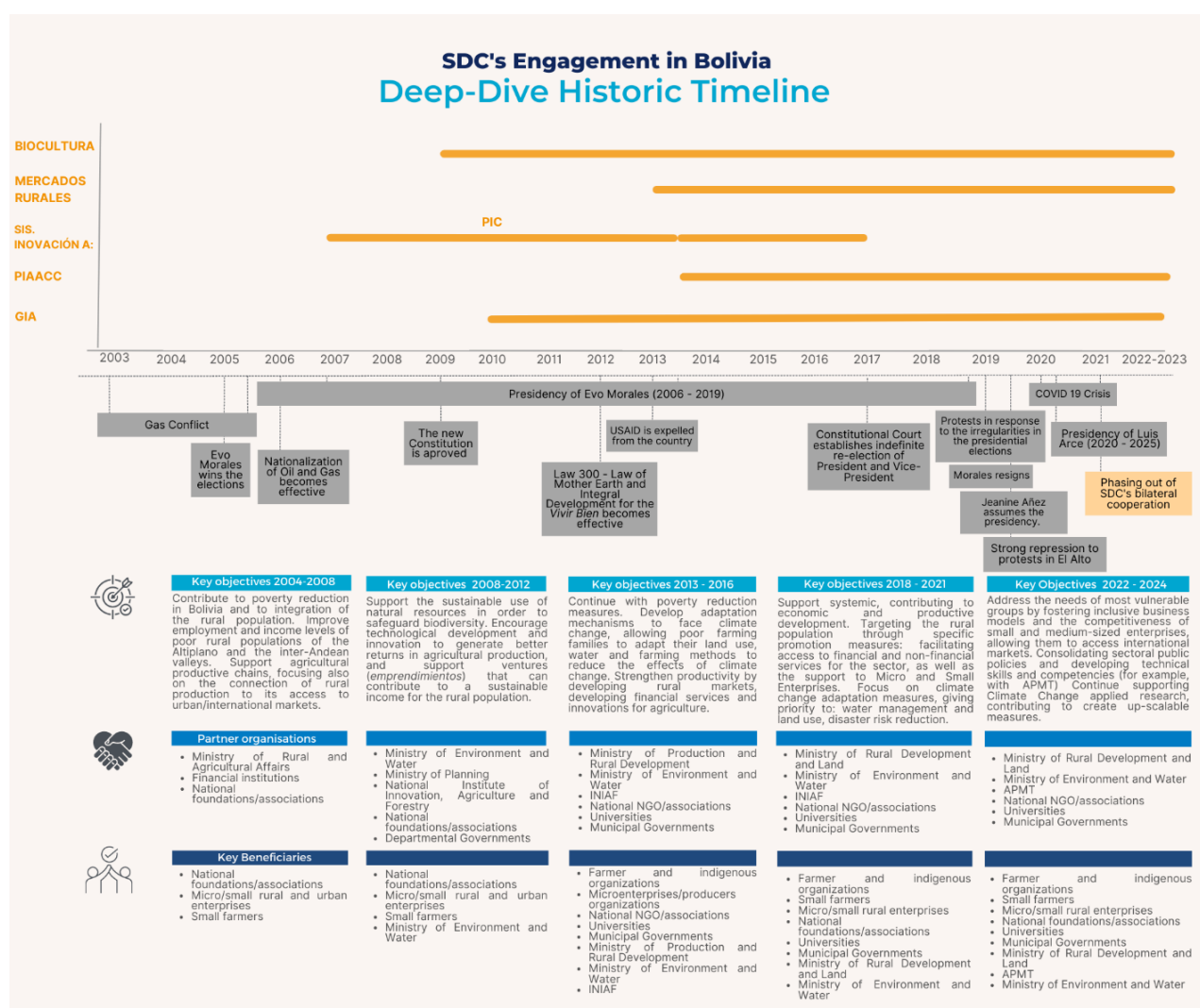


Figure 2: Timeline of major events (political, social, economic) relevant for the rural development sector in Bolivia.

The nationalization of the Oil and Gas industry (2006) – which did not imply expropriation of foreign companies, but rather more state participation in the profits of the industry – as well as the new Constitution (2009) were two breaking points that marked Bolivia's economic path. The other pillar to the rapid growth was a profound re-structuring of its internal finances, increasing its saving capacity and reducing inflation considerably. **Between 2006 and 2019, GDP grew from USD 9.000 million to more than USD**

<sup>1</sup> Budget information for the sector is not available. Therefore, it has not been included in the timeline.

<sup>2</sup> Luciana Mermet for UNDP: [https://www.undp.org/es/bolivia/blog/eliminar-la-pobreza-una-obligacion-sin-discusion#\\_ftn1](https://www.undp.org/es/bolivia/blog/eliminar-la-pobreza-una-obligacion-sin-discusion#_ftn1)

**40.000 million, and GDP per capita tripled within this period**, reaching far better results than other countries in the region during the same period. Informality, nevertheless, was and still is extremely high in Bolivia. **ILO statistics estimate that around 80% of the population works in the informal sector**, and from this percentage, only 10% have health insurance; and barely 20% saves for retirement. Estimating the contribution of coca leaf production and smuggling and illegal mining to Bolivia's GDP is challenging, but different national and international research institutes show that both activities play a major role in the country's economy.

The MAS economic policies, framed in a favourable economic context achieved tangible results during its ruling period, not only in terms of economic development but also regarding social indicators. These results were recognized with a strong popular support during the first phases of Morales' government, which resulted **in a stable political scene in Bolivia for over a decade** – another key determinant for the country's economic growth. It was also under this setting that the government started promoting the *Vivir Bien*, which was institutionalized as a state policy in 2012 with the entry in force of Law 300, *Ley Marco de la Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien*.

### The paradigm of *Vivir Bien*

*Vivir Bien* is originally a philosophy of the Bolivian indigenous population. The concept is broadly summed up in two major features – living in harmony *with others* and *with nature/Mother Earth*, features that emerge as alternatives to the growing inequality and environmental destruction associated with the capitalism. This philosophy became more visible when Evo Morales came to power in 2006 with the Movement for Socialism (MAS). On a later stage, the Bolivian Constitution of 2009 established *Vivir Bien* as the *guiding framework* for its economy and society, and Law 300 (Framework Law for Mother Earth and Development for Living Well) has defined more precisely the scope of this concept.

After several rifts between the government and numerous social movements and organizations, the decline in popular support for the governmental project reached its sharpest point in 2016, where **51% of the population voted against reforming the constitution in order to allow for indefinite re-election of Morales**. This decision was disregarded by the constitutional court, which in 2017 ruled in favour of indefinite re-election. Morales came out victorious in a heavily contested election in 2019. **With the OEA questioning the credibility of the election's results and in the face of increasingly violent protests, Morales and Vice President García Linera resigned shortly after the elections**. In the midst of a deep political crisis and numerous critiques of the presidential succession process, Jeanine Áñez assumed the presidency of the country, triggering strong nationwide protests, which were harshly repressed by its brief government. The recent political crisis and the COVID 19 pandemic showed that, despite the country's considerable achievements in poverty reduction and inequality between 2006 and 2014, **there is still important work to do to consolidate these results**. Luis Arce, the current president-elect (2020) and former Minister of Economy during Morales government, has pointed out that the way forward will be the industrialisation of natural resources, such as lithium.

### The agricultural sector's evolution

Bolivia has experienced an expansion of agricultural exports in the last 20 years. Non-traditional crops like soybeans, beef, and quinoa have gained prominence in international markets in comparison to traditional crops such as rice, maize, and potatoes. The agricultural border – in this context, the expansion of agricultural activities into previously uncultivated or underutilized land – has changed in line with this expansion: **Bolivia has experienced an expansion of agro-industrial crops**, particularly in the eastern lowlands of the country. **Large-scale agricultural activities**, including soybean cultivation, have expanded into previously forested areas such as the Chaco and Amazon regions. This expansion has been associated with deforestation and land conversion, leading to concerns about the loss of biodiversity, carbon emissions, and impacts on indigenous communities. Land disputes and conflicts have arisen between small-scale farmers, indigenous communities, and agro-industrial enterprises, leading to tensions.

This reality contrast with the small scale producers. Small-scale farming still faces considerable challenges, mainly due to (I) low productivity per hectare cultivated, which is lower in comparison to the neighbour countries, and (II) its slow evolution: the informal agricultural sector has few intersectoral relationships (except with transportation and commerce) and considerable difficulties in creating added value. A recent research about land concentration patterns in Bolivia<sup>3</sup> showed that there are about **660,000 agricultural units (small, medium and large), of which 87% are made up of small producers, generally of indigenous-peasant origin**, yet these small productive units occupy only 14% of the country's arable land.

**Moreover, marked income disparities between the rural and urban area persist**, and they are aggravated by other factors such as ethnic group and gender. There are also manifest differences in terms of multidimensional poverty: rural areas still have limited access to quality infrastructure and public services such as electricity, education, health facilities. Inequality, however, is not only to be found in income distribution: land is highly concentrated and unequally distributed in the country. **Small and family farming** play a significant role not only in terms of **subsistence** for the rural families, but also in **national food security and the internal local market**: A recent study<sup>4</sup> showed that the main destination of family farming production is the domestic market (68%), followed by transformation (11%) and self-consumption (10%). In addition to the already precarious conditions of family farming, **climate change is having an increasing impact on its production**. This segment of agriculture has neither the tools nor the technology to adapt to climatic phenomena (especially frosts and droughts). Moreover, the pandemic and its related restrictions showed the relevance of provisioning the internal Bolivian market with local production.

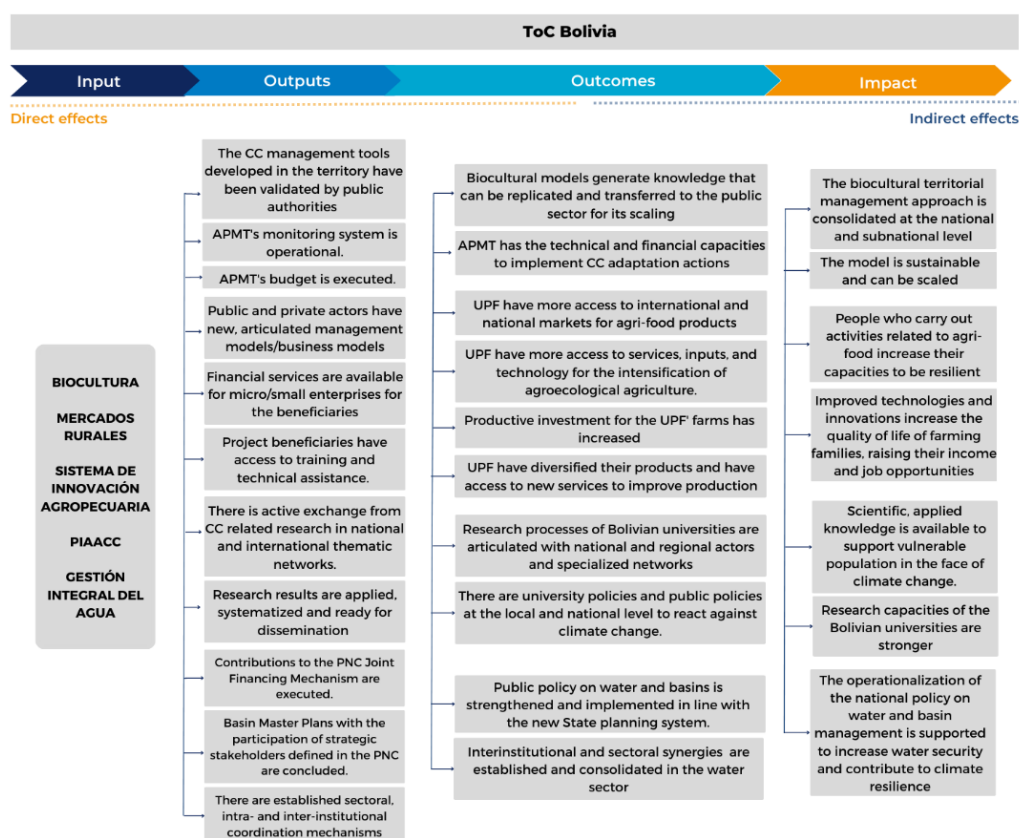


Figure 3: Thematic theory of change

<sup>3</sup> Concentración y extranjerización de la tierra en Bolivia. Miguel Urioste (2011).

<sup>4</sup> Contribución de la agricultura familiar campesina indígena a la producción y consumo de alimentos en Bolivia. Carola Tito Velarde y Fernanda Wanderley (2021).

**This above is the context that frames Swiss cooperation agenda in the rural sector over the last 20 years.** The Thematic Theory of Change (ToC) for SDC's engagement in the rural development sector in Bolivia is shown in Figure 3. It is based on the respective intervention logics of the projects included in the deep-dive. The logical frameworks were first extracted individually with the aim to then identify commonalities and build coherent clusters of outputs, outcomes and impacts. In the HIC Team's opinion, the projects' internal logic was coherent enough to permit clustering without having to worry about losing essential particularities.



