# Evaluation Report

# Evaluation of the project

# "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"

# July 2024

**Developed by:**

**Marius Bîrsan**

Independent Evaluation Specialist

Name of the Thematic area: **Education / Vocational Education**

Implementation period: **2020 – 2024**

Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation: **United Nations Development Programme in Azerbaijan**

Timeframe of the evaluation: **March – July 2024**

First draft Evaluation Report submitted at: **29 June 2024**

Final Evaluation Report submitted at: **01 July 2024**

International External Evaluator: **Marius Bîrsan**

UNDP staff focal point for the evaluation: **Eltekin Omarov, Zahra Amrahova**

| Evaluation information | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Evaluation type** | Project Evaluation | |
| **Final/midterm review/ other** | Final Evaluation | |
| **Period under evaluation** | **Start** | **End** |
| | 2020 | 2024 |
| **Evaluator** | Marius Bîrsan | |
| **Evaluator email address** | marius.birsan@web.de | |
| **Evaluation dates** | **Start** | **Completion** |
| | 19 March 2024 | 01 July 2024 |

# Table of Contents

# Contents

Evaluation Report – "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"– July 2024

List of tables and figures

Evaluation Report – "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"– July 2024

## List of abbreviations and acronyms

AR -- **Annual Report**

AWP -- **Annual Workplan**

Covid-19 -- **Coronavirus Disease – 2019**

DCO -- **Development Coordination Office**

DVE -- **Dual Vocational Education**

EU -- **European Union**

IC -- **Individual Consultant or Individual Contractor**

ICT -- **Information and Communication Technologies**

ILO -- **International Labour Organisation**

LNOB -- **Leaving No One Behind**

NGO -- **Non-Governmental Organization**

OECD -- **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development**

SAVE -- **State Agency for Vocational Education**

MoSE -- **Ministry of Science and Education**

SDGs -- **Sustainable Development Goals**

ToR -- **Terms of Reference (of the Evaluation)**

(S)VC -- **(State) Vocational Centres**

UNDP -- **United Nations Development Programme**

## Executive summary

ES1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Azerbaijan is conducting the evaluation of its project "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan" (hereinafter referred to as the "Project"), to better understand its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, as well as its contributions to the country programme objectives. The project is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by UNDP Azerbaijan. It is intended to support the modernization of Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Azerbaijan, to deliver competence-based training to increase the attractiveness and labour market relevance of vocational education and training.

The *purpose* of this evaluation is to assess the progress towards the achievements of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and to assess the relevance and sustainability of outputs as contributions to mid-term and long-term outcomes. The evaluation also reviewed the project's strategy, and its implications towards sustainability.

The evaluation followed the methodological guidelines and quality standards outlined in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, principles and standards on Gender and Human Rights Dimension (as defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group – UNEG), as well as the ethical principles as defined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. The data collection and analysis included a variety of multi-phase approach, tools, and steps, including triangulation of acquired data from various quantitative and qualitative sources. The findings were cross-referenced, and generated conclusions formulated for each of the evaluation criteria. In turn, some of the conclusions – enriched by data and findings – generated recommendations.

In conclusion, the project was appropriately designed responding to the current need of the education system and partially of the private sector. The implementation was efficient, following established management principles of UNDP, whereby some challenges were correctly addressed, and the approach showed a certain degree of flexibility. The results were achieved in their majority, with very few components delayed or changed to respond the realities in the field. The project shows solid traits of sustainability, and the cross-cutting considerations were included and systematically pursued. Very few operational areas aspects are improvable through recommendations formulated below.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the evaluation formulates the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: UNDP should consider providing support (technical, capacity building) to strengthen the data collection and analysis, important in the logical chain generating modern VET.** As vocational education acts in a fast-changing environment (dependent on the technological advance and the dynamic private sector), it is critical for SAVE and MoSE to access the most reliable and comprehensive data on which they define their policies and

actions. The best policies or activities cannot be effective if they rely on incomplete or erroneous data.

> **Recommendation 1a: Ensure that yearly curricula update encompass best practices (**methodological and content**), based on comprehensive private sector needs analysis.** Provide continued support to ensure standardisation methodology for writing or adapting new curricula, to avoid inconsistencies in quality.

> **Recommendation 1b. Explore the options and potential added value of creating a digital library with training material**. Existing models can be reached and adapted to the local needs (see proposed models from Germany, Korea). Operating a digital library would increase accessibility of all students' categories to up-to-date information and knowledge.

**Recommendation 2:** Continue to improve people's perception on VET, through popularising the positive results of existing VCs (visibility activities) as well as by upscaling activities and results. Activities in a previous project were implemented in two vocational centres. Based on the lessons learned, the current project expanded activities in eight centres. Although the growth is significant, more vocational centres.

**Recommendation 3: Investigate ways to prominently link Career Centres with Dual vocational education programme.** Most stakeholders welcomed both the dual career programme and the career centres. This approach will ensure better sustainability and increased synergies.

> **Recommendation 3a: Consider expanding the psychological training for career specialists in career centres,** to enhance their understanding on the psychology of the students, who go through a critical age in taking life decisions (especially relevant in schools not having psychologists).

**Recommendation 4: Strengthen the principle of market fairness.** In the provinces, interviews indicated that, in some instances, the collaboration between the vocational centres and the private sector agents was frequently done based on personal relations. Although this approach ensures partners' involvement, the results might produce unwanted results: not the most appropriate partners might be chosen; and market unbalances might be triggered, arbitrarily producing advantages for some players only.

**Recommendation 5: Consider new training elements, according to newest developments on the labour market.** New training trends on Virtual Reality or more focus on soft skills should be included more consistently in curricula and trainings (especially relevant for entrepreneurial skills) can be considered. These elements should be validated by proper market analysis performed for or by SAVE (see also Recommendation 1).

> **Recommendation 5a: For tourism specialisation,** additional attention should be placed on extra courses of foreign languages. They will help students and graduates to get

enhanced communication skills, facilitate improved customer service, competitive advantage, and might facilitate professional growth (by easing access for self-study).

**Recommendation 5b: Consider a more prominent role of soft skills to be taught to students.** Accompanying the hard skills acquired during vocational education, soft skills (e.g., time management, critical thinking, teamwork, creativity, conflict resolution, communication skills) play a critical role, especially for students who might consider a self-standing career.

