Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK PEACE, GOVERNANCE AND EQUALITY 2025–2028

Thematic context

In today's world of increasing instability, peace and prosperity are at risk. Democracy and public institutions worldwide face growing pressure from authoritarianism, conflict, and weak governance. Corruption, limited participation, and persistent inequalities – especially gender discrimination, income disparities, and unequal access to services – undermine stability and prosperity around the globe.

Switzerland has a strong political and economic interest in fostering a peaceful, fair, accountable, and prosperous international order. It actively works to counter democratic backsliding, reduce corruption, and address growing inequalities, as these factors undermine accountability and trust in state institutions and often become root causes of conflict and instability.

Switzerland is recognised globally for its commitment to peace, human rights, and international humanitarian law. Building on its long history as a reliable partner in international cooperation, Switzerland plays a key role in fostering dialogue and strengthening trust among diverse communities, guided by the principles of inclusivity, discretion, and impartiality. This approach promotes peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and reducing violence. In the case of violence against women and girls, Switzerland invests in the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment through prevention and response programmes, often led by local communities.

Switzerland's own experiences with democratic governance and decentralisation lend credibility to its efforts to improve public services and combat corruption. It is recognised for its efforts to increase civic participation and improve representation not only for women but also for linguistic minorities and rural populations in public institutions and political processes. Furthermore, Switzerland has been a pioneer in the responsible return of illicit assets, having repatriated more funds than any other country and establishing several types of best practices in this area.

Results and lessons learnt 2021–24

In 2022, the Peace, Governance and Equality (PGE) Section was newly created by bringing together topics, expertise and staff from seven previous units. This consolidation has strengthened the coherence and impact of the SDC's work on peace, governance and equality, enhancing its relevance through the provision of coherent advisory services and strategic guidance throughout the SDC and through proactive advocacy at the international level.

Key results include:

- **Peace:** The SDC has leveraged its expertise in authoritarian contexts to influence the networks of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), shaping advice on how to work in politically constrained environments. It has also supported consultations led by the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace, whose findings were presented to the UN Security Council and helped shape inputs to the New Agenda for Peace.

- **Governance:** In April 2024, the OECD DAC adopted new principles for supporting media and information environments. The SDC played a leading role by co-developing these principles and steering the policy dialogue behind them. Today, those principles guide the support provided by all DAC donor members. In December 2024, the SDC also co-hosted the fourth biennial Expert Group Meeting on Asset Return and the 2030 Agenda, which remains a driving force in promoting best practice on asset recovery globally.

- **Gender equality:** The "Fit for PSEAH" Forum Theatre raises awareness of the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH). Originally performed in Bern, New York and Geneva for an international audience, it has expanded to Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, with local actors adapting it to their cultural context and language. The SDC has also collaborated with 2X Global, an international network that promotes gender-smart investment and equality in finance, to develop a new certification mechanism showing the gender-responsiveness of organisations and enterprises.

Furthermore, the PGE Section continues to manage several ongoing asset return cases. In Uzbekistan, where civil society has helped decide how restitution funds are used, three projects in health and education are under way. In Peru, Switzerland's repatriation of illicit assets is supporting rule-of-law and anti-corruption efforts. In September 2025, Switzerland and Equatorial Guinea agreed on the return of CHF 22.8 million to fund a health project for vulnerable communities. Lessons learnt from these experiences have helped shape an expanding body of international best practice in asset return.

Priorities 2025–28

Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28 underlines its commitment to gender equality, good governance, and a human rights-based approach, including a stand-alone objective on peace and governance. To deliver this mandate, the expertise of the PGE Section is centred around the following strategic outcomes:

- Peaceful coexistence and social cohesion among different population groups are strengthened, while conflict and violence are reduced.
- Public institutions are more accountable and better able to respond to the needs of citizens.
- Women and girls can participate more equally in social, economic, and political life, while gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are reduced.

Priority Topics



Sustaining Peace, Conflict Prevention & Transformation

Fragility & Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

Human Rights & Development

Culture & Peace



Good Governance

Decentralisation & Local Governance

Anticorruption & Asset Recovery



Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's Political Participation

Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence & to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

For the 2025–28 period, the PGE Section is now focused on a smaller set of topics that are most relevant to the widest range of Swiss representations and where it can provide expertise across all four core functions of the SDC's thematic cooperation: strategic partnerships, policy dialogue, advisory services, and knowledge management.

The PGE Section serves as the SDC's centre of expertise on transversal themes. It reviews SDC programmes on gender responsiveness, good governance, and contributions to peace, and supports Swiss representations in the development and design of projects. The Section also offers tailored training courses, such as in conflict-sensitive programme management and political economy analysis. Finally, through its network and related platforms, it acts as the main channel for sharing Swiss experience in peace, governance and equality, and ensures the application of relevant guidelines across the SDC.

Partners

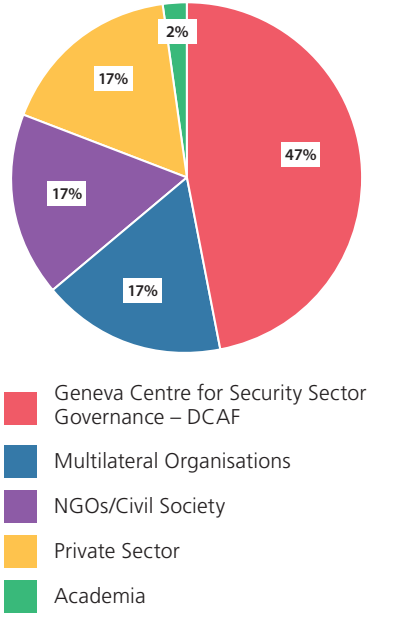
The PGE Section maintains strategic partnerships with multilateral organisations, civil society, the private sector and other actors to complement its work, strengthen global policy dialogue, and respond to the needs of Swiss representations in its thematic areas. It also works closely with other FDFA organisational units to achieve shared goals – for example, with the Peace and Human Rights Division and Swiss Humanitarian Aid to reinforce the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, or with the Directorate for International Law to implement bilateral asset recovery agreements.

The PGE Section works to influence global development and ensure Swiss priorities through active policy dialogue. It takes leadership roles in OECD DAC networks, brings Swiss field experience to multilateral forums and governance bodies, and convenes global partners around priority issues. Within Switzerland, it strengthens ties with International Geneva, contributes to the implementation of strategies and guidelines such as those on anti-corruption, democracy, human rights, and asset recovery, and follows up on evaluations to improve future work.

Programmatic Framework 2025–28

Budget: CHF 95 million
(subject to parliamentary approval)

Breakdown by type of partner (*approximations*)





Imprint

Published by:
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
www.deza.admin.ch

Layout:
Mark Manion, Commusication Arts

Photo captions and credits:
Audience voting during the PSEAH Forum Theatre in Zimbabwe.
© Population Solutions for Health
Culture creates a space for dialogue, which is essential for lasting peace. Tour of the stage adaptation of Gaël Faye's novel Petit Pays in Nyamata and Bugesera in June 2025.
© L'ESPACE +

Contact:
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC
Thematic Cooperation Division
Section Peace, Governance and Equality
Eichenweg 5
3003 Bern
deza-pge@eda.admin.ch

Bern, 2026 / © FDFA/SDC