## 4 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

### 4.1 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF SDC'S COOPERATION WITH BOLIVIA IN THE FIELD OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

#### 4.1.1 Relevance

**SDC's bilateral cooperation remained relevant in the last two decades.** With its long-term presence in the rural development and agricultural sector, the different analysed projects showed that SDC's response towards both the historically unresolved and the current development needs has been pertinent, as evidenced by three key findings:

**(I) Climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, resilience, the “new” problems in the rural sector were pragmatically integrated** in the projects working on this sector. These topics already appear as crosscutting issues within SDC's agenda in the 90'. However, bilateral cooperation in the rural sector during this decade was still more technically oriented, aiming to improve the conditions for agricultural production. Climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as food security became the central topics of SDC's programs in the last 20 years, also in response to the 2030 Agenda.

*Biocultura* and PIC are good examples: while maintaining the overall goal of poverty reduction, they have managed to integrate new paradigms and concepts such as *agroecology* in their activities. Such activities and tasks are no longer a separate component but rather a transversal element within the project. This integration is rooted in **a (II) systemic approach**, which has been placed at the centre of SDC's activities in the country. Based on this, rather than working in different, separate initiatives, the work conducted by the Swiss cooperation has been framed under a sectoral perspective, which allows to have an overview of the rural sector and therefore easily identifying the bottlenecks within it. This is materialized in the *Mercados Inclusivos* Project, which does not only work on the production side with small farmers, but also on the demand side – amplifying opportunities to reach markets –, as well as with other related, intermediate, processes: access to (micro) financial services, insurances, trainings, etc. Consequently, the project has been successful at identifying the main bottlenecks within the value chain (e.g. the lack of linkages between the seeds producers, the farmers and the markets) of agricultural production, and has addressed them accordingly.

This systemic approach is only possible when **the (III) heterogeneity of the stakeholders is clearly understood**, and the co-work with them is conducted on this basis. Throughout its projects, SDC has worked closely not only with the national partners, but also with the small-scale producers, agricultural inputs suppliers, research institutions and universities, among others – see again the example of *Mercados Inclusivos*, but also of PIAACC, GIA, *Biocultura*. The multi-level dialogue has been effective to this end, as well as for creating trust relations and for engaging the stakeholders with the projects and their objectives. It is worth highlighting that the latter aspect is not necessarily given, especially in a context of permanent political change and high turnover of public servants. **Trust relations have been built on the basis of active listening in the before mentioned dialogue spaces** – according to interviewees, SDC is permanently open for feedback and discussion –, **as well as through a highly transparent communication of the bilateral cooperation agenda**, which clearly demarcates the objectives to be pursued and allows to have a better understanding of activities that will be carried out during the implementation of a project.

After the first election of MAS in 2005, Bolivia started its way towards the implementation of the *Vivir Bien*. Among others, one key principle of the *Vivir Bien* is the holistic comprehension from the socio-economic problems, understanding the links between economy, nature and society. This new vision had significant impacts on the relations between the government and the international cooperation donors.

**For SDC, this paradigm shift reflected on the need of adopting a more comprehensive, holistic approach** not only in order to face the multidimensional nature of the problem of rural poverty (which will be addressed in more detail in 4.1.3), **but also to be in line with the development priorities of the country at the time**. PIAACC is a good representation of this experience: the project involves different

stakeholders and delivers different solutions according to their identified needs. SDC adjusted well to the growth of technical capacity in the field of agriculture and rural development following the multi-level approach. In research, the emphasis changed from capacity building toward constructing a research environment for Bolivia, mobilizing public funding for research and building the institutions that are required for this environment.

With the task of re-designing the overall approach based on the country's priorities came the challenge of grounding a paradigm that was strongly developed at the conceptual level, but that still had numerous difficulties to be operationalized. Nevertheless, the efforts to **adapt to the context in addition to a clear communication and an open, transparent agenda, allowed SDC's cooperation program to remain relevant for the sector.**

#### KEY MESSAGES

- **SDC's bilateral cooperation remained relevant through the last two decades**, comprehensively dealing with climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, resilience, but also working along the rural structural problems, such as the low productivity of small-scale agriculture and the lack of connections among the agricultural productive chain.
- The **systemic approach was pertinent**. One key element of this approach is recognizing the intersectional difficulties of the rural sector in Bolivia, in which vulnerable economic conditions (poverty, limited access to basic services) converge with social marginalization (by means of gender, ethnicity) and lack of financial and human resources for a more efficient agricultural production. The Swiss cooperation approach was appropriate to address in the multi-faced obstacles that hinder rural development.
- The **projects' objectives** in the sector **are in line with development priorities** of the country.

#### 4.1.2 Coherence

**There is internal coherence within the different projects under analysis.** One good example of this is the nexus between PIAACC and *Biocultura*. They operate at different levels: the first one works mainly with universities and research institutions, the second one is closer to the communities and local governments. However, they share a common goal, adapting to climate change while guaranteeing food security, and there is **room for communication between the two implementing teams when needed.**

**The close relation with the implementers has been another key factor to assure coherence.** Thanks to the long-term joint work performed by them and SDC, they have been able not only to successfully implement most of the projects for which they are responsible, but also to sustain a common thread in the interventions across time. **Hence, projects have a history, they are well familiarized with the structural and historical problems of the rural sector, and, in many cases, they participated in the transition from the older, technological-transfer oriented projects towards the current ones.** This is reflected in GIA: while approaching the water management sector in line with the current trends and needs in the sector, it also uses experiences from previous natural resources projects, such as PRONAR (former Programa Nacional de Riego), PROCUENCAS, etc. And in spite of the fact that **SDC's phasing out of Bolivia has strong implications for the whole local cooperation ecosystem, the cooperation networks are expected to remain.** Moreover, these organisations carry on with acquired know-how, which is highly relevant for the rural sector.

**There are also positive outcomes in terms of coherence with other donors and external actors.** A case in point is the last phase of *Mercados Inclusivos*, which is co-financed by SIDA and SDC. This form of trilateral cooperation features the most pertinent tools from the two donors (the multidimensional poverty analysis from the Swedish cooperation, in line with the systemic market development approach from SDC) and has placed them in practice without making distinctions between SDC and SIDA, becoming a positive reference of new forms of cooperation and joint work between donors.

**SDC in Bolivia has an 'open-door' policy for the other relevant donors**, engaging with them in permanent discussions. One example was the Water Roundtable (Mesa de Agua), which was formed by the Swedish, German, Belgian and Swiss cooperation, and where other donors such as the European Union (EU), IADB and the World Bank took part. More importantly, and closely related to this experience is the



construction of the National Basin Program (PNC, Plan Nacional de Cuencas) which has **brought all donors together with the government**, and speaks in favour of joint work between donors and the government. Nevertheless, national partners still criticize that there is still a lack of donor coordination, and they consider that there could be a more active engagement of the donors themselves.

Finally, a last remarkable topic is the capability to place visibility in a secondary place. **External actors acknowledge that SDC has not been active in the search of visibility**, which gives more space for an open collaboration with these actors. According to interviewees, **another benefit from the trilateral co-operation** (e.g. SIDA – SDC – Bolivian Government) is the extent to which, by working together with other cooperation offices, **the capacity for advocacy with the government is increased**. By working together they tend to have stronger lines of communication with the national partners, and therefore have better chances of scaling-up the results and effects of the projects.

### KEY MESSAGES

- **There is internal coherence within the projects in the sector**, which is sustained on SDC's sound project management, but also on the networks that have been built through the decades in which the Swiss cooperation has been active in Bolivia.
- The projects, their implementers and beneficiaries have a common history, and they have a deep understanding of the sector and its associated challenges. **Local organisations carry on with the acquired know-how that has come from Swiss cooperation.**
- **Cooperation with other donors has been successful in several dimensions**, and the benefits of such cooperation have translated into the projects.

#### 4.1.3 Effectiveness

Results and effectiveness achieved by SDC in the rural sector can be classified in different categories, right next to the instruments that were deployed to reach these results.

One part of the Swiss cooperation's achievements are the **technical improvements** in agricultural production. Another relevant contribution has been the support to **institutionalize innovation** in different spheres, which is linked to another relevant outcome of SDC's presence in Bolivia: **numerous cooperation platforms and relations between private and public stakeholders have emerged**. There have been different funding mechanisms that sustained diverse initiatives, and which have left important outcomes and experiences. Finally, SDC has contributed by supporting the conceptual development of the new paradigms around the Vivir Bien, which is highly relevant for the Bolivian context, particularly regarding climate change and agroecology.

#### Improvements in the agricultural production through technical assistance

As mentioned in 4.1.1, one key aspect that defines Swiss cooperation as relevant and timely is the possibility of integrating transversal topics such as climate change in the different sectors of cooperation. Likewise, **it has been defined based on the historical roadmap designed by the Swiss cooperation within the sector**, in which both demand and supply in the agricultural markets are relevant.

In the case of the first two phases of *Mercados Inclusivos*, there are key contributions in terms of seed quality, in which UPF (Unidades Productivas Familiares)<sup>5</sup> participating in the project reached up to 100% higher income in the production of potatoes seed in comparison to the UPF that were not participants. They also showed to be more resilient to extreme weather events: **the monetary income for the participating UPF whose potato production was affected by frost was up to 30% higher than the income of not participant UPF**. Adding to this, UPF emphasized that the training provided by the project allowed

<sup>5</sup> UPF – family productive units, have no homogenous definition. In this context, it refers to small farmers, whose agricultural production goes mainly to support the family. In addition to their food production capacity, UPFs are important work sources in the rural area.

them to recognize "*how pests live*", identify and correctly apply chemical products, distinguish seed classes and qualities, among others. Finally, TA provided through the project has allowed bigger producers to reach certain standards which are required for participating in fairs and business spaces, such as the Organic Fair e-BIOFACH 2021 or European Organic Program. It also stands out that 9,420 UPF improved their climate change adaptation strategies, in which 7,810 women have developed capacities and improved conditions that allow their empowerment in prioritized territories.

There are also relevant results achieved through the GIA Program, in which 303 families – including families with a woman as the head of the household – **have improved their income by at least 15%** thanks to improvements in agricultural production linked to access to a more efficient and sustainable use of irrigation water.

One key element in this regard is the localized knowledge and experience of **technicians and advisors, who were local in most of the cases, and therefore had a closer understanding** of the local context and its limitations. The experts providing TA in the mentioned projects had a sound experience in the field and have often previous experience working with local authorities, which made interaction with local beneficiaries and counterparts much more fluent.

### Innovation environments

Apart from the quantitative effects that will be described next, PIAACC Project has raised awareness regarding **the importance of strengthening research within the national universities to create endogenous innovation**. Furthermore, it has stressed the potential of such a research for dealing with challenging tasks as climate change and food security on the rural side. The following list provides a first outlook of the results achieved by the program on its first phase:

- 67 research projects in the following topics were executed:
  - 13 projects in integrated **water management**.
  - 21 projects in **Territorial Management and Biocultural Diversity**.
  - 21 projects in **Food Security** and Sovereignty.
  - 8 projects in **Disaster Risk Reduction** and Intercultural Climate Modelling Methodologies.
  - 4 projects in **Social Management for climate change**.
- More than 100 institutions were involved in the research including social organizations, non-profit institutions, government, departmental and municipal entities making, etc.
- More than 80 publications (books, magazines, booklets, manuals, policy brief, etc.) were released.
- The first national meeting of researchers to foster scientific communication was organized through the project.

In the case of PIAACC II, participant universities are both beneficiaries and implementing organizations. SDC provides support through the backstopping role. Hence, even though it can still be considered as TA (in the sense of backstopping as a certain type of advisory), it is worth mentioning that this approach has been key to strengthening internal university management, allowing the universities to consolidate the new research environments from within, understanding their capacities and limitations.

**The PIC project** also made a significant contribution in terms of innovative mechanisms on agricultural production. One important element is the level of awareness within the communities about food security: the majority of the program's participants mention that they have a better understanding of the relevance of food in nutrition for health. They also reached **higher levels of productivity on small scale agriculture, which in turn results on higher levels of income: participant families had a 59% increase** in their average income.

### Networks and sectoral platforms

There are consolidated networks within the sector: different institutions have had the opportunity to meet in different SDC projects, which has allowed **to create a trust environment but also a solid commitment for dealing with the challenges of the sector**. These connections are not necessarily formally

constituted – they exist mainly through the presence of local and international experts and their willingness to cooperate. And while most of these networks date from more than two decades, there is still space for new actors, who can also bring new expertise: MIGA (Movimiento de Integración Gastronómico Alimentario de Bolivia), a local movement that carries out several initiatives in the field of food security, has been able to work with SDC through different projects, but more importantly in the context of the phasing out, it has been able to access to the human and social capital built by the Swiss cooperation.

These **networks and platforms** are not only useful for actors to meet and recognize their potential synergies –as in the case of *Biocultura* or PIAACC I and II, but they **can also be turned into an instrument to reach political instances**, as in the case of GIA.

### Support to rural finances through accessible insurance and credit

Micro and rural finances are also not new in SDC' history in the sector. *Mercados Inclusivos* has been the most noticeable project in this area for the last 20 years, not only by **providing standard tools for financing but also fostering access to insurance through the *Seguros Inclusivos* initiative**, highly relevant in the context of climate change adaptation strategies. The first two phases of the program were very successful in this regard, as 100% of the UPF participating in the project mention having accessed personal accident insurance. 60% of these insurances were purchased by women.

In addition, this project has managed to **scale-up some of its financing tools**. One example is the *Frutales* program, which is also part of the MDRyT.