**Recommendation 6: Consider (re)creating networks for sharing knowledge and best practices.** The networks play a pivotal role in enhancing vocational education systems by fostering collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. A similar structure - Directors' Council – existed before and was discontinued. Communication groups based on social media, although convenient, do not cater for safety considerations and forces people/schools to use tools otherwise not required.

**Recommendation 7: Future similar projects should consider potential pathways for graduates to increase in value chain of the vocational education.** Some students could use more proactively the acquired hard and soft skills, and - with a grant programme - can be encouraged to develop their own business. Fostering entrepreneurship attempts in the country increases the value added in the economic environment, compared to just providing "skilled" employable workforce.

# 1. Introduction and evaluation background

1. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Azerbaijan plays a significant role in supporting the country's sustainable development across various sectors. The support is provided to the Government of the country through several thematic areas - economic development, governance and institutional development, Social Development, Environmental Sustainability, and crisis prevention and recovery.

2. Evaluations fulfil an important role within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), being critical function aimed at assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, and impact of its projects, programs, or policies. These evaluations help ensure accountability, facilitate learning, and inform decision-making processes, to enhance the performance of development initiatives.

3. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Azerbaijan is conducting the evaluation of its project "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan" (hereinafter referred to as the "Project"), to better understand its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, as well as its contributions to the country programme objectives. The project is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by UNDP Azerbaijan. It is intended to support the modernization of Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions in Azerbaijan, to deliver competence-based training to increase the attractiveness and labour market relevance of vocational education and training.

4. The project has formulated three pillars for action, and three *horizontal measures* (with four sets of activities) to support the system delivery:

> Pillar 1: Introduction of innovation in the selected VET providers (with five activities);
>
> Pillar 2: Infrastructure and equipment modernization in the target group of selected VET providers (with four activities);
>
> Pillar 3: Capacity development for VET providers in Azerbaijan (with two activities).

5. The *direct beneficiary* of the results of the evaluation is the management of UNDP, which will use the findings and recommendations in its internal analysis and decision making aiming at optimising future similar interventions. The *indirect beneficiaries* (benefitting from the expected positive changes brought by the eventual improvements recommended by the evaluation) are the education system (Ministry of Science and Education, State Centre for Vocational Education - SAVE, vocational schools) and students. The EU Delegation, as donor, will also benefit from the results of the current evaluation.

6. This evaluation report responds to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the assignment and is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 - comprises of the introduction and the background, describing in short, the evaluation UNDP Azerbaijan is implementing;
- Chapter 2 - describes the scope, purpose and objectives of the evaluation exercise;
- Chapter 3 - Evaluation approach and methodology – describes the methodology used, how the various steps were implemented and the intermediary results;
- Chapter 4 – Findings – structured by the five evaluation criteria, the chapter outlines the data and analysis based upon the evaluation formulates the key findings;
- Chapter 5 – Conclusions – for each evaluation criteria and evaluation questions, the conclusions based on the previously formulated findings are defined;
- Chapter 6 – Recommendations – based on the conclusions, the recommendations and – where applicable – their implications are outlined.
- Annexes – present key supporting information to support the description of the evaluation process and selected supportive data for analysis which did not fit into the respective chapters.

## 2. Evaluation scope and objectives

7. The overarching *purpose* of this evaluation is to assess progress towards the achievements of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and to assess the relevance and sustainability of outputs as contributions to mid-term and long-term outcomes. The evaluation will also review the project's strategy, and its implications towards sustainability.

8. As outlined in the ToR, the main objectives of the evaluation are to:

- evaluate the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the project

- review the project's strategy, and its implications towards sustainability.

9. The evaluation is to assess all activities undertaken within the framework of the project, categorised under three criteria: relevance and project design (problems addressed, assumptions, relevance, Theory of Change); Results Framework/Logframe (indicators and targets, correctly defined objectives, contribution to impacts, proper monitoring system in place); and progress towards results (effectiveness and efficiency); and sustainability (financial, socio-economic, institutional framework and governance). The *scope* of the evaluation is to appraise the activities and results under the VET4Future project between the start in August 2020 and June 2024, which should represent a month prior to the project completion according to the initial schedule. In-depth analysis also benefited from field visits that were undertaken to a series of regions where the project implemented activities in VET Centres. The analysis also encompasses learning from various assessments of the previous interventions related to Vocational Education and Training in Azerbaijan.

10. As outlined in the Terms of Reference (see Annex I – Terms of Reference) and confirmed in the Inception Report agreed in the beginning of the assessment, the main *objective* of the evaluation is to assess the progress and appropriateness of the project, and to generate strategic and practical recommendations on how to further advance support to the Ministry of Science and Education and SAVE to improve and better adapt vocational education to the labour market needs.

## 3. Evaluation approach and methodology

11. In order to achieve its objectives, the evaluation used a variety of multi-phase design, tools, and steps. The methodology was influenced on one hand by the theory-based approach to explain mechanisms how the activities should lead to outputs and outcomes, which – in turn – should contribute to overarching impact of improving the educational system in the country, including by better adapting it to the needs of the labour market.

12. In choosing the relevant methods and approach, Gender and Human Rights Dimension (as defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group – UNEG[1]) were considered during the inception, data collection, analysis and reporting stages. The stakeholder analysis included the students and graduates, personnel of the VET Centres, MoSE and SAVE, representatives of private sector and NGOs, as well as other key informants with deep understating of the education sector in Azerbaijan.

13. The evaluation also considered throughout all stages the ethical principles as defined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation[2]: integrity (defined by honesty and truthfulness, professionalism and independence, impartiality and incorruptibility), accountability (transparency, responsiveness, responsibility and account giving), respect (engaging with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, wellbeing and personal agency, while being responsive to their sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQI+ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and cultural, economic and physical environments) and beneficence (striving to do good for people and planet while minimizing harms arising from evaluation as an intervention).

14. Inception Phase (March - April 2024) – comprised of:

---

[1] https://www.uneval.org/document/download/1294 - last consulted in February 2024
[2] UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation - available at: https://procurement-notices.undp.org/view_file.cfm?doc_id=302194#:~:text=The%20four%20UNEG%20guiding%20ethical,Accountability%2C%20Respect%2C%20and%20Beneficence. – last consulted in February 2024

Evaluation Report – "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"– July 2024

*Desk review* of relevant documents (programmatic documents of the UN System and of UNDP, UNDP web-site, documented outputs of the activities and monitoring reports, as well as other relevant statistics studies and reports related to labour market and education system (the full list of consulted documents is presented in Annex II – Inception Report

Microsoft Word
Document

Annex III – List of consulted documents); exploratory interviews with key members of the project management (conducted online).

Data Collection Phase (April - May 2024)

- 15. *Documents review* – besides the general documents mentioned for the inception phase, documents, reports, technical papers and policy briefs related to UNDP Azerbaijan's' activities and the education sector in the country were reviewed: United Nations-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) 2016 – 2020, UN-Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDF) 2021 – 2025, UNDP Country Programme Documents, steering committee reports, narrative annual reports, etc. For purpose of triangulation, reports from other international organizations (International Labour Organization – ILO - statistics on labour market, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports on education) were consulted.

- 16. *Analysis of statistical data* (desegregated by gender, age, geographical diversity, disability status) relevant to UNDP, MoSE, SAVE and labour market. The quantitative analysis relied on data made available in the narrative annual reports.

- 17. *Field visits* to all vocational centres were performed, in order to capture achievements, regional differences and enhance understanding of support provided to the VET environment in the country.

- 18. *Structured/semi-structured interviews* were one of the main data collection instrument and were used to gather primary data from key informants. The information was used to validate the Theory of Change and understand the effects of the project activities, as well as explaining mechanisms behind the theory. More than 28 interviews with all stakeholders were carried:
    - UNDP project management and staff
    - UNDP senior management;
    - EU Delegation;
    - State Agency for Vocational Education;
    - Management and staff of vocational centres;

- Graduates and students from vocational Centres:
- Representatives from the private sectors, NGOs, other specialists with relevant knowledge on the education system and labour market.

19. The *interviews* lasted on average 60 minutes in duration and a semi-structured discussion guide was used to lead the interviews. In some cases, the key interviews took place face-to-face in the premises of the VET4Future project. With other interviewees, the discussions were conducted on site in Vocational Centres, allowing to understand the state of the infrastructure and observing the educational dynamic.

20. The relationship between the evaluation questions and the data collection tools is described below in the Evaluation Matrix, including the role played by the mentioned data collection tools:

| Evaluation Criteria | Main Evaluation Question | Evaluation sub-questions | Proxy Indicators | Data Collection Tool | Data Source(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Relevance** | To what extent is the Project relevant to countries' and beneficiaries' needs, and aligned to the principles of sustainable development? | - Was the project concept in line with the national education development priorities and plans of Azerbaijan?<br><br>- What is the comparative advantage of UNDP in comparison to other donors in supporting the institutional beneficiaries in Azerbaijan?<br><br>- Were lessons from other relevant project properly incorporated into the project design?<br><br>- Was the problem addressed by the Project and the underlying assumptions correctly formulated and mitigated?<br><br>What are continued needs (infrastructure, personnel, curricula) being still present within partnering vocational centres? | Alignment to UNDP corporate objectives | Desk Review (documents)<br><br>Semi-structured Interviews<br><br>(Online survey) | To what extent is the Project relevant to countries' and beneficiaries' needs, and aligned to the principles of sustainable development? |
| **Effectiveness** | How did the Project contribute to achieving the strategic objectives of UNDP in Azerbaijan? | - What has been achieved from the planned results (activities, outcomes)?<br><br>- How does each of the intended outputs and outcomes contribute to the overall objective of the Project? What are the major factors influencing achievement or non-achievement?<br><br>- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of programme's objectives and expected results?<br><br>-To what extent were women and men equitably impacted by the results of the project, and to what extent have marginalized groups benefited?<br><br>- Are proper means of communication established to communicate the project progress and intended impact to the public? How | Qualitative assessment of factors which influenced the Project, both positively and negatively;<br><br>qualitative assessment of how the Project responded to these factors.<br><br><br>Effectiveness of the communication strategy | Desk Review (AWP, Annual reports)<br><br>Semi-structured Interviews<br><br>On-site visits<br><br>(Online survey) | How did the Project contribute to achieving the strategic objectives of UNDP in Azerbaijan? |

| | | appropriate are the VET outreach and public awareness campaigns? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Efficiency** | Were the resources sufficient for achieving the results?<br><br>Were all activities organized efficiently and were objectives achieved on time? | - How much time, resources and effort it takes to manage the Project? What could be improved? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear?<br><br>- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?<br><br>- Are there any delays present in project start-up and implementation? What caused the delays? How were they resolved?<br><br>-To what extent did monitoring systems provide data that allowed UNDP Azerbaijan to learn and adjust implementation accordingly? | Qualitative assessment of implementation arrangement and results<br><br><br>Number and quality of partnerships created or maintained | Desk review<br><br><br><br>Semi-structured Interviews | Were the resources sufficient for achieving the results?<br><br>Were all activities organized efficiently and were objectives achieved on time? |
| **Sustainability** | To what extent will the benefits of the activities persist after the end of the intervention? | - How well was the sustainability consideration (financial, socio-economic, institutional) embedded in the Project design?<br>- What are the opportunities to build upon the existing results after the end of the Project? Are there any elements of Exit Strategy being considered?<br><br>are improved institutional and personnel capacities with Project partnering institutions present? How stable are they? | | Qualitative assessment of activities undertaken to build capacity and<br><br>prepare partners/beneficiaries to maintain outcomes after the end of the intervention | To what extent will the benefits of the activities persist after the end of the intervention? |

| Cross-Cutting Themes | | - To what extent has the Project been conducive to the incorporation of core principles such as human rights, gender equality, equal opportunities for people with disabilities and marginalized groups, resilience and leaving no one behind in the work of UNDP and of the beneficiaries? | | Statistical data to break down implementation results by gender and PwD | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

*Table 1: Evaluation Matrix, containing the evaluation criteria, evaluation questions, and data sources relevant for the evaluation of the VET4Future project in Azerbaijan*

21. After collecting the information, the systematic analysis (June 2024) comprised of:

- Descriptive statistics: Summarizing and describing the main features of the data;
- Thematic analysis: Identifying and analysing themes or patterns in qualitative data;
- Content analysis: Systematically analysing the content of textual data;
- Narrative analysis: Examining the stories and narratives within qualitative data;
- Triangulation - the use of multiple methods, data sources, and perspectives to cross-verify and strengthen the credibility of evaluation findings; this is a key approach to enhance the robustness and validity of evaluation results by ensuring that conclusions are supported by evidence from different angles. If data from different sources consistently support the same conclusion, it increases the confidence in the validity of the findings and conclusions;
- The findings were consistently analysed thematically, and are validated with project staff during quality assurance stage;
- The findings (standalone or in combination) constituted the basis for formulating the conclusions, which – in turn – generated the recommendations outlined in Chapter 6. Recommendations.