### Developing a common agenda through the Basket fund in the river basin management sector

**The basket fund mechanism contributed to the promotion, accompaniment and technical and financial support of the PNC** as a whole. This instrument is relevant as it provides a certain degree of flexibility, as national partners can make decisions on resource allocation. Moreover, it brings together different cooperation programs that might otherwise be dispersed, working on a single goal and hence pushing for a minimum level of agreement with the involved institutions. The experience during the GIA Project was very positive, although there was permanent accompaniment to the national institutions in order to sort out the institutional challenges that emerged across time. The basket fund experience showed that it can be a significant contribution to specific goals as the creation of a national basin strategy, even if its duration is limited.

### Contributions for the construction of the *Vivir Bien* paradigm

Throughout *Biocultura*, SDC has engaged in permanent debate with institutions from both the national and local level, discussing and reflecting on the key aspects that had to be reflected on the regulatory framework and public policies related to Law 300 and Law 777 (Law for the Comprehensive State Planning System / Ley del Sistema de Planificación Integral del Estado – SPIE, 2016). These discussions included the creation and design of the Comprehensive Information and Monitoring System of Mother Earth and Climate Change (SMTCC).

### Reached/excluded stakeholders

In Bolivia, SDC managed to reach a wide range of institutions at different government levels, civil society, academia and private sector. This is also strongly related to the **systemic approach**, and the open-door policy, which ultimately **aims to encourage the access to (financial, human) resources available on the different projects**. Leaving someone behind is nevertheless inevitable, but attention has been placed to have participative and open project systems.

Regarding the implementation of a gender approach, the five projects pointed out to participation of women in decision-making spaces as one of the central challenges. **The actions had different targets and levels of impact:** *Biocultura* has opened training and exchange spaces, in which women can raise their voice and manifest their interests. GIA, on the other side, used a theatre play to raise awareness in public schools about the relevance of water management with a gender perspective. *Mercados Inclusivos* worked jointly with the UMSA's law, social work and psychology students, expanding the coverage of

attention and prevention of the SLIM, Municipal Legal Services, which deal – among other topics – with violence complaints.

However, **not all interventions have achieved a transformative approach**, in which concrete, targeted measures are taken in order to modify the system/mechanism that is excluding women. **Mercados Inclusivos has worked successfully in the promotion of women's economic empowerment** with relevant initiatives such as the better access to SLIM. GIA, PIAACC, Biocultura, attempt to work on an awareness-raising level, taking openly about gender inequalities and monitoring gender-disaggregated indicators, but there is still room for new actions, whose impact goes beyond diagnosis and awareness-raising level.

Finally, another remarkable aspect that was permanently acknowledged by both private and public stakeholders is **SDC's close relation to the beneficiaries**, not only the institutional ones but especially with rural communities and small farmers. The link is not direct in many cases, as these beneficiaries tend to know the project implementer more **than SDC as an institution, but there is connection through frequent site visits and through the interest that SDC representatives demonstrate day to day**. This is not only highly appreciated due to the trust relations that result from this relation –and which is a key element for a project's success– but is also linked with another key principle of Swiss cooperation, the empowerment of marginalized groups.

### KEY MESSAGES

- **SDC has done significant contributions to improve agricultural production through technical assistance.** The evaluations show positive results, which translate into higher levels of income for the families whose main source of income is agriculture.
- There have also been relevant contributions in the **support to innovation spheres**, not only working directly on the territory but also with national universities.
- Other instruments such as **microcredits and financial/personal insurance have been deployed, and are highly valued by the beneficiaries**.
- **The basket fund was a very powerful instrument to articulate the donors and the government towards a common end.** The results achieved (especially the PNC) reflected the effectiveness and pertinence of the basket fund.
- The gender approach from the projects in the sector could be further developed.
- There is a **close relation between SDC and the beneficiaries**. The link is not direct in many cases, but there is connection through frequent site visits and through the interest showed by the Swiss cooperation.

#### 4.1.4 Impact

##### Diverse actions to tackle poverty

Measuring poverty reduction is challenging. First of all, poverty analysis has changed through time within SDC, shifting from a more income-focused view to the multidimensional poverty approach. This adds considerably to the understanding of poverty, but makes its measurement more complex. Another important consideration for this case is that some of the revised projects are still in the implementation phase, so it is not yet possible to assess their final impact. Therefore, and using final evaluations from previous phases as an input, we have selected five key achievements from the revised projects (or its previous phases) that allow us to reflect around the aggregated impact on poverty reduction.

#### Mercados Inclusivos

**Access to financial resources:** *the anchor actors\* do not have access to other types of credit, so ProntoPago –a service articulated through the project that provides cash flow for the targeted institutions- has a significant impact on their business. The financial conditions provided by ProntoPago cannot be found in other institutions. By using these resources, small enterprises such as Granja Samiri have been able to grow rapidly,*

*without sacrificing their mission and vision (which incorporates, ecological and social considerations) in the process.*

*\*The anchor actors are micro/small enterprises selected by the project, which have access to the financing through ProntoPago.*

**Access to financing remains as one of the key challenges for reducing poverty in rural areas**, not only restricting the fulfilment of vital needs but also hindering the possibilities of economic stability for the population working in agriculture. By providing funding through ProntoPago, the anchor actors have shown significant growth in their production, while strengthening the agro-ecological approach and articulating other small farmers, as mentioned by one of them: *At the beginning, there were only around 100 families dedicated to the cañahua<sup>6</sup>, for a price of 50 bolivianos per quintal. Now there are more than 1,500 families dedicated to this, and a quintal is worth 600 bolivianos. Producers specialized and develop new products. Before they were looking for financing all the time.* And even though the scope of ProntoPago is relatively small as it works with only 6 or 7 anchor actors (an issue that will be addressed in chapter 4.2.1. LL), its impact on the producers and its surrounding network has been significant.

#### PIC

**Higher income due to better production conditions:** *The total production costs for annual crops are lower for the participating families compared to the group of non-participating families. This result shows that those families that adopt the innovations introduced by the PIC generally lower their production costs. In terms of gross income and profits, higher estimates are observed for PIC participating families, with a difference of 1,344 Bs / ha / year, equivalent to a 59% increase in the average income.*

The PIC project stands out due to its **bottom-up structure**, which shows the importance of creating **innovation and better practices locally, not for the farmers but with them**. In spite of being a relatively technical-oriented project, there were considerable efforts to establish platforms and connections between the involved stakeholders – producers, the city governments, the seeds providers – as well as for building commitment with the involved parts. During its period of activity, PIC was very effective in terms of increasing the income level of the participating families, yet it was less effective in the upscaling of the project because public institutions were not able to take over the promotion role of the project.

#### GIA

**Opening space for new priorities and empowering the beneficiaries in the process:** *Communities are actively involved in the water management plans and actions - the water problem in the area is recognized, and they mention the urgent need to take concrete actions against the contamination of the rivers. At the level of water service providers, the project has contributed to technical knowledge about water sources, and to plan and make informed decisions in the short and long term.*

Although from a more strategic level, GIA was a key project to discuss water and basin management in Bolivia. During its implementation phase, it **raised awareness of the topic at different levels**: on the one hand, working closely with the MMAYa to develop the PNC and several mechanisms to provide a sustainable water management; but also **working closely to the population to discuss the importance of protecting water sources**, and the necessary means and actions to be taken in order to respond to climate change.

#### Biocultura

**Understanding the cultural and social dimensions of poverty:** *The intercultural approach has also implications in terms of poverty: in many cases, for the indigenous populations, 40% of their income comes from their territory, from their familiar activities. If you 'remove' that relation with the territory, the percentage of the population in poverty is significantly larger.*

<sup>6</sup> The cañahua, also known as cañihua, kafiwa or qafiwua, is a cereal native from the Andes. It has become more popular outside of Bolivia and Peru thanks to its high nutritional value.



Multidimensional poverty covers a wide range of needs, yet the approach pursued by *Biocultura* goes a step further: **rural and indigenous population have not only numerous unresolved needs but also other types of relations with their territory**, and another way to sort out their needs. The main achievement has thus been the strengthening of these relations – fostering self-management (*autogestión*), local and autonomous governance, protecting the ancestral knowledge within the indigenous populations; but also supporting concrete economic activities such as eco-tourism, access to agro ecological markets, etc. – to reduce poverty in line with the local approach.

#### PIAACC

**Improving food security through efficient climate change adaption:** The local community in Micaya has more technical resources in order to adapt to climate change, and therefore to ensure food security within the community.

The main objective of this project is to link **applied research in order to deliver local alternatives** to fight rural poverty, while keeping a holistic and inter- and multidisciplinary approach. The research project “*Implementación de un mecanismo de resiliencia a través del diálogo de saberes en el manejo de suelos en sinergia con la producción agrícola, alimentación, nutrición y salud como una estrategia para mitigar los efectos del cambio climático en la Comunidad de Micaya, Municipio de Colquencha-La Paz*”<sup>7</sup> has managed to connect a number of interventions to improve the quality of life for the community. Hence, by adapting to climate change through practical, low-cost interventions (e.g. installation of pluviometers and construction of greenhouses), the community can sustain its agricultural production in a context of drastic temperature changes, and it can diversify its food production in order to have a better nutrition.

#### Other long-term changes

The revised projects have also left a number of other impacts within the sector. The degree to which these changes will prevail is hard to predict, yet the following arguments provide a first overview of possible changes:

#### Actively contributing to improve the bottlenecks within the sector

One of the main challenges for the rural sector is the degree of isolation, the constant division in which the population and all the related stakeholders work. **SDC has carried out significant efforts to be a facilitator, a bridge between the different parts of the sector.** And while it has not been possible in every case, it is clear that Swiss bilateral cooperation has successfully operationalized the alternatives against this separation, which is reflected in *Mercados Inclusivos*. Moreover, it has contributed to establish **solid relations between the stakeholders of the sector despite the changing political environment.**

#### Creating an innovation and research environment that can be self-supported in the long-term

The PIAACC Project has been a significant contribution of SDC for the generation of an innovation, research ecosystem, which is not only focused on the academic research but especially and more importantly to **creation of applicable knowledge**. It has done so by promoting an interscientific and holistic research agenda, which has included topics such as land management, food security and sovereignty, risk reduction and disasters and social management of climate change. Furthermore, it has strengthened the research culture in new generations of researchers. Close to 500 researchers (undergraduate and postgraduate students) were part of the research teams of PIAACC I.

PIAACC has also been the **backbone for a new research management system within the national universities involved**, which has turned research as one of the university pillars. This is already being captured in the recently university statutes approved in 2022, and the interviewees mentioned that they consider themselves ready to look for other sources of financing in order to sustain research and innovation, with spill over benefits to all Bolivian universities. Moreover, there are success stories that should

<sup>7</sup> Research project from the UMSS in cooperation with Oruro University, led by one of the PIAACC researchers.

be mentioned: thanks to her study in biotechnology and microbiology in the growing of Quinoa, one of the researchers has been selected among the 7 women scientists from Global South recognized for food security research<sup>8</sup>.

### Recognising the value of interculturality and its opportunities of applicability

SDC made significant **contributions in the regulatory field**, especially by supporting the elaboration of the Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for the *Vivir Bien* (better known as “Ley 300”), in which the Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth (APMT for its initials in Spanish) is created. The elaboration and approval of this law had not only a legal implication but also a symbolic one, as it materialized long discussions around the *Vivir Bien* and revealed the impetus that the government was giving to this paradigm. However, and beyond the concrete contribution to the regulatory framework, the support in the construction of Law 300 and projects such as **Biocultura shows a serious commitment of SDC to strengthen interculturality**, by working hand-in-hand with the notions of ancestral knowledge, dialogue of knowledge (*diálogo de saberes*). It has also been a significant effort to remark the value behind these ‘alternative’ ways of living, producing and creating that are and have been part of the indigenous culture in the country, and that have been systematically ignored and excluded throughout the history.

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Poverty analysis has changed through time within SDC, shifting from a more income-focused view to the **multidimensional poverty approach**. This adds considerably to the understanding of poverty, but makes its **measurement more complex**.
- The different evaluations show that, considering their context and scope, **SDC’s contribution to poverty reduction has been positive**.
- Regarding other positive impacts, **SDC has dedicated significant efforts to create alternatives and solutions against the bottlenecks in the sector**, creating bridges between the stakeholders and acting as a facilitator.
- These same efforts have been deployed to **create an innovation and research environment** that can be autonomous in the long-time.
- The cooperation has taken up **the principles of the Vivir Bien** that are relevant in the national context, and **has tried to actively include them in its projects**.