22. Limitations, risks and mitigation

The evaluation process did not encounter major limitations to hamper the data collection, analysis or presenting the relevant findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Small factors required extra attention from the evaluator's side.

| Risk | Impact | Probability | Mitigation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Different expectations around comprehensiveness, depth and results of the final evaluation | Medium | Medium | In the inception phase, consultations with UNDP underline the understanding and agreement on the expected results of the evaluation. The evaluation touches all key aspects sufficiently to support informed, fact-based findings and recommendations. |
| Limited availability/unreliability of statistical data. | Medium | Low | Available sources of information were identified (internal data generated by the Project's monitoring and reporting system). |
| Limited interviewee availability: the evaluator may find that key interviewees are unavailable during the data collection phase (given the tight schedule of the field trips). | High | Low-Medium | The travel arrangements were made in advance and agreed between parties under supervision of UNDP. The interviews were announced in advance, to accommodate busy schedule of the interviewees. Where the first-choice interviewee |

| | | | was completely unavailable, a qualified interviewee substituted from the institution in question e.g., deputy director replacing the director). |
|---|---|---|---|
| Possible defensiveness around the evaluation and its findings | Medium | Medium | Pro-active transparency around the evaluation exercise: The evaluator provided appropriate information about the evaluation and its independent and impartial status, together with guarantees around the confidentiality of internal sources and inputs by interviewees. |
| Lack of follow-up and lasting benefit from the evaluation | High | Low | The evaluation focused on creating valid findings and reasonable recommendations, that can be easily incorporated and monitored into the Management Response by making the Evaluation Report available on the UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre. |

*Table 2: Limitations and mitigation approaches*

## 4. Analysis and findings

Background

B1. Azerbaijan's economy was heavily influenced by its oil and gas sector, which has been the primary driver of economic growth for many years. In 2022, the industry accounted for around 55 per cent of the GDP[3]. The services sector has seen growth, particularly in finance, tourism, and information technology. According to the same data, the services sector contributes approximately 32 per cent of Azerbaijan's GDP. This marks a significant increase from previous years, indicating a shift towards a more diversified economy. Additionally, agriculture remains a significant employer, especially in rural areas, contributing with 5 to 6 per cent from GDP in the national economy.

B2. The labour market in Azerbaijan is stabilising to lower levels, with ongoing efforts to address its challenges and leverage opportunities for growth and development. Around 45-50 per cent of Azerbaijan's workforce is employed in the services sector, which includes industries such as retail, transportation, finance, and hospitality.
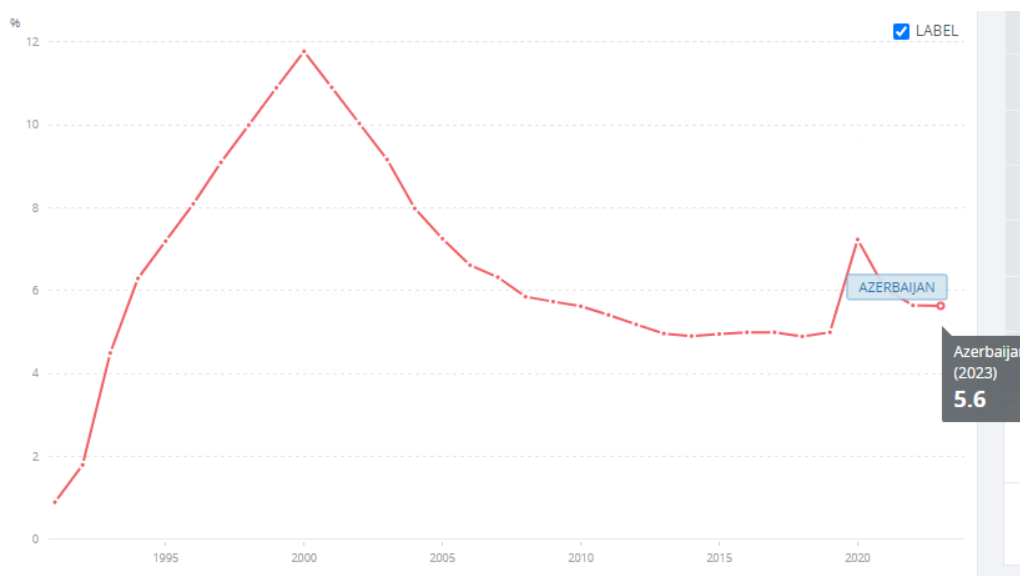


*Figure 1. Evolution of the unemployment rate - ILO Modelled Estimates and Projections database (ILOEST)*

B3. In order to accommodate this shift, the education sector was put under a high pressure, to prepare the new generations of students for the economic shifts. The number of educational institutions and vocational training centres has grown, aiming to improve the skill sets of the workforce to meet the demands of the expanding services sector.

---

[3] https://www.statista.com/statistics/457577/share-of-economic-sectors-in-the-gdp-in-azerbaijan/#:~:text=This%20statistic%20shows%20the%20share,sector%20contributed%20about%2032.2%20percent. last consulted in June 2024

Azerbaijan's VET participation rate was one of the lowest in the European Union's Eastern Partnership region—14.5 per cent in 2018 compared to 30 per cent in Ukraine and 40 per cent in Moldova and Belarus.

B4. To meet the evolving needs of the labour market and the transformation of the education system, the Government of Azerbaijan – through the Ministry of Science and Education - developed and adopted a comprehensive legislative framework, including the "Strategic Roadmap for Vocational Education and Training"[4] (2016). In the same year, the State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE) was operationalized. Additionally, the Government of Azerbaijan has adopted strategies and policies such as "AzNQF" decree[5], law on "VET", rules "Conduction Prior Learning" addressing the quality and relevance of education and training, in relation with the strategic objectives of the national economy, employment and society. Other bodies with roles in improving VET that were created are Education Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA), and NQF department in Institute of education was important step taken in improvement of vocational education.

B5. Among the new trends gaining traction in the global economy, the readiness for the 4th industrial revolution (4IR) is attracting more attention and resources. An Asian Development Bank material[6] states that "stronger alignment between employers and training institutions in responding to industry's demand for skills is particularly critical in Azerbaijan, where most employers view graduates as lacking not only job-specific skills but also the necessary soft skills". In this context, the importance of the vocational education and training becomes even more prominent. Additionally, other relevant topics for the future of economy (and of VET) are the green skills[7], digitalization of economy and education, or "skills for the future"[8]. These trends require that the curricula and training materials should be updated on yearly basis, and continued support is required in this area including by involving private sector (Finding 1).

B6. Several international organisations are showing interest of involvement in improving vocational education in Azerbaijan. Coordination of activities and benefiting from the experience of these agencies can be vital for the success of the current project. Project currently cooperating with The German-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce (AHK Azerbaijan), World Bank[9], GIZ[10], ADB and other EU funded projects (including through eTwinning.

---

[4] https://monitoring.az/assets/upload/files/6381dda5389fb17755bbb732a9c7d708.pdf - last consulted in June 2024

[5] https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/Azerbaijan.pdf - last consulted in May 2024

[6] https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/54295-001-ssa.pdf - last consulted in May 2024

[7] https://www.unido.org/stories/what-are-green-skills - last consulted in June 2024

[8] https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2017/07/5-ways-build-skills-future/ - last consulted in June 2024

[9] https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/634141474898383895/azerbaijan-second-education-sector-development-project

[10] https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/20324.html

## 4a. Relevance

R1. The United Nations has been actively supporting the education sector in Azerbaijan through various initiatives aimed at enhancing both general and vocational education. The United Nations-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) 2016 – 2020 defined the Strategic Priority Area 1 (Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development Underpinned by Increased Diversification and Decent Work), where vocational education is mentioned several times as a vehicle to achieve the proposed outcomes. The subsequent UN-Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDF) 2021 – 2025 continues to set accent on vocational education in the Priority Area 1 (Inclusive growth that reduces vulnerability and builds resilience) and in Priority Area 2 (Stronger institutions for better public and social service delivery). Stemming from the objectives defined in the UNSDF, UNDP Azerbaijan formulated clear objectives in the Country Programme Document (CPD) 2021 – 2025 related to vocational education and training. Related to the UNSCDF Outcome involving UNDP #2 – "People furthest behind benefit from enhanced national capacities and governance structures for social protection and quality public and social services, in line with Azerbaijan's international commitments", Output 2 .2   is   formulated   as   "Modernize vocational education centres to meet the growing labour market and social needs", clearly indicating the goal on vocational education and training. On the UNSDCF Outcome involving UNDP #1: "People furthest behind participate in and benefit from a diverse and innovative economy encompassing future-oriented labour-market transformation and access to decent work", institutional partnership with the State Agency on Vocational Education is also mentioned.

R2. The European Union employs several instruments for partnership with the neighbouring regions. Among them, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a collaborative initiative involving the European Union (EU) and six Eastern European countries, including Azerbaijan. Launched in 2009, the EaP aims to deepen political and economic ties, promote reforms, and enhance stability, prosperity, and resilience in these nations. Overall, the EaP serves as a crucial platform for Azerbaijan and other partner countries to engage with the EU, pursue reforms, and work towards greater regional stability and development.

One important area for the EaP is education, including the reform of vocational education. For example, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE) have been working together to conduct annual assessments and support the continuous improvement of VET policies. These efforts are part of the Torino Process, which evaluates VET systems from a lifelong learning perspective, ensuring they meet the needs of both youth and adults. In this respect, the project "VET for the future: development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan" was formulated to be aligned to the strategic needs of the country and of UNDP in Azerbaijan.

R3. The Project was also defined to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; - Target 4.4 "By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship"

R4. Together with the formal education, vocational education and training services cannot be analysed individually, taken out of the context. They are an important part in the causal chain between covering the needs of students and the needs of the society at large, and of the private sector in particular.  In order to create a functional education system, it is important to have defined the objectives, acquire reliable demographic data and have a clear picture of the real needs in the private sector. In the context of VET, it is critical for SAVE to have valid data of the potential students following VET programmes and – at the same time – of the needs of the economic sectors for vocational services. The data should be of high quality and collected both quantitatively and qualitatively. (Finding 2). Planning activities related to VET are based on data provided by other entities. SAVE receives reports on the labour market from the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, while demographic data on education is being delivered by the Ministry of Science and Education. The data quality cannot be controlled by SAVE, although is decisively influences the results of the activities. Since 2021, SAVE implemented a new monitoring and reporting platform, with several modules. The Agency needs to expand the platform with an improved monitoring system, as data reported by schools and VCs are still lacking reliability.

R5. New geographic areas in the western part of Azerbaijan will offer new opportunities for vocational education, with specific particularities. The reconstruction of those regions will put a high pressure on the demand of qualified and skilled work force, and MoSE and SAVE will need to adjust the enhanced scale and the specificities of the new regions. Estimates forecasted by SAVE range to 30,000 VET students in 2024, with an expected increase of up to 40,000 by 2026.

R6. The image of Vocational Education and Training has been improving in the last years[11]. The visibility activities convey these messages, and the perception of the population (and of the potential students) is gradually improving, thanks to multiple interventions to modernise infrastructure, open door days at the VET, improve curricula, and link the activities to the needs of the private sector. However, the parents' perception on VET still has room for improvement (Finding 3).

R7. On the additionality of UNDP in the project's approach, there are several components. First, UNDP brings a global level quality of knowledge on implementation of projects, but also

---

[11] according to the research report on "Investigation of lack of interest in vocational education" created by PMC Consulting Company within the framework of the current Project

on mobilising global resources and best practices. This is based on the mandate and global reach of the organisation. Another component is the "mediator "role UNDP plays in building trust within communities, based on the positive image the organisation has in the country, as revealed in most interviews. The involvement of an international actor of the prestige of the UNDP in the VET sector contributes to offset the negative image associated with VET in Azerbaijan.