#### 4.1.5 Sustainability

SDC’s contribution to the rural development in Bolivia is recognized both inside and outside of the country, which is a reflection of the positive impact reached by the different projects. And in spite of the difficulties to measure the extent to which this contribution will remain, **most of the interviewees pointed out to the “Swiss know-how” as the key legacy of SDC in Bolivia**. This refers to the know-how earned along the projects by the local experts, some organisational/institutional processes from SDC that serve as reference for local institutions, and of **course the solid networks in the sector with NGOs, foundations, universities and research institutions**. These impressions shared by the interviewees were framed in the 50 years of Swiss Cooperation. In the HIC team’s opinion, sustainability should not only answer to the question of *what* remains after SDC’s phasing out – this is also determined by the context and the beneficiaries’ conditions –, but more importantly, to *where* these different traces can be found. To illustrate this, there are some representative examples of the selected projects below:

#### Innovation programs

Several interviewees pointed out that **Innovation Programs tend to be uninteresting for the local and national governments**, as the results from such programs are only seen in the long-term, and (especially local) agendas are in the search of more immediate results. The most relevant example within the last 20

<sup>8</sup> Award by OWSD-Elsevier Foundation

years is the case of the PIC Project and the troubled knowledge transfer to the INIAF after its closure. In the attempt to transfer the technical know-how earned throughout the project, it was not clearly acknowledged that, **in spite of officially being the responsible entity for innovation in the field, INIAF was never actively engaged with the activities conducted throughout the PIC and was therefore not ready to continue with its legacy.** In the HIC's opinion, the sustainability of this project has been notably affected by these circumstances.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the complex relations with INIAF, PIC **contributed to create an ecosystem of relevant experts and institutions in the sector.** This is clearly visible in the current activities of the BDP, an institution that is owned both by the State (having 80% of the bank shares) and CAF. Nowadays, BDP is providing a number of services that were once encouraged through PIC, and is indirectly working with *Mercados Inclusivos* and other Swiss cooperation partners.

**PIAACC shows a different perspective towards the future. The project has now solid foundations,** and is actively looking for alternative sources of funding. Moreover, it has advocated for state-financed funds for research, a discussion that eventually led to modify Law 1493<sup>9</sup> on 2022, which now contains a *Fund for the Promotion of Science and Technology Development*. The interviewees related to the project mentioned that they implement new organisational skills, which were developed through the assistance provided by SDC, and that are very likely to continue after the phasing out of the Swiss cooperation.

Another key action in order to ensure PIAACC's sustainability was a prudent analysis of the **time dimension.** Although closing and phasing out of a project **too late** might turn cooperation instruments inefficient, leaving it **too soon** might leave some on-going processes adrift. A good example of this is the transition between the first and second phase of PIAACC: *The sustainability of the project in its first Phase is not yet fully on track (...). The Universities have not yet accentuated this process, neither technically, nor administratively, nor institutionally, if this process is not supported, and despite the predisposition of the linked institutions, there is a risk of going back and dissolving what has been advanced to date* (PIAACC I Final Evaluation). This statement contrasts with the Phase II of the project, in which universities affirm to be technically, administratively, and institutionally prepared to continue with the mandate of PIAACC, showing that the capacity to sustain an achieved goal is also built across time.

### Multidisciplinary approaches to former 'technical' problems

**Sustainability is determined** not only for the positive or negative outcomes of a project, but **also for its circumstances.** One good example of this was seen in GIA: the project showed the relevance of a holistic approach, which was supported by the relevant counterparts. However, with the political crisis of 2019, which was aggravated by the pandemic context – in presence activities completely suspended, and strict quarantine measures were installed – the roadmap within the sector at strategic level was (at least partially) broke. On the other side, local experts from both the private and public sector stressed out that **there is an already grounded understanding that water management requires a multidisciplinary approach,** which considers not only the merely technical issues but also the relation between rural communities, territory, water and nature.

**Stakeholders now identify the relevance of water management with regard to climate change, they recognize the need of a multi-level governance** on the water sector, and they have even gained valuable experience in the search for external financing and the best ways to manage it. In the HIC's team opinion, this is a great contribution towards sustainability, as this **multidisciplinary approach is closer to the group of experts and technicians who might remain in the water sector for a longer time,** even if the political scene is permanently changing.

<sup>9</sup> Ley 1493, from 17-12-2022 «Ley del Presupuesto General del Estado – Gestión 2023»



### Lack of funding limits certain initiatives

**The reduction or lack of funding emerges as a real challenge after SDC's phasing out.** The basket fund experience illustrates this. Its implementation was very successful, and it sent a powerful message about the relevance of working together with different stakeholders in order to achieve results. However, it seems unlikely that such experience can be replicated in other sectors, as international cooperation offices are starting to close their portfolios in Bolivia. Any further similar initiative will depend on the ability of participating stakeholders to mobilise national and local resources, and to build the political consensus that a common fund demands.

### The ongoing programs

A final reflection on *Mercados Inclusivos* and *Biocultura*. The only two ongoing projects out of the five selected, show different results. **For the first one, the possibilities of continuation seem likely, as the trilateral cooperation established between SIDA, SDC and the national partners has evolved positively**, and SIDA is more than prepared to carry on with the project until 2025. Yet the project has also opened a way towards the future by, as one of the interviewees described, "*diversifying the risk*". *Mercados Inclusivos* works with such an extended network that both their successes and failures cannot be attributed only to the cooperation offices or its implementing partners, but also to the whole conglomerate of stakeholders participating in the project. Their possibilities of continuation is therefore also in hands of these other actors, and the conducted interviews showed the HIC team that they are highly interested in continuing the project.

**The outlook is less optimistic for Biocultura.** The implanting partners stressed out the difficulties they have in finding financing from other bilateral cooperation offices or organisations. An alternative future for the project would be its institutionalization, yet the required conditions for this seem also unfeasible. The APMT has very limited technical and financial resources to take over and continue with the conducted work, and the agroecological approach does not seem to entirely fit in the other relevant ministries, MMAyA and MDRyT. In the HIC team's opinion, **the sustainability of Biocultura will rely heavily on the project's own efforts to lever new funding, efforts that can be supported by a clearer communication of the project's approach and its implemented actions; as well as by a stronger socialization of the agroecological perspective and its potential in Bolivia.**

### KEY MESSAGES

- **"Swiss know-how" is identified as the key legacy of SDC in Bolivia.** This refers to the know-how earned along the projects by the local experts, some organisational/institutional processes from SDC that serve as reference for local institutions, and the solid networks in the sector.
- **There are mixed results regarding the sustainability of innovation programs.** PIC and PIAACC show the positive and negatives outcomes of the current experience, in which recognizing the counter-parts' capacities is key.
- The relevance of a **multidisciplinary approach appears to be well grounded on the water sector.** It seems realistic to state that this new approach will remain after SDC's exit.
- Initiatives like **the basket fund** have been successful in Bolivia, but with the exit of many cooperation offices in sight, the **chances of replication seem smaller.** Any other attempt of having a tool like this one will depend on the relevant stakeholders' capacities to mobilise funding.
- **The solid network working with and within Mercados Inclusivos have built good possibilities for its continuation after SDC's exit.** This is not the case for **Biocultura, which still requires significant efforts to ensure its sustainability.**

## 4.2 MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

### 4.2.1 Sectoral lessons learned

**Lesson 1:** Agroecology is a long-term commitment, and is a promising approach to work on the nexus between climate change adaptation, food security and agriculture. However, the limitations and challenges of this approach need to be thoroughly assessed and actions against these constraints have to be addressed.

***Biocultura* has made a remarkable effort into the integration of an agroecological perspective in its area of intervention.** Moreover, it has open a door of discussion about this approach and its relevance in Bolivia, working in parallel with the local and national government levels. By doing this, it became clear that the context for the expansion of agroecology is adverse in Bolivia: the agricultural sector is, on the one hand, heavily determined by the agroindustry; and, on the other hand, severely constrained by the low productivity of small, family agriculture. Further research is required in order to understand how can agroecology ‘compete’ with regular agricultural practices, so that it can be sustainable over time.

**Agroecology also stresses out the importance of conserving biodiversity and of rethinking the cultural and social dimension of agricultural production in order to deal with CC challenges,** walking along the thin line of learning from the ancestral and local knowledge while looking into the future. *Biocultura* has dedicated significant efforts to the revaluation of native knowledge, and at the same time, it has worked hand-in-hand with more than 400 communities to define resilience mechanisms to face CC. Regarding the latter part, **several interviewees pointed out that the agroecological approach still needs to be refined, so that its practices are tangible and clearly defined.** They also pointed out to the need of balancing between making the best use of the available native knowledge, without losing of sight the challenges of the future.

**Lesson 2:** Food production, planting and harvest cycles and the connection of men and women with nature have a cultural, spiritual and historical dimension in Bolivia, which have to be taken into account during project implementation in order to build true ownership with the beneficiaries. Moreover, these ‘other’ dimensions can also turn into tangible economic activities – tourism, gastronomy, etc.

**The most pleasant experiences narrated by the interviewees are those in which beneficiaries can make the most out of a project while being in harmony with their traditions, their beliefs.** This can be clearly depicted in the case of food security: *Biocultura*, *Mercados Inclusivos* – PIC to a certain extent –, which have worked closely with the communities, supporting them for rescuing diverse seed varieties, promoting the consumption of traditional (and highly nutritional) food, creating awareness of the nutritional and cultural Andean patrimony within the communities. Together with local organisations such as *MIGA*, new networks have been established, and together with food products, the knowledge and history behind them is also being transmitted to the members of these networks – restaurants in the main cities, local and foreign tourism agencies, universities and research institutes.

**Lesson 3:** Climate Change is already posing significant challenges for the rural sector of Bolivia – unexpected droughts and rain, record temperatures, among others – threatening the means of subsistence of the rural and indigenous population. The impact of the bilateral cooperation in this regard could benefit from concrete, short-term actions in addition to a long or mid-term action plan.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation also require short-term measures. Research projects within the PIAACC attempt to deal with these different time horizons: some projects seek to solve the most immediate needs of the population by, for example, supporting them with the construction of greenhouses to diversify food production under climate-related extreme events; while other projects deal with biological/technical mechanisms to improve agricultural production under harsh weather conditions. However, the central purpose of this project is to encourage research rather than to provide immediate solutions. It might be interesting to **explore new possibilities of engagement in other complementary areas around CC adaptation and mitigation in the rural field.** Low-cost tools to generate weather/climate

data or early warning systems which are known and run by the communities would be examples of these complementary fields.

**Lesson 4:** Migration of younger generations to the cities has a profound impact on the rural society. The population remaining in rural areas is aging, and the percentage of women in the rural population is increasing, which creates new demographic and social realities.

The structural problem of rural-urban inequality remains in Bolivia: monetary income, access to public services and infrastructure are still notably lower in the rural areas in comparison to the cities, so **migration is still the first option for many young adults, especially men. As a result, entire communities have become ghost towns**, whose main residents are either kids under the watch of their mothers or grandparents, or the elderly population. This poses a major difficulty for projects seeking for innovation and creation of resilience capacities.

This reality is not unknown within the projects. *Biocultura* has supported the expansion of employment possibilities for the young communities' members, by focusing for example on alternative activities such as historical and gastronomical tourism. Through its different mechanisms, *Mercados Inclusivos* is also contributing to strengthen new local business and to create aggregated value out of agricultural production. However, it is important to keep in mind that **the demographic trend in the rural areas will add another layer of complexity** to the discussion of rural development. Addressing this context more effectively in future SDC projects requires further internal discussion, establishing connections between demographic trends and the future of agriculture and food security within this context.

**Lesson 5:** Innovation can deliver significant contributions to improve the quality of life of the rural population, yet it must be strongly supported over time, focusing more on the experience earned than on the final outcome.

**Innovation is the sum of successful and unsuccessful research:** it needs space to fail as much as it needs to support achieved goals or results. There have been valuable experiments as in the case of SEPA (leading seed company), which was first created as a joint venture (between SDC, local producers, and the sectoral Ministry). It faced several challenges over the years due to its particular internal organization and decision-making processes, but also due to the changing political environment. Several interviewees mentioned this as an unsuccessful initiative. There are also some positive examples, such as CIFEMA. The company, which started as a research centre supported by SDC and UMSS is now a solid enterprise in the market of Agricultural Machinery. **Both experiences, although with heterogeneous results, provide important learning opportunities in terms of innovation**, and are equally valuable for the construction of know-how.

**Lesson 6:** Up-scaling of good practices/results found in the projects onto a national or sectoral level still requires reflection towards SDC's phasing-out in Bolivia.

The seven anchor actors using the ProntoPago service as part of *Mercados Inclusivos* and the communities in which several PIAACC projects take place are two good examples that illustrate that not every positive outcome or mechanism can be replicated. In the two mentioned examples, the scope and instruments are limited to a very specific context: ProntoPago has not yet become a mechanism that is open to micro- and small enterprises from the rural sector, and is still not replicated by other financial institutions. The PIAACC research programs are applicable in the communities in which they take place, but the innovations and solutions found are designed *only* for the particularities of each of these communities. On the other hand, both interventions have been very effective in the beneficiaries' eyes, and have definitively positively impacted their urgent problems.

**This reflection does not aim to decide whether smaller, more targeted interventions are better than large ones:** both *Mercados Inclusivos* and PIAACC have been flagship programs in the sector, they have attracted new cooperation partners and institutionalized some effective practices, serving as input for the elaboration of public policies or norms. It states, however, that **not every project can or will be**

**up-scaled only due to its success. The difficulties of up-scaling are not exclusive to SDC:** the rural sector in Bolivia is, by its own nature, a fragmented and geographically disperse sector, which in turn poses difficulties for scaling initiatives up.

**Lesson 7:** The gender approach in the rural sector can be further strengthened, delivering more concrete actions.

With the exception of *Mercados Inclusivos*, initiatives on the subject of gender have remained more at a diagnostic (for example, developing indicators) or awareness level. Although these two elements are absolutely necessary, there is room for deepening the gender component, for instance, by creating programs that support female community leaderships, design community-based violence reporting mechanisms, by creating awareness-raising programs targeted specific to men.