R8. On the coordination between various donors, interviews revealed an area of improvement. Statements highlighted multitude of activities which are covering education-related topics, but not all are coordinated centrally, and synergetic opportunities are being missed. An area not covered yet with a high need potential was expressed by SAVE, is a systematic assessment on effectiveness of translating material from abroad versus creating own curricula. On curricula design, interviews revealed that the standardisation methodology for writing or adapting new curricula is not fully established, apparently leading to inconsistencies in quality. Additionally, the creation of a digital library containing training materials from all VCs would increase accessibility of all students' categories to up-to-date information and knowledge. (Finding 4).

## 4b. Effectiveness

Ef1. The project started officially in August 2020, during times when the effects of the Covid-19 impacted both activities of the project, as well as the activities carried by the vocational centres. Minor delays in various stages at that time are justifiable by the major external factor.

Ef2. The project implemented in the beginning stage a comprehensive analysis of the situation at that point, a "Baseline Assessment of 7 pilot VET Centres". The assessment, primarily based on a set of questionnaires, analysed the infrastructure, staffing, student's enrolment status, curricula, financial arrangements of the Centres, existing linkages with employers, and other data. The recommendations covered topics on teacher training, infrastructure rehabilitation, curricula modernisation, provision of raw materials, improving cooperation with employers, and the establishment of a mechanism for application of work-based learning (WBL). The recommendations were well reflected in the project's objectives and in the annual work plans and constituted the justification to redefine two target indicators compared to the ProDoc.

Ef3. The start of the Project coincided with the peak of the limitations inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic when the VET sector switched to online classes. Together with the EU and SAVE, UNDP supported in producing a series of TV and online classes to help ensure that VET students don't miss out on their lessons. The lessons were aired on Azerbaijan's Culture TV channel and were also available on the online platforms of the Ministry of Science and Education (MoSE).

Ef4. Initially, the activities were planned to be implemented in collaboration with seven Vocational Centres: four in Baku – Baku State Vocational Education Centre on Art and Craft,

Baku State Vocational Education Center for Tourism and Social Services, Baku State Vocational Education Center on communication and Information Technology (IT) and Baku State Vocational Education Center on Industry and Innovation. Other three centres are in other regions – Ganja Vocational Education Center for Trade and Services, Sheki Vocational Education Center, and Jalilabad Vocational Education Center. The criteria for selecting the VCs were priority sectors for country development, labour market relevance, private sector interest and the existence of required infrastructure. In the course of implementation, two additional centres not originally foreseen by the project have also been supported: one in Lankaran, and an additional one in Ganja (on Industry and Technology). This additional support benefited from synergies and increased the cost-effectiveness of the project. In all VCs, almost 4,800 students were registered by the time of the project implementation.

Ef5. In the provinces, interviews indicated that, in some instances, the collaboration between the vocational centres and the private sector agents was mostly done based on personal relations. Although this approach is the easiest one, the results might produce unwanted results: not the most appropriate partners might be chosen; and market unbalances might be triggered, arbitrarily producing advantages for some players only (Finding 5).

Ef6. Pillar 1 focuses on introducing innovations in VET providers to modernize the education system and enhance the quality of vocational education. The main goal is to support national VET reform by implementing new approaches in content, services, management, and collaboration with the private sector, benefiting students, staff, and other key stakeholders.

Activity 1.1: In the first year of the project, the activities focused the development of strategic development plans, the establishment of School Advisory Boards (BoT), and the need for professional development opportunities for VET teachers and managers to address challenges and ensure sustainability. The activities continued with establishing Board of Trustees (BoT) to support school management in Ganja and Baku. Capacity building measures, including training programs for staff, have been implemented to ensure the success of innovative approaches and new programs. Additionally, the project has organized training sessions to enhance the capacity of selected technical Vocational Education (VE) staff in developing and implementing competence-based curricula. Furthermore, the project has provided training for VE staff and private sector representatives involved in organizing Dual Vocational Education (DVE) programs. Lastly, it has facilitated networking and exchange of experience in vocational education, promoting project-based learning experiences and supporting the training of pedagogical staff to align with 21st-century vocational education and training requirements. In the last year of implementation, a training program focused on entrepreneurial thinking and practical business skills, drawing 72 participants, and providing simultaneous translation services. The program included captivating presentations, interactive brainstorming sessions, and real-world case studies, with a strong female representation among the attendees. Additionally, a specialized up-skilling training program for cooking instructors resulted in 14 female instructors obtaining a state-recognized Food

Safety certificate, enhancing their professional credentials, and promoting ongoing professional development. Furthermore, VE staff achieved an impressive 99 per cent rate of active participation on the E-Twinning platform with the national quality badge. It is worth noting that the current number of VE staff has reached from 44 to 53. As a response to the VE challenge, training sessions conducted by an international consultant focused on entrepreneurial thinking and practical business skills, drawing 72 participants with a strong female representation. The sessions provided valuable insights, strategies, and real-world case studies to enhance entrepreneurial skills.

Activity 1.2 (Introduction of innovative VET services into selected VET providers): In the first year, the activities aimed at enhancing vocational education through innovative approaches like work-based learning (WBL) and officially certified short term inclusive VE programs. By recruiting local consultants and conducting thorough research, the project has successfully implemented new programs and partnerships with private sectors to support VET centres. Additionally, efforts have been made to promote inclusive education through the development of guidelines and recommendations for inclusive vocational education, particularly for individuals with disabilities. The activities continued with support provided to SAVE in implementing innovative approaches in education programs, resulting in the development of 19 long term and 18 short term new education programs and 68 modules. The project also worked on revising the curriculum for the "video shooting operator" occupation and identified occupations for short-term courses and technical VE curricula. The project aimed to align these programs with the European Qualification Framework (EQF) levels 3, 4, and 5 and the Azerbaijan National Qualification Framework (AzNQF). During evaluation time, overall, 18 short-term curricula, 15 technical VE curricula, and -four HTVE curricula were developed and some of them were updated and supported with the implementation. The rest of the modules for WBL and one for green skills will be delivered by the end of project. In the last year, the project continued supporting SAVE in implementing innovative education programs, focusing on expanding and improving vocational education through the introduction of new curricula and teaching materials. The project managed to finalize additional 2 curricula and 2 modules by March 2024 to further enhance vocational education opportunities. Inclusive vocational education opportunities were provided to a diverse range of students, including those with disabilities, to equip them with valuable skills and empower them for successful integration into the workforce.

The implementation of activities related to green and future skills began in July 2024, following the approval from SAVE to integrate these into the Azerbaijani TVET system. These innovative approaches will be piloted in September 2024. The project has initiated the recruitment of an international expert, with the process expected to be finalized by August 15th. Additionally, the project provided trainings for the VE staff and private sector representatives involved in the organization of DVE Programme. The project continued to provide support to SAVE in the implementation of innovative approaches within education programs, expanding the scope and enhancing the quality of VE through the adoption of

various dual VE programs and teaching materials. Inclusive vocational education opportunities were provided to a diverse range of students, including those with disabilities, to equip them with valuable skills and empower them for successful integration into the workforce. The project also provided trainings for the VE staff and private sector representatives involved in the organization of Dual Vocational Education (DVE) Programme in Azerbaijan.

Activity 1.3 (Improvement of financial management and cooperation with private sector by selected VET providers): initially, the activities focused on the importance of effective financial management for VET providers, with a focus on income generation activities and the development of business plans to ensure sustainability and self-financing. In the subsequent years, activities aimed at enhancing financial management practices in vocational education institutions and fostering partnerships with the private sector to align education with workforce needs. The establishment of joint working groups and the development of new workshops within vocational centres were key strategies to improve collaboration, decision-making, and program quality for the benefit of students and industries.

Activity 1.4 (Strengthening of career guidance services in selected VET providers): The lack of interest in vocational education and training has been identified as a significant issue, with factors such as the absence of career support and underdeveloped career systems contributing to this. A study was conducted to assess the situation and develop new guidelines for strengthening career development support in VET, with a focus on engaging students, parents, and employers to address the lack of interest. The study also provided recommendations based on international best practices, and various outputs were delivered during the first year of implementation to address the identified gaps and improve interest in VET. In the following years, progress was made in modernizing vocational education through the establishment of Career Centres and capacity building initiatives. The efforts have resulted in enhanced career support services, training opportunities, and successful employment outcomes for graduates, ultimately contributing to the development of a skilled workforce. In the last implementation stage, head instructors and career specialist from eight selected VE centres visited "Re-build Karabakh exhibition" in September 2023. The field visits included visits in Career Centres, where discussions took place not only with the career specialists, but also with beneficiaries (students and graduates). One *lesson learned* is that, after the Career Centres started initially with supporting writing cover letters and CVs (which didn't bear the expected positive results), they switched to providing internship opportunities to small groups of students, which was better welcomed by the students and entrepreneurs. Unanimously, the perception of interviewees on the quality delivered by the Career Centres (quality of personnel, infrastructure) is very good, confirming the high relevance and quality of the services provided. One area of improvement would be if, in the future, the Career Centres would strengthen the cooperation with the Dual vocational programme (Finding 6). additionally, career specialists could benefit from psychology courses, to enhance their understanding on the psychology of the students, living a critical age in taking life decisions

(especially relevant in schools not having psychologists; Finding 7). In some centres, the career specialists are overwhelmed with work and demotivated for to not being appropriately compensated for their efforts.

Activity 1.5 (Skills Development through digitalization and online training): The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of digital resources in education, leading to the production of TV classes and the establishment of a television studio in Azerbaijan. The project supported the development of digital learning resources, training specialists, and creating online courses to enhance vocational education. Guidelines and quality criteria for digital learning resources have been developed, with the goal of promoting innovation and digitalization in education. For the first time in Azerbaijan, a relevant training course program was developed on the "MOODLE" education platform. This program set certain standards in the development of digital resources, enables appropriate measurement of results, and overall provides better quality in online learning in TVET. At the end of the course, 13 candidates successfully completed the training and were awarded certificates. Adopting modern learning techniques (online platform, Virtual Reality) proved challenging, and the project resorted to creating own, tailored approaches, which involved more time than initially envisaged. At the beginning of 2024, the project has finally initiated the tendering process to develop four online courses for vocational teachers. The goal is to provide accessible, modern, and interactive learning experiences to enhance professional development and prepare students effectively for the workforce, with the courses aiming to foster collaboration among educators and align with industry standards and best practices. The VR component tendering was under consideration by the time of evaluation.

Pillar 2

Activity 2.1 (Procurement of infrastructure, equipment and supplies to support new educational content (including programmes for PwDs), support activities and establishment of small-scale workshops): In the first year of implementation, establishment of workshops in seven VET providers wasn't achieved, to implement various programs, with a service provider offering consultancy services for renovation and equipment needs. The outputs delivered showed progress towards completing the necessary infrastructure and equipment according to the work program timelines. The next implementation year brought some delays due to changes in procurement rules and procedures but managed to successfully establish workshops in some VET centres, with a focus on promoting inclusivity and accessibility. The project also faced challenges in identifying the next three Career Support Centres but managed to finalize the construction of Jalilabad SVEC. The project has made progress in delivering equipment and materials for various workshops. During the fourth year of implementation, the project successfully supported various vocational education providers with repair and construction works, including the renovation of career centres and initiation of workshops. The project also achieved completion of workshop designs and technical

specifications for several repairment workshops, with equipment and materials already delivered for the MasterChef workshop.

Activity 2.2 (Procurement of infrastructure, equipment and supplies to support the business development and establishment of learning factories in selected VET providers): The "CASPIAN PEARL" LLC company has provided design and technical specifications for the establishment of three learning factories in selected VET Centres, with a focus on innovation and future skills. The use of VR, electrical engineering, mobile phone technicians and confectionary workshops are among the identified directions to support the learning factory approach. In the following years, the project developed and submitted five business plans to SAVE, focusing on income-generating initiatives at the VE Centres. Despite budget constraints, the introduction of TV studio and Master Chef workshops provided unique opportunities for generating income through various activities. The field visit to the TV station (in the VE Center for Culture and Crafts) highlighted the excellent quality of support provided both at infrastructure level as well as in capacity building support. The school's graduates are highly sought after by media outlets, and the produced TV material is bought by other TV stations, having a high potential to generate revenues. The Lankaran VC also benefits from a very modern TV equipment in its workshop. A new trend in TV production which can be relevant for future support is the Virtual Reality (VR) production, considered already by Output 1.5.3 (Finding 8).