#### 4.2.2 Institutional lessons learned

**Lesson 8:** SDC's overarching cooperation structure has been effective, and the technical advisory provided throughout the five decades of cooperation is recognized among beneficiaries.

This appreciation is shared between the HIC Team and implementing and national partners, as well as by the beneficiaries. **Long project cycles are also positive, as they allow for continuity.** When conducting a solid follow-up of a project's phases, the achieved results can be very effective. This has been evidenced in several of the visited projects. Moreover, it also stands out that **Swiss cooperation's mandate is transparent and clear for all its counterparts**, and the carried out activities follow a well-established roadmap that allows SDC to be perceived as a trustworthy actor in the country. **This reputation is strongly linked to the quality of its technical advisory, which stands out for being based on a solid, in-depth analysis of the context**, as well as for the closeness between local experts and the corresponding beneficiaries, partners and/or implementers. They also remark that **Swiss cooperation sustains serious, long-term commitments**, in which they clearly see a grounded connection during the project's lifecycle, including its phasing out.

**Lesson 9:** It is important to identify and work with other relevant stakeholders beyond the national partners and the implementers. SDC has done very fruitful work by providing support to key stakeholders at an early stage, which have later on evolved and become central actors in the sector.

It has already been underlined that a systemic approach has had great impact on SDC's work in the rural sector. However, it is important to highlight that, for this approach to be useful and operational, **multiple stakeholders must be strengthened outside of the national partners and implementers. SDC in Bolivia was successful at identifying high-impact productive initiatives** during the 80's and 90's – such as CIFEMA, SEFO, PROINPA –, which have now a positive impact in the development of the sector.

**Lesson 10:** In order for cooperation to successfully impact on public policies, it must work closely with national partners over a sustained period of time, and it needs to find common places with the national agenda. An ex-post transfer of know-how and technical knowledge is ineffective.

**Cooperation can positively impact public policies** and advocate for other relevant topics even when they are not seen as priorities, which can be fruitful in the long term (here again, the case of the PNC and all the related experiences). On the contrary, when the **reflections and inputs that emerge from the projects to the public debate are not co-constructed with national partners, their impact is reduced.** This is exemplified in the case of INIAF, where the institution's limited and late involvement in the innovation programs hindered the transfer process, and therefore the institutionalization of new practices. An ex-post transfer of know-how and technical knowledge seems to have lower chances of success.

Hence, and in order to have a positive impact on the construction of public policies, it is important to have a sound understanding of the national agenda and the context, and **to find the gaps of opportunity in which the cooperation's agenda can fit into these spaces.** This positive incidence is therefore tightly

connected to the extent to which cooperation remains relevant in the country, as well as to the dialogue between the cooperation and the national institutions.

**Lesson 11:** Stakeholders involved in a project are heterogeneous, their roles can be complementary but they can also be in conflict. **Political dialogue at different levels has been one of the most challenging tasks for SDC, but also the one which has allowed the Swiss cooperation to preserve its open, positive relation with the government,** while at the same time working closely with the stakeholders from the local scene.

**Multi-level dialogue in its different dimensions has been fundamental throughout SDC's presence in Bolivia.** As for what the political side concerns, there is valuable work in terms of working in parallel with local and national governments. The first ones are closer to the population, have a deeper understanding of communitarian needs, and can support and place in practice the small-scale initiatives. **Paradoxically, these strong local governments have coexisted with a centralized state,** in which sectoral decisions rest with the correspondent ministry. Stablishing and maintaining an open dialogue within this context is not an easy task, as there is permanent institutional change and high personnel rotation.

Therefore, part of **SDC's successful interventions** can be explained through its disposition to **recognise local governments**, without **compromising its communication with the national ministries** and the central government. Building connections has often implied renouncing to limelight. Many beneficiaries are not familiarized with the Swiss cooperation office, but they know the team working on the field and the local experts involved in the project, which stands out **SDC's role as facilitator, as a platform for different stakeholders to meet.** This characteristic of Swiss cooperation has an important effect on the implementers - they feel supported and confident to take decisions, as well as on the national partners, who mentioned that: *"the reason we do the projects is the people, the beneficiaries, not the cooperation itself".*

**Lesson 12:** Advocating for open communication rather than getting involved in the internal political discussion was a success factor for SDC's work in the last 20 years. Having an open dialogue with the government gives room for action.

Bolivia's recent history has been marked by the political moment between 2006 and 2019, in the MAS government aimed to build stronger networks with the other Latin American countries, while taking critical distance with the US and (to a minor extent), the European Union.

**Under these circumstances, the activities carried out by international cooperation agencies and active NGO in the country experienced significant change.** SDC was not untouched by this reality, and new strategic decisions were taken in order to have room for cooperation's projects to continue. Hence, and continuing its tradition, Swiss cooperation stance was to remain open and to build bridges towards a common goal. By doing this, SDC maintained the core of its rural development agenda, yet from it open space for new approaches which were more in line with the socio-economic circumstances. **SDC managed to leave a door open for respectful dialogue, which in turn allowed a better understanding of the national priorities of the moment.**

**This, however, did not exempt SDC from (mostly internal) critics.** Several interviewees working closely with Swiss cooperation do not support this new approach, because, in their opinion, it has led to a lack of focus - projects' goals have become less concrete, and, in their view, the projects should have a more technically-oriented base.

**Lesson 13:** Local participation and local know-how - working closely with local experts and the beneficiaries allows the latter ones get actively involved in the project, and therefore strengthens the feeling of ownership.

**One characteristic of Swiss cooperation that is constantly highlighted is the close work they carry out with ultimate beneficiaries** –small farmers, rural communities–, and the strong presence of local experts. In the HIC's team opinion, this strong communication has also **allowed for the implementers**



and beneficiaries to *learn by doing*, as they are also part of the decision-making processes. Furthermore, it also requires for communities, universities and local institutions to be accountable for the project in which they participate, which contributes to sustainability and **to develop a feeling of ownership of the final results/products**.

**Lesson 14:** Placing flexibility in practice allows implementers to manage projects in a dynamic, response-oriented way without losing of sight the overarching goal of the projects.

One concrete action has been **flexibility on the budget**. Giving the implementers space has **not implied less transparency, but more room for change** when a situation demands so, as pointed out one of the implementers: *“If the attention goes only to budget execution, the team ends up responding to the budget and not the goal of the program”*. Big events such as the pandemic, but also ‘routine’ problems can require a reallocation of funds, and conceding the implementers the freedom to conduct these changes in unforeseen circumstances **has allowed them to react faster, better**. Furthermore, implementers need to have **space for failure**, knowing that some project components might not thrive and that this also contributes to the learning experience (of the sector, of the cooperation office, of the implementer itself).

**Lesson 15:** Flexibility requires to think ‘out of lines’, adapting the internal organization of a project without compromising its quality.

Flexibility has also implied **taking ‘one step back’ when required** – handing over ongoing projects to local partners in order for them to continue when the political environment required to do so; but also bringing new allies to iconic SDC’s projects in order to give better chances to its sustainability. It has also meant going out of lines in terms of the traditional role distribution. There is a clear delimitation between beneficiaries – implementers / backstoppers, yet it has been vital to recognize when local stakeholders are ready to conduct more tasks and the cooperation side is ready to *only* provide advice. **As pointed by one interviewee, there must be “flexibility on the way forward, but not on the goal.”** Flexibility requires a sound knowledge of the context, its limitations, particular areas of intervention, demographic dynamics.

**Lesson 16:** Projects in Bolivia could benefit from a stronger, clearer connection to other SDC’s networks and/or global programs. Integration could support projects in the future, but also increase their potential and scope.

The connection between SDC Projects in Bolivia are connected to the global programs or SDC’s thematic networks is not clear for the different stakeholders involved in ongoing projects. This is more evident in the current context of SDC’s phasing out, where **there is potential to bind national programs together with global ones, but the mechanisms and opportunities to do so are not so clear**. A similar situation is found with the thematic groups and networks within SDC: **the extent to which national programs are related to and can benefit from these networks is unclear** (for example, how could innovative projects such as Biocultura or Mercados Inclusivos contribute to the Agriculture and food thematic network and/or to other SDC projects outside of Bolivia).

**Lesson 17:** Local time frames must be compatible with those of the cooperation office.

Another point raised by numerous interviewees is that **cooperation offices tend to have long-term agendas, whereas local and national governments tend to search for quick results**. SDC has bet for long-term goals, which do not always deliver immediate, tangible results from the beginning of a project. Harmonizing these time frames requires open communication with the national partners and implementers, so that there is a realistic management of expectations for all the involved parts.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This deep-dive has summarized SDC's bilateral cooperation with Bolivia in the Rural Development sector 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 Bolivia and other LAC countries. Methodologically, the deep-dive made triangulated interviews and literature review, made use of an evaluation and capitalisation matrix categorized by the OECD DAC criteria plus lessons learned. It was not an evaluation, but a collection of lessons-learned and capitalization effort.

Based on the reflections presented in this report, it is possible to state that **Swiss cooperation in the sector has successfully responded to the development priorities** of the country. **SDC's traces in the sector are recognized** both inside and outside of Bolivia, which is in turn a reflection of the positive impact reached by the different projects. These achievements must be framed under **two central events**: on the one hand, **the long-term presence of SDC in Bolivia**. SDC's oldest bilateral cooperation program in Latin America has **invested valuable resources in building solid local networks**. **The degree to which these networks are constituted**, and the numerous NGO, joint ventures and institutions that are now active in the rural sector and work autonomously, but whose origin is to be found thirty or forty years ago in the previous programs of Swiss cooperation, is, in the HIC's team opinion, **something worth highlighting**. **It also stands out SDC's programmatic coherence throughout the almost half century of its presence in Bolivia**. The instruments and approaches implemented by SDC have changed in line with the new global and local paradigms and has not implied shifting the overarching goals of Swiss cooperation in the country, but rather to fine-tune them towards a more comprehensive understanding of the structural problems of the country.

Another central element that **has been decisive for the success of Swiss bilateral cooperation are the political framework conditions**. The relative politically stable scene (especially during the first decade of the 2000') and the economic growth of the last two decades had notorious implications for poverty reduction at the national level, and were fertile ground for strengthening the role of long-term plans. In the middle of the support and critic that it has received, the *Vivir Bien* concept opened the doors for repositioning the issue of climate change within and outside of the country.

Moreover, and even though there is no homogeneity between the MAS governments and other indigenous base organizations – some of them are very critical of and oppose to the MAS' government –, **having a political party of indigenous roots ruling the country changed the Bolivian political scene drastically**. Although with many nuances, and without neglecting a critical look, the experience of recent years was an important contribution to the empowerment of (at least a part of) the indigenous population, which assumed a leading role in the national political debate. **SDC was an attentive and respectful partner during this transition throughout the years**, and it adjusted its programs and goals accordingly, leaving iconic projects such as *Mercados Inclusivos* or *Biocultura* as a result. Drawing from these findings, the HIC Team recommends the following with view to potential next steps of SDC's learning exercise:

### Recommendation for SDC's legacy in Bolivia

- SDC's exit leaves a big gap in Bolivia, so **every effort to strengthen hand-over mechanisms should be continued and intensified** (e.g. possibilities of expanding joint work with other donors and/or NGOs, connecting bilateral programs with existing global programmes, etc.).
- A lot of knowledge has been generated throughout SDC's projects. And while each of them has its own knowledge management system, **local actors could benefit from a centralized database**, through which they could access to all the relevant information produced by the projects.
- Close collaboration with local experts has been highlighted as one of the greatest strengths of Swiss cooperation in the country. **Local experts are more likely to remain in the country and continue utilizing and transferring SDC's know-how**. Opening networking spaces in the context of the phasing out (in the form of, for instance, events, focus groups) that bring together former SDC collaborators and experts could further strengthen this local network.

- While recognizing SDC's efforts regarding a **gender agenda**, rural women still face difficulties that could be addressed in more depth within the projects, addressing, for example, the temporalities of urban-rural migration and its impact on women, and linking **other stakeholders that could also contribute to these efforts after SDC's phasing out** (see the case of the joint work between the UMSA and SDC in *Mercados Inclusivos*).

### Recommendations for SDC's future work in the Rural Development sector elsewhere

- SDC's long-term commitment in Bolivia proves that rural development is much more than improving agricultural production. **Agroecology is a valuable approach** for understanding the links between agricultural production, the impact of CC on it and the social and cultural dynamics underlying it, but **there is still a way forward for delivering more concrete, tangible measures** derived from this approach.
- Through its different projects, SDC has worked hard to preserve agricultural and food diversity. In Bolivia, this has meant working for the **preservation of traditional seeds and the farming of local products**, but also in promoting a sustainable and healthy food within the local population. This comprehensive approach stands out as one of SDC's features in the sector, and could be replicated in other countries.
- Climate change poses a significant threat to the agricultural sector globally. **Climate-related data** (e.g. Temperature Data, Precipitation Data, among others) **plays a crucial role to develop effective adaptation and mitigation measures**. The concept of *digital agriculture* explores innovative ways to offer accessible weather and climate services and information to agricultural stakeholders. By providing more accurate climate data at a relatively low cost, it enables informed decision-making. A critical review of this approach, along with other potential strategies, is essential for guiding future projects in this domain.
- Rapid urbanization trends – which are not exclusive from Bolivia – present considerable challenges for projects within the rural sector. **Any future engagements in this sector must consider the wide-ranging social, economic, and demographic variables impacted by rural-urban migration**, including aging of the rural population. In light of this, forthcoming SDC projects in the rural sector should incorporate tailored measures to support the youth. For instance, they can actively contribute to the creation of alternative job opportunities, making rural economic activities more appealing.
- Keep fostering innovation in research and novel approaches to enhance food security**. For instance, advocate for the promotion of traditional dishes and the use of local ingredients, embracing diversity in food production; integrate local cultural knowledge with emerging trends to create a harmonious blend. Innovation and technical assistance are of particular relevance for boosting productivity and resilience in small-scale and family agriculture.
- The rural sector is often fragmented, and is heterogeneous, geographically dispersed and culturally diverse. **Up-scaling successful initiatives is a challenging task that requires critical thinking**. What works well within one project might not work in another one, **but positive outcomes certainly play a role as best practices or good references for other large-scale initiatives**, even if they cannot be replicated in the same way.
- Up-scaling also requires engaging other key stakeholders** – the national and local governments, the donors and organizations active in the sector –, **so that the outreach of the cooperation can be extended and consolidated**. The experience of the joint work of SDC and SIDA in *Mercados Inclusivos* serves as a good example of how collaboration can amplify the project's effects. Furthermore, SDC's collaboration with public Bolivian universities (UMSA, UMSS) has demonstrated that building networks with local actors is vital for ensuring the project's sustainability.

Overall, SDC's systemic approach to rural development in Bolivia has had a positive impact on the country's rural areas, where poverty and inequality are often more prevalent. While challenges remain, particularly in the areas of sustainability and long-term impact, SDC's engagement in Bolivia and in the sector leaves a number of mostly positive lessons learned, and is without doubts a valuable case study for SDC's future engagements in other countries.



## ANNEX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The following persons were consulted by the HIC team as part of the Deep Dive in Bolivia:

NAME	(FORMER) ROLE OR INSTITUTION
José Luis Pereira	Program Officer SDC Bolivia
José Luis España	Team Leader DAC – SOLIDAR SUIZA
Sandra Nisttahusz	Team Leader Mercados Inclusivos - Swisscontact
Lillian Painter Francisco Molina Kantuta Lara Cecilia Miranda	<b>WCS</b> Director WCS Bolivia Backstopper – PIACC Social Affairs Coordinator Gender and interculturality coordinator
Paola Padilla	Ministry of Environment and Water
Deddy Gonzáles	Ministry of Rural Development and Land
Guido Meruvia	Program Officer SIDA – Swedish Cooperation
Javier Linares	Team Leader Biocultura - ProRural
María Eugenia García PhD. Mauro Constantino Ivy Beltran	<b>Universidad Mayor de San Andrés</b> Vice Chancellor Head of the Postgraduate Research and Social Interaction Department. Coordinator of PIAACC Project for the University
Ing. M.Sc. Ivy Beltrán PhD. Carla Crespo. PhD. Isabel Morales. Ing. M.Sc. René Terán.	Researchers of the PIAACC Project for the University
Javier Zubieta	Former Team Leader GIA – Helvetas
Leslie Salazar	MIGA
Adriana Pinto	EcoFuturo Bank (implementing institution of ProntoPago)
Trigidia Jiménez Franco	Granja Samiri, beneficiary from ProntoPago
Iván Fuentes Elmer Aguilar	<b>Universidad Mayor de San Simón</b> Head of the Science and Technology Research Department Coordinator of PIAACC Project for the University
Raúl Delgado Luis Aguirre Leonardo Zambrana Alberto Centellas Jhonny Ledezma Eduardo Mendoza	Researchers of the PIAACC Project for the University
Diego Pacheco	Vice presidency
Roberto Arteaga	Former Team Leader PIC – Productive Development Bank of Bolivia
María Eugenia Choque	Former Ministry of Environment and Water
Carlos Ortuño	Independent consultant, former Vice Minister (2009-2017) of Water Resources and Irrigation
Germán Quispe	Official of the Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth
Rolando Oros	PROINPA

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- 2) PNUD - "Evaluación Independiente del Programa para el País", Oficina independiente de Evaluación (OIE), Julio 2022
- ¿Cómo reimpulsar la reducción de la pobreza y la desigualdad en Bolivia? World Bank (2020)
- Contribución de la Agricultura Familiar Campesina Indígena a la producción y consumo de alimentos en Bolivia. Carola Tito Velarde y Fernanda Wanderley, Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado, IPCA (2021)
- The Potential of Agroecology to build Climate-Resilient Livelihoods and Food Systems. FAO (2020)
- Concentración y extranjerización de la tierra en Bolivia. Miguel Urioste, Fundación Tierra (2011)
- Law 300 - Ley Marco de la Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien (2012)

## ANNEX 3: EVALUATION & CAPITALIZATION MATRIX

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
<b>1) RELEVANCE</b>		
1.1 How and to what extent did SDC's aid through the project X <b>respond</b> to pressing <b>multidimensional development needs</b> ? Were the investments done <b>coherently</b> and <b>proportionate</b> in relation to the <b>development priorities in the countries</b> 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"> <li>The overall interventions of the bilateral cooperation programs <b>were relevant and according to the development needs of the last two decades</b>, as confirmed by several sources.</li> <li>Since 2006 a new economic model emerged, which in turn reflected on new governmental priorities and actions. SDC has been well aware of this change of paradigm, and <b>has made a significant effort to adapt its action accordingly</b>. Hence, it has designed <b>holistic approach and methods</b>, which was strongly related to the paradigms that were emerging in the country. The topics and the approach of <b>the projects under revision was desired by and planned next to the responsible authorities</b> (e.g. the MMAyA, the Rural Development Ministry), by the public sphere. (INT 10)</li> <li>SDC has effectively <b>identified the multidimensional needs at different government levels</b> (national and local), at the different pieces of the agricultural productive chain, and in different fields (public policy, research and innovation, etc.).</li> <li>One example of this is the PIACC project, which articulates numerous stakeholders and delivers different alternatives according to their identified needs: the project arose from a demand for greater research capacity from universities, and it was linked the sovereignty of knowledge and innovation (which was a key principle of within the public policy sphere). Accordingly, the response of the Swiss cooperation was towards the articulation of scales – universities, local governments and research and innovation secretaries. (INT 4)</li> <li>Another key element in <b>the response towards development needs was reading these from a systemic perspective</b>. When working with this approach, looking at the chains and combined with a multidimensional poverty analysis, the target of the projects changed. This new answer towards the 'usual' problems -which gain relevance in the last two decades- is perceived as positive in most of the cases, yet it creates some resistance in others as it is seen a thematic dispersion, less effective type of intervention (INT 3, INT 6, INT 7).</li> </ul>
1.2 In how far was SDC's engagement in LAC <b>in line with overall Swiss development cooperation priorities</b> ?	<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"> <li><b>The orientation of this cooperation strategy is also oriented to the priorities described in the 2007 Foreign Policy Report</b>, as well as foreign policy objectives contained in the Policy Report Exterior of 2000. (National Strategy 2008-2012).</li> <li><b>Switzerland's commitment to Bolivia allows to ground important values of the Swiss foreign policy</b> such as poverty relief, respect for human rights, promotion of democracy and a rule of law, a peaceful coexistence and the preservation of the environment (National Strategy 2013-2016).</li> <li><b>Switzerland's commitment makes it possible to place in practice important values of Swiss foreign policy</b>, such as reducing poverty, respecting human rights, promoting democracy and the rule of law, striving for peaceful coexistence and conserving natural vital foundations (National Strategy 2018-2021).</li> <li><b>The Bilateral Cooperation Exit Program for Bolivia 2022-2024 is part of the Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024</b> and the Regional Guidelines for Latin America and the Caribbean 2021-2024. (National Strategy 2022-2024)</li> </ul>
<b>2) COHERENCE</b>		
2.1 Was the development cooperation in the specific country/sector <b>coherent</b> and <b>complementary</b> to other <b>SDC activities</b> (humanitarian aid, engagement in the	<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"> <li>As for the <b>coherence with global programs</b>, so far there are <b>no consolidated mechanisms or strategies to link bilateral programs with global programs</b>. At the moment, there are more "personal" efforts to connect bilateral programs with the local ones, efforts that are based on the well-established network of the Swiss cooperation within the country. In several cases, the themes and approaches are similar, but the structures are different. For example, in the case of the 'Andes Resilientes' program: there are no bilateral programs in Peru and Ecuador, but there are in Bolivia. Here, there is potential for strengthening the Lima Hub, in which it can operate at a regional level and multiply its effects (INT 1).</li> </ul>

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
field of peace and security, global programmes) as well as with the engagement of <b>other Swiss development actors</b> (e.g. SECO)?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is <b>internal, sectoral coherence within the different revised projects</b>. A good example is the synergies between the PIACC and Biocultura projects. They <b>operate at different levels and work with different actors, but the logic of work and the overall objectives remains the same</b>. The SDC's approach and vision is visible on different scales, and this reflects on the projects. Furthermore, there are valuable spaces for coordination between SDC projects, which are generated and coordinated by SDC. (INT 4)</li> <li>Coordinated and <b>coherent actions with Swiss implementing organizations and/or NGO are also remarkable</b>. The GIA Project has become a clear reference of this level of articulation: the joint work of SDC and Helvetas allowed to navigate the (politically) changing circumstances around the sectoral round tables, and therefore to support the goals of the project in the policy-making field. (INT 10, 17, 18)</li> <li>In spite of the fact that SDC's phasing out of Bolivia has strong implications for the whole Swiss cooperation ecosystem, the positive outcomes that come from the relations between SDC and the other cooperation actors is expected to remain. Moreover, these organisations carry on with SDC know-how, which has been highly relevant for the rural sector. (INT 10)</li> <li>The reviewed sources -both interview and literature- <b>do not mention any engagement of SECO in SDC's projects in the rural sector</b>.</li> </ul>
2.2 Was the development cooperation <b>coherent and complementary</b> to the engagement of <b>other international development actors</b> ?	<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"> <li>Coherence and coordinated <b>work with other bilateral cooperation offices has also shown to be very productive</b>. A relevant case is the last phase of the <i>Mercados Inclusivos</i> project, which is financed by two donors (SIDA and SDC). There has been a high level of coordination among them, which is a remarkable element in the current Bolivian scene - considering that most of the bilateral cooperation offices are on their way out, and that there is generally a weak synergy between donors. (INT 3). Moreover, <b>the project has leveraged other international cooperation resources</b>, in addition to those provided by SIDA and COSUDE, for an amount of around USD 1 million (non-financial issues): EUROCLIMA+ Fund and NESTA Foundation among the main ones (ProDoc Mercados Inclusivos Fase III).</li> <li>SDC has maintained good relations with different donors (GIZ, KfW, EU, JICA and KOICA, IDB, CAF, WB). There is a <b>higher level of cooperation with ASDI, not only in Mercados Inclusivos, but also in permanent discussions around the</b> methodologies, approaches and joint conceptual visions, and they have also worked together in more transversal topics (gender, market agriculture, among others). (INT 1)</li> <li>Some key elements for this fruitful joint work have been: (I) Been able to place the visibility of the cooperation in the second place, (II) having a transparent, open agenda; (III) having a clear information management as well as clear governance mechanisms. Moreover, <b>these success factors also have an impact on the scale and range of the projects' benefits</b>: by working together, the cooperation offices can have stronger communication line with other relevant stakeholders (also with the different government levels) and therefore have more capacity for advocacy.</li> <li><b>Lastly, beneficiaries and other stakeholders mentioned that working with SDC has opened up new possibilities for them</b> -especially relevant in the phasing out context- to work with other cooperation offices (for example, SIDA) or organisations (such as Helvetas, or Swisscontact). "One partner leads us to the other." (INT 11)</li> </ul>
<b>3) EFFECTIVENESS</b>		
3.1 What concrete development <b>results in different sectors</b> were achieved?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results and effectiveness can be classified in different categories. SDC has contributed by supporting the conceptual development of the new paradigms and economic models that have emerged in the country in the last two decades, which is highly relevant for the Bolivian context, particularly in the area of climate change and agroecology. Networks and cooperation platforms have been also created, allowing new thematic ecosystems to emerge. (INT1)</li> <li><b>MERCADOS INCLUSIVOS (results achieved in the previous phases)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the training received on the use of good quality seed and financial training (provided by the PROFIN Foundation), various members of the association have access to ""individual productive credit"" for the purchase of certified seed and implementation of productive plots.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The UPF consider that the economic income generated from the production of quality seed potatoes was up to 100% higher compared to the income of the UPF that did not participate in the project. In the case of potato production affected by frost, the economic income achieved by the UPF was up to 30% higher than that of the UPF that did not participate.</li> <li>○ The UPF emphasize that the training has allowed them to recognize ""how pests live"" that affect the potato crop (its biological cycle), identify and correctly apply chemical products, learn how traps based on pheromone baits are used, distinguish the classes and qualities of certified seed.</li> <li>○ 100% of the UPF mention having accessed some insurance against personal accidents; 60% of these insurances were purchased by women and the remaining 40% by men; all anticipate renewing the policies. Women stress the importance of accident insurance. (Mercados Inclusivos Evaluation. Beneficiary Assessment, 2021)</li> <li>○ 13,265 UPF have increased their net income, more than 25 thousand men and women have improved their self-employment, 9,420 UPF improved their climate change adaptation strategies (measures), 7,810 women have developed capacities and improved conditions that allow their empowerment in prioritized territories and 1,194 women in other territories.</li> <li>○ In the impact evaluation carried out in 2021 by an independent company, it has been verified that the target population that has accessed the goods and services provided by the project has a higher performance (more than 200% higher) than the population that did not have access.</li> <li>○ On the other hand, support for the design of national programs, particularly the ""Frutales"" program of the MDRyT, has made possible to leverage more than USD 20 million for 5 years, of which at the moment it is estimated that at least USD 2 million have been executed (non-financial).</li> <li>○ Participation in fairs and virtual business spaces: participation of companies in the Organic Fair e-BIOFACH 2021 (8 companies and 78 meetings). Participation in the Free From - European Organic Program (3 companies exporting food for retail and 81 meetings with potential clients). (ProDoc Phase III, 2022)</li> <li>○ Exponential Growth for the enterprises that are part of the program. Before they belonged to the informal market/fairs, but they had no cash flow. The ""subsidy"" (governmental program) is a good market, but they take time to pay (30-40 days). So ProntoPago has been able to increase production. They have started 2018 with 1 product and currently have 14. Otherwise they could not access credit, and all their efforts were linked to seeking financing. (INT 13)"</li> </ul> <p><b>PIC (Programa de Innovación Continua)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On average, the PIC has generated changes in the income level of producing families of 1,344 Bs/ha/year, equivalent to a 59% increase in average income (different results in the different areas of intervention).</li> <li>▪ Expressed as a general average, the innovations introduced by the PIC in the 7 study platforms have not yet caused a significant effect on employment levels, with an average change of 6 percentage points.</li> <li>▪ The average income of rural families that are part of the project turned out to be 54% higher than the farms ""without the project"" (annualized private NPV), according to the private financial evaluation of the impact study. (INFORME FINAL EFECTOS PIC-COSUDE, 2013)"</li> </ul> <p><b>PIAACC (phase I)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The following indicators were achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67 research projects executed, 9 projects with additional funds (advocacy), in</li> <li>• 5 thematic axes addressed as follows:</li> <li>• 13 projects in integrated water management.</li> <li>• 21 projects in Territorial Management and Biocultural Diversity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 projects in Food Security and Sovereignty.</li> <li>• 8 projects in Disaster Risk Reduction and Intercultural Climate Modelling Methodologies.</li> <li>• 4 Social Management projects for climate change.</li> <li>• 320 researchers from 14 universities with strengthened research capacities.</li> <li>• 25 participating external research units.</li> <li>• 111 Organizations Associated with Research Projects (OAPIs) participated in the execution of research projects in ACC. Knowledge Management:</li> <li>• More than 100 institutions: educational units, social organizations, non-profit institutions, government, departmental and municipal entities making a total of 2816 actors involved in 112 spaces that addressed processes of planning, management, implementation and application of ACC investigations.</li> <li>• More than 80 publications (books, magazines, booklets, manuals, policy brief, etc.)</li> <li>• 5 scientific writing courses and 3 policy brief courses. Dissemination of knowledge:</li> <li>• 2 conferences on climate change and dialogue of knowledge: with the participation of researchers and local actors. Institutionalization perspectives.</li> <li>• 1er national meeting of researchers. Scientific communication.</li> <li>• 2 regional meetings - methodological discussion and linking of researchers.</li> <li>▪ Regulatory mechanism of sustainability: Approval of the National Science, Technology and Innovation Plan of the Bolivian University System (PNCTI) at the XVI National Meeting of Science and Technology (RENACyT), in March 2017. (ProDoc Phase II, 2019)"</li> </ul> <p><b>GIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 303 families –including families with a woman as the head of the household- have improved their income by at least 15% in a real way thanks to improvements in agricultural production linked to access to a more efficient and sustainable use of water.</li> <li>▪ 2,902 -including families headed by a woman- have improved their income by at least 15% in a real way thanks to improvements in agricultural production linked to access to a more efficient and sustainable use of water. (ProDoc GIA)</li> <li>▪ To demonstrate that it is not only the scientific part what matters in the sector, but to view it as a whole and aim for sustainability. And the only way to achieve that is to work with the population. Because a lot can be done, but if the population does not understand the importance of watershed management, it won't be sustainable.</li> <li>▪ The idea of watershed planning is to think about the water resource, contemplating all the needs. And that is one of the pillars of the plans. Combining economic development and environmental protection, understanding the basins and their productive vocation, because there are no driving recipes. (INT 5)"</li> </ul> <p><b>BIOCULTURA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At the National level, the Project has contributed to the development of the regulatory framework and public policies, particularly in relation to Law 300 (Ley Marco de la Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien, 2012) y la Ley 777 (Ley del Sistema de Planificación Integral del Estado – SPIE, 2016). Progress has also been made in the implementation of the FPMT (reglamentación y adscripción de Proyectos), and in the Comprehensive Information and Monitoring System of Mother Earth and Climate Change (SMTCC) regarding its design and implementation.</li> <li>▪ One of the indicators continues to be the increase in income – but that is only one part. And on the institutional issue, above all. ""Now the communities are more resilient because they have managed to develop activities that improve their income, but also allow them to preserve their environment."" The</li> </ul>



GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
3.2 By means of which development <b>approaches and instruments</b> did SDC and its partners across the decades successfully contribute to improvements in the priority themes/sectors in LAC - and which did not achieve their intended outcomes?		best example is Colomi, irrigation mechanisms that are families that have greater access, and that produce more and better – including the issue of biodiversity. Think in systems. And this is reflected in what the municipality there has incorporated, and biocultural managers have emerged. (INT 4)"
	3.1.1 Intended project outputs and outcomes were (not) achieved by means of selected approaches and methodologies.	<p>There are different instruments deployed across the projects. The most relevant for the sector and the revised projects are listed below.</p> <p><b>Technical Assistance</b></p> <p>An outstanding element of SDC's approach was that <b>technicians and advisors were local</b> in most of the cases, which allowed them to have a closer understanding of the local context and its limitations. The experts providing TA in the mentioned projects had a sound experience in the field and have often previous experience working with local authorities, which made interaction with local beneficiaries and counterparts much more fluent. (INT 18). Furthermore, TA allows to access different <b>set of skills that would not be achievable otherwise considering the financial limitations</b> of several national counterparts, something that was more tangible in the last part of the 90' and beginning of 2000' (INT 6).</p> <p>TA is also highly relevant as it determines -at least to a certain extent- other decisions, for example, which other instruments (such as technology/equipment transfer, financing, etc.) can be used to achieve the established goal (INT 1).</p> <p>Finally, <b>TA allows learning by doing</b>, a very relevant element when discussing sustainability (INT 4). This point will be further developed in the corresponding chapter.</p> <p><b>Multi-stakeholder platforms</b></p> <p>Multi-stakeholder platforms and networks have been recognized as successful by different actors, especially considering the holistic and bottle-neck approach of the projects in the rural development sector. These <b>networks allow actors to meet and recognize their potential synergies</b> -as in the case of Biocultura or PIACC I and II-, but it can also be <b>up-scaled to political instances</b> in which dialogue is hard to reach, as in the case of GIA. (INT 1, 4, 18)</p> <p><b>Basket fund / financing</b></p> <p>The basket fund mechanism contributed to the promotion, accompaniment and technical and financial support of the PNC (Plan nacional de cuencas) as a whole (ProDoc GIA). It provides a certain degree of flexibility for the objective of the project, and it demands some level of compromise both from the donors and the beneficiaries. <b>The experience during the GIA Project was very positive</b>, although the institutional challenges remain and can hinder its effectivity. (INT 5, 18)</p> <p>For the case of PIACC, financing of applied investigation has been key for encouraging an innovation within the universities, while at the same time addressing the research towards the local needs and relevant topics -climate change, food security.</p> <p><b>Micro-finance (credits and subsidies)</b></p> <p>Microfinances have a long history within SDC work and in the sector. The interviewees and the literature recognize it as a successful tool. In the ongoing project, it stands out the ProntoPago, a mechanism to provide liquidity to small enterprises that cannot access the regular financial system. Although <b>limited in its scope (it has only 6/7 beneficiaries)</b>, it was <b>highly successful in its objective</b> of providing resources to actors that are normally excluded by the formal financial sector (INT 12, 13).</p> <p>Adding to this, the flexibility in terms of the roles within a project has also been acknowledged as a distinctive mark of SDC. In the case of PIACC II, the universities are both the beneficiaries and implementing organizations, and SDC's support comes from the backstopping support. This approach was decided in order to strengthen the sustainability of the project -again, learning by doing-, but also taking into account the different capacities of the involved stakeholders.</p>

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
3.3 Which <b>stakeholders</b> were reached and how - and which were excluded and why? Which <b>capacities</b> were changed and how?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDC has made significant efforts to work with <b>systemic approaches</b> (e.g. focusing on the sector, a whole productive chain) <b>rather than direct interventions</b>. The objective behind is to <i>open the doors</i> for everyone, and to encourage to use and access the resources available for the different projects. Leaving someone behind is nevertheless inevitable, but attention has been placed to have open, participative project systems, rather than on the specific targeted stakeholders (INT1)</li> <li><b>Close work with the ultimate beneficiaries of the projects</b> -rural communities and small farmers- remains as a distinctive characteristic of SDC. This is not only highly appreciated due to the trust relations that develop from this work, but is also linked with another key principle of SDC's activities, empowerment of marginalized indigenous groups. (INT 6)</li> <li><b>The before mentioned multilevel dialogue also reflects the variety of reached stakeholders.</b> SDC works in parallel with public and private institutions, both from national and international origins (as in the case of the NGO).</li> <li>The long-term approach of the different projects shows that <b>changing capacities is a long-term challenge</b>, and that the project objectives must be consequent and related one to another. <b>Some key stakeholders of today's projects were also supported and or initiated by SDC in the 80' and 90'</b>, as the case of ProRural -the implementing NGO of Biocultura- or Prolnpa, which is currently a private company but was originally a research institution. (INT 1, 8, INT Proinpa).</li> <li>On the other side, high personal rotation within the local institutions and the permanent change of the political scenario are considerable limitations to develop long-term institutional changes.</li> </ul>
<b>4) IMPACT</b>		
4.1 How, and to what extent, did SDC's bilateral cooperation <b>contribute to poverty reduction</b> and/or the <b>reduction of inequalities</b> in its priority countries and regions in LAC?	<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>	<p>SDC acknowledged the lack of rigorous evaluations to measure poverty reduction throughout the time. While some of the revised projects are still in implementation phase, final evaluations from their previous phases are available and show the (selected) following results:</p> <p><b>Mercados Inclusivos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to financing resources: the anchor actors (within MI Project) do not have access to other types of credit, so ProntoPago has a great impact on their business. The EcoFuturo Bank has some financial conditions than are not to be found in other institutions, which is what has sustained the small enterprises as Granja Samiri (INT 12)</li> <li>In the evaluation of effects carried out in 2021 by an independent company, it has been verified that the target population that has accessed the goods and services provided by the project has a higher performance (more than 200% higher) than the population that did not have access. (ProDoc Mercados Inclusivos, 2022)</li> </ul> <p><b>PIC (Programa de Innovación Continua)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The total production costs for annual crops are lower for the participating families compared to the group of non-participating families. This result shows that those families that adopt the innovations introduced by the PIC generally lower their production costs. In terms of gross income and profits, higher estimates are observed for PIC participating families, with a difference of 1,344 Bs / ha / year, equivalent to a 59% increase in average income</li> <li>PIC's actions have been concentrated on the first links in the chain (improved seed, new varieties, pest and disease control) but changes on the income level of the participant families are already detected. (Informe Final PIC COSUDE, 2013)</li> <li>The external evaluation of effects and impacts of the PIC2, demonstrated positive changes in the indicators of <i>increase in income</i> of peasant families and <i>productive investments on the farm</i> in 67 items in which they have been evaluated. (PIC ProDoc, 2013)</li> </ul> <p><b>GIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities are actively involved in the water management plans and actions - there is recognition of the water problem in the area and they mention the urgent need to take concrete actions against the contamination of the river by mining activity. At the level of water service providers, the project has</li> </ul>



GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
<p>4.2 What <b>other longer-term key changes</b> has SDC's bi-lateral cooperation in LAC contributed to from 1961 until today (<i>intended or un-intended</i>)? How and to what extent did the interventions in LAC cause <b>higher-level effects</b> (such as changes in norms or systems)? How will the interventions contribute to <b>changing societies in LAC</b> 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>	<p>contributed to technical knowledge (quantity and quality) about water sources, to plan and make decisions in the short and long term. (Evaluación Final GIA, 2022)</p> <p><b>Biocultura</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The intercultural approach has also implications in terms of poverty: in the Amazonian indigenous populations, 40% of their income are gifts from the land to the family economy (their subsistence). Monetizing what they receive from the territory is 40% of their income. If you remove that, the percentage of the population in poverty is significant. Hence, it is important to understand their relation with the territory from this perspective as well. (INT 4)</li> </ul> <p>Making efforts to <b>improve the bottlenecks within the sector</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The multidimensional poverty approach made it possible to face the problems beyond the productive issue, arriving at solutions and ways of approaching also in the social sphere for the target population, <b>encouraging the actors of the systems to act in a more comprehensive manner</b> in the set of interventions. (ProDoc Mercados Inclusivos, 2022)</li> <li>▪ Important results have been achieved related to: (i) a <b>comprehensive reading of the territory</b>, from planning and management, building resilient CC agendas that include the demands of local actors; (ii) articulation, facilitating connectivity between different actors, local governance and the channeling of co-financing for public and cooperation programs, resources from the General Treasury of the Nation.</li> <li>▪ <b>Biocultura made significant contributions in the field of regulations and national public policies</b>, reflected for example in the Ley 300 and the creation of AMPT. (ProDoc Biocultura, 2019, INT 8).</li> <li>▪ Creating an <b>innovation and research environment</b> that can be self-supported in the long-term:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The project contributed to generate <b>knowledge applicable to the development of an interscientific and holistic research agenda</b> including topics such as <b>land management and biocultural diversity, food security and sovereignty</b>, risk reduction and disasters and <b>social management of climate change</b>. The results and knowledge generated by the investigations were relevant and pertinent to the contexts, in some cases with wide recognition and institutional support from the municipalities, in others, with perspectives of financing and continuity as local enterprises. Government instances such as INIAF recognized and awarded research for its contributions to technological innovation, which shows the strategic value of applied research for ACC.</li> <li>○ On the other hand, the <b>research funds made it possible to strengthen the research culture in new generations of researchers</b>. Thus, close to 500 researchers in the condition of undergraduate and postgraduate thesis students from different disciplines were part of the research teams. (ProDoc PIACCII, 2019).</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The <b>PIAACC Project has been one of the pillars of the UMSS in its different faculties</b>. Internally, research has been positioned as one of the axes. A new statute has been approved in 2022, where the central axis of the university is research.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The acquired experience will be transferred to other Bolivian universities. This is already reflected in the statutes, and the UMSS is going to take charge of a fund that the government is going to dispose for research</li> <li>○ What makes the PIACC different? Interdisciplinarity, applicability, dialogue of knowledge (diálogo de saberes) –recovering ancestral/traditional visions–, comprehensiveness to address issues from different perspectives (social, cultural, etc.). Creation of work networks in the university. (INT 14).</li> <li>○ Recognising <b>the value of interculturality</b>: there is another knowledge and it is equally valuable. <b>Acknowledging the relevance of the indigenous vision and paradigms, which historically has been</b> a pending commitment. (INT 4)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

GUIDING QUESTIONS	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA / INDICATORS	RESULTS / COMMENTS ON THE ASSESSMENT
<b>5) SUSTAINABILITY</b>		
<p>5.1 To what extent are the benefits of the programmes, including closed ones, <b>likely to continue</b> after SDC funding ceases (<i>for closed programmes: did the benefits actually continue?</i>)? What were/are the <b>successes and hindering factors</b>?</p>	<p>5.1.1 Exit strategies were defined and implemented (e.g. discontinuation or reduction of measures when targets were reached or transfer of responsibility to national structures).</p> <p>5.1.2 Projects concepts generally consider national capacities necessary in order to build on project achievements.</p> <p>5.1.3 National (governmental and non-governmental actors) were closely involved in project implementation as partners/beneficiaries with a high level of ownership.</p>	<p>The analysis in terms of sustainability must be done taken certain considerations, one of them that several projects are still active. Nevertheless, the interviewees and previous phases documents already give some hints of the future of some achievements from the last 20 years of cooperation.</p> <p><b>Thinking in the sustainability of the benefits from day one:</b></p> <p>The future of the project has an exit strategy thought from the beginning. The objective is always to transmit a way of working. In the cases in which there are solid institutions as counterparts or beneficiaries, there is coordinated work from the beginning. There are many success stories, NGOs or foundations that have been assuming the functions for which they were created (PROFIN case). Working with SDC has also been a gateway to other donors. The exit work also goes through governance and governability (how to operate internally). (INT 1)</p> <p><b>Continuity to ensure -as far as possible- that once concluded, the project's benefits can be sustained without SDC:</b></p> <p>From PIACC I Final Evaluation: The sustainability of the project in its first Phase is not yet fully on track, the process initiated with this Phase-I has been very important, but it still requires support for the institutionalization of ANCTI's research and implementation. The Universities have not yet accentuated this process, neither technically, nor administratively, nor institutionally, if this process is not supported, and despite the predisposition of the linked institutions, there is a risk of going back and dissolving what has been advanced to date. This challenge was substantially solved in PIACC II, where both universities felt more confident of the future of their research after SDC's departure. (INT 9, 14)</p> <p><b>Compromises and capacities from the local counterparts/beneficiaries in order to continue:</b></p> <p>Sustainability demands a minimum of agreements and capacities from the counterparts, and the absence of it can hinder the continuation of the achieved results. There are other experiences where there is a generalized feeling of a rough phasing out, where some initiatives/institutions (such as the INIAF) were left "adrift". (INT 6)</p> <p>Hence, institutional sustainability is key: in this particular case, the INIAF does not counts with political and technical support. Hence, they have had difficulties to appropriate the management of the institution and to fulfil the objective of its creation. The political part does not know the research processes and their cycle. (INT 16)</p> <p><b>Positioning non-priority topics on the agenda:</b></p> <p>Environmental issues were not a priority, but it throughout SDC's sustained efforts it started becoming a priority. Climate change is now tangible, but GIA and older projects were already talking about water management and its relevance before, showing the importance of dealing with issues even when they are not seen as proprietary. Placing this topic on the agenda contributed to develop local capacities, and even though 'the foundations' are still fragile, certain concepts and practices remain. The once project-specific goals have been linked to the national agenda, it has acquired a certain level of relevance (INT 10)</p> <p>SDC made efforts along the line of the government to create coordination mechanisms. When Morales entered in 2006 there was some level of mistrust due to previous experience with bilateral donors, but given the relevance of water management, there was room for discussion. (INT 18)"</p>
<p>5.2 Did SDC's bilateral cooperation interventions lead to <b>scalable</b> or <b>replicable</b> re-</p>	<p>5.2.1 Project approaches were scaled-up in the priority regions.</p> <p>5.2.2 Project approaches were replicated outside the priority regions.</p>	<p><b>Replicability is highly attached to the availability of resources, but some capacities/instruments remain:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The configuration of SDC's teams (especially in more technical areas such as water management) is hard to maintain over the time, as there are limited resources within the ministries. Nevertheless, when announcing its phasing out, SDC rang some 'alarms' in the counterparts, showing the importance of this multidisciplinary approach and the acquired learning during the project, but also in how this can be sustained over time. (INT 5).</li> </ul>

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sults (for closed interventions: Were those actually up-scaled or replicated?)?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In other cases such as with the basket fund initiative, the replication potential is smaller as it is highly dependent on external resources, especially now that bilateral cooperation is slowly leaving the country. Nevertheless, while it was in force, it was highly effective. (INT 5).</li> </ul> <p><b>Scalability and replication require joint work with multiple stakeholders:</b> In the still ongoing projects, there are several organizations that are being identified so that they can lead the processes in the future. In numerous cases the generated capacities were expected to be assumed by the public sector, but personal rotation is a significant challenge in this regard. Hence, it is the communities who have to take over of the biocultural model, so that then they can continue to promote the approach and take the leading role in demanding that the authorities continue. (INT 8)</p> <p><b>Replicability can be found in different stances:</b> The PIC Project was successful in bringing together a number of stakeholders after the project's end. Currently, the Banco de Desarrollo Productivo is 80% state, 20% CAF. The bank is a strategic partner of COSUDE; because they work with Swisscontact, with Helvetas, now they are an actor in the ecosystem. The former PIA experts are now part of the BDP, which at the same time works with Mercados Inclusivos (through ProInpa), and they can use their experience on the same sector but from a different role. (INT 16)"</p>
<b>6) LESSONS LEARNED</b>		
6.1 What did <b>work well</b> and what are considered the <b>greatest failures</b> of SDC's bilateral cooperation in LAC?	<i>descriptive/illustrative</i>	<p><b>Development of social and human capital:</b> the wide network of public, private and academic organizations with which the project works and the trust-building of the project with different organizations, companies and universities, but fundamentally between them, is a social capital very important given the institutional weakness that characterizes the country; this capital is considered an unforeseen positive effect. (ProDoc Mercados Inclusivos III, 2022)</p> <p><b>Low profile interventions:</b> It was not widely known that HELVETAS implemented the GIA Project in coordination with their municipality; but the beneficiaries do identify and recognize the activities carried out through the municipality or strategic partners. (Evaluación Final GIA, 2022)</p> <p><b>Multilevel coordination:</b> this stances enables the implementation of national policies on water/watersheds/climate change (Evaluación Final GIA, 2022). Although the achievements of each phase by level were differentiated, the possibility of influencing on both fronts contributed to the project being able to adapt flexibly to changes in context, taking advantage of the opportunities that arose, particularly at the territorial level, an aspect that must be weighted in the output phase (ProDoc Biocultura 2019). The project (Mercados Inclusivos) was conceived from the beginning as a systemic approach. An interesting element was that it was articulated with different institutions, not ""embedded"" in the ministry. (INT 3)</p> <p><b>The cooperation has understood and worked well at the three levels,</b> the issue is that everything is in the middle. Empowerment of local levels, of participation. The planning ministry coordinates the ministries and cooperation, so that everything is harmonized. (INT 18)</p> <p><b>Serious, long-term commitments:</b> coherence in the project management and follow-up processes, monitoring of results. Relationships built on respect and flexibility, while maintaining the overall objective. (INT 1)"</p>

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6.2 What lessons can be learned from SDC's bilateral cooperation in LAC in order to <b>guide partner governments, other national and international partners</b> in LAC that may step in after SDC to continue projects and programmes?	<i>descriptive/illustrative, overall conclusions of study</i>	<b>Success factors:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Understanding the environment conditions.</b> There is a lot of personal turnover, yet the goal is still to strengthen the national counterpart so that it can manage the project. In some cases, SDC had to 'step back' and intervene at other levels in order to give continuity - for example by giving mandates to NGOs to take charge of implementation, by working with local governments instead of national ones, etc.</li> <li>▪ <b>Being open to failure:</b> Not every action or approach within a project has worked, but SDC is open to redirect the measures taken, which is important for a fluent implementation. They also ask themselves the question, why is it important to fail? By working with numerous stakeholders, there is dispersion of risk - many things cannot be controlled by the project, but this is also part of the learning process and has to be recognized as such.</li> <li>▪ <b>Flexibility embodied in concrete actions:</b> on the budget, which gives space for that. If the attention goes only to budget execution, the team ends up responding to the budget and not the goal of the program. This does not imply less transparency, but gives more room for action. If the circumstances are changing, the focus has to be changing too. (INT 4) The management model is learned by doing, with the local staff (INT 9)</li> </ul>
6.3 What lessons can be learned for SDC <b>institutionally</b> and/or <b>sectorally</b> that may be relevant for SDC to improve development effectiveness in LAC and elsewhere? What have been <b>enabling</b> and <b>hindering</b> factors?	<i>descriptive/illustrative, overall conclusions of study</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Local participation and local know how:</b> Backstopping is the accompaniment, which also gives a process of sustainability and supports the generation of capacities, but the actions must be taken from the beneficiaries. From a sectoral perspective, this implies that communities, universities and local institutions need to be accountable for the project (INT 4). Working hand-in-hand with the local experts. It is clear that there will be limitations, but empathy is necessary in order to avoid hierarchies (INT 6). The products and the achieved objectives have to be useful for the ministries, not for the cooperation offices. This is an important element to take ownership of the product, to be able to know and better understand what is being produced (INT 5)</li> <li>▪ <b>Trilateral cooperation:</b> sharing goals and visions. Two is better than one for the construction of public policies. The impact can be larger by putting efforts together, the number of beneficiaries can increase --&gt; Multiplying the impact is the best argument for a joint cooperation between agencies. (INT 7)</li> </ul> <b>Hindering factors:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>The 'other side' of flexibility:</b> in a weak institutional context, the availability of funds as in the case of the basket fund, may generate internal struggles to obtain the funds, and they may not be used where they are really needed. In this cases it is even more relevant to know the context, its limitations, the productive vocations of the areas of intervention, the demographic dynamics. (INT 5)</li> <li>▪ <b>Dispersed actions within the sector:</b> The approach to the new paradigms was not perceived positively by all stakeholders. The objective of the interventions was confusing, too broad and perceived as ineffective. On the other hand, some stakeholders questioned its applicability on a large scale - how to reconcile ancestral visions with a competitive agriculture, allowing the generation of substantial resources? (INT 6). This is not entitled to SDC's work - it is a characteristic tied to the development of a new conceptual and economic model, which is still under construction as in the case of the <i>Vivir Bien</i>. Yet by embracing the new approach, the projects must deal with these conditions as well. (INT 15)</li> <li>▪ <b>Misdiagnose of the institutional capacities of the counterparts:</b> In the PIC Project, all efforts were place in order to transfer the capacities to INIAF. However, it was not discussed how or to what extent this transfer could work, and what the actual capacities of INIAF were. When closing the PIC, the team entered into a process of sharing everything they did together and involving INIAF authorities them in the process, but this was not successful. From its conception, INIAF institutionally weak due to a number of factors: (I) conception --&gt; innovation = research, it takes time and does not give results; (II) technically, there is no capacity to explore innovation issues, and the INIAF has gotten involved in traditional research issues. At the end, the innovation process was abandoned at key moments, where they did not finish settling down. (INT 16)"</li> </ul>