Activity 2.3 (Procurement of infrastructure, equipment and supplies to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19): SAVE requested to purchase 1.5 million medicine disposal face masks using EU contingency funds allocated in September 2020. The bidding process was initiated but postponed due to lockdowns, but was eventually completed by the end of 2021, when face masks, clothes, gloves, and antiseptics were delivered to SAVE to address challenges of Covid-19 pandemic.

Activity 2.4 (Introduction of digital innovations in selected VET providers): The establishment of a modern TV studio workshop at Baku SVEC on Culture and Craft, with a focus on inclusivity for persons with disabilities, provided students with the opportunity to create digital educational materials in an inclusive learning environment. The fully equipped studio, along with capacity-building training for instructors, ensures that students are empowered to explore various professions within the creative industry, fostering inclusivity and accessibility in education.

Pillar 3

Activity 3.1 (Strengthening of national coordination of VET): Activities in the first year established that there is a need for coordination of vocational education and training service providers, private sector, and other interested groups at the national level in Azerbaijan. The

Advisory Council on Employers, now known as the National Skills Council, was established on December 22, 2022, under the MoSE. The focus of the council is to collaborate with employers and government institutions to facilitate the supply of highly skilled professionals to the labour market. The establishment of the National Skills Council is intended to serve as an advisory mechanism to support the reform of the country's vocational education policies and implementation practices, with the goal of better matching the supply of labour to the market needs of skills.

Activity 3.2 (Strengthening of capacity building of national VET institutions and providers): the establishment of a Competence Center at the Baku State Vocational Education Center on Industry and Innovations is crucial for addressing the shortage of teachers and improving the quality of vocational education in Azerbaijan. In the first year, the project developed and delivered training programs for new teachers and provided capacity building for quality improvement of TVET teachers. Additionally, the project has successfully organized training programs, and webinars to achieve its objectives. In the following year, a study visit to Germany provided valuable insights into teacher training and professional development practices, focusing on competency centres to enhance skills in VET, industry, and innovation. The training programs and capacity-building measures implemented aim to ensure sustainability and disseminate knowledge within educational institutions, contributing positively to the vocational educational landscape. In the last year of implementation, a capacity building opportunity for instructors and mentors in the project was planned in a selected EU country, with a desk review successfully conducted to identify best practices in VET staff, private sector, and agencies involved in dual education programs. The survey conducted among VET Centres were designed to help in selecting candidates for the study visit, with the report and draft agenda covering Croatia, Latvia, and Germany (shared with SAVE for approval). Despite all the preparatory work to conduct a study visit to Croatia, the trip failed due to visa issues. Latvia has now been identified as the next destination, and organizational work was in progress by the time of the evaluation.

Horizontal measures to support system delivery

Activity 4.1 (Support of the Communication Department of the State Agency for Vocational Education in developing effective communications and boosting the reputation of and attractiveness of VET): effective internal communication systems and ongoing training to support the successful implementation of the project was identified as a key enabler from the beginning. In the first year, the project supported in developing a communication strategy and action plan for SAVE, including rebranding efforts and website updates. Despite challenges such as structural changes and delays, the project team has made progress towards achieving the outlined outputs. In the second year, the project has successfully promoted vocational education through various activities such as photobanks, public campaigns, and festivals. It has also organized capacity-building trainings and events for VET providers and developed success stories and social video clips to showcase the involvement

of people with disabilities and vulnerable groups in vocational education. These efforts have contributed to raising awareness and promoting vocational education in Azerbaijan. In the 4th year, the project achieved the production of five articles on dual programmes, showcasing various aspects such as hospitality, automobile, textile, and shop management. Additionally, the successful development and publication of five success stories were well-received by UNDP Eurasia[12].

Activity 4.2 (Support of the State Agency for Vocational Education in organizing National Skills Competitions and participating in International Skills Competitions): the main focus of the activity is to assist SAVE in coordinating local vocational education competitions in Azerbaijan and preparing for international contests. In the second implementation year, "World Skills Azerbaijan" NGO has achieved full membership status within the global "WorldSkills" organization[13], allowing them to participate in international competitions across multiple skill areas. Additionally, the organization has transitioned into a non-governmental organization and will oversee all activities related to the WS component through a direct contract with UNDP, pending official approval from "WS International." In the last year, the project supported a local vocational education competition in Azerbaijan. Additionally, a vacancy was created for direct contracting with WorldSkills Azerbaijan Association to support the organization and participation in national and international skills competitions A study visit organised with a focus on organizing study tours and providing trainings for optimal competition organization.

Activity 4.3 (Support of the piloting of competitive financing mechanism to provide non-financial contribution/assets and material support to VET providers): The activities aimed to support VET providers through a competitive financing mechanism, selecting 10 innovative projects focusing on various areas for non-financial contributions. Training sessions and workshops were conducted to ensure understanding of the application process and guidelines, with successful outcomes achieved in developing competition rules and organizing training courses. In the fourth implementation year, the activities aimed to pilot a competitive financing mechanism for VET providers, with a consultant offering training to enhance their capacity. Ten projects were selected for non-financial contributions, focusing on areas like alternative energy and inclusion of vulnerable groups. The Evaluation Committee assessed proposals based on impact, sustainability, efficiency, and relevance, ultimately shortlisting ten projects for further advancement. The supply of equipment and implementation of 10 TVET centres was in progress by the time of the evaluation

Activity 4.4 (Support pilot actions to engage youth in VET under the leadership of SAVE): The "Vocational Volunteers" program, developed with the assistance of a local specialist, aims to enhance the appeal of vocational education and training for young people. The program involved students in voluntary programs, social work, and services within the vocational

---

[12] https://www.undp.org/eurasia/stories/possible-passion - last consulted in June 2024
[13] https://worldskills.org/

education system, as well as the organization of activities related to vocational education. In the last year, the "VET Volunteers" program, launched in October 2023, aimed to engage Azerbaijani youth in vocational education through various initiatives. Despite challenges, the program remains committed to fostering youth involvement in vocational education and promoting innovation in the field. Various informative events have been organized in different regions. The selected participants were involved in training sessions and team-building activities. The implementation of these activities was in progress at the time of evaluation

Ef7. Outputs were regularly reported to the donor through narrative reporting sessions and regular meetings and appraised in the Steering Committee meetings. A Results-Oriented Monitoring mission commissioned by EU Delegation in 2022 confirmed the achievement of intermediate milestones of the project and made some recommendations which generated a Management Response from UNDP through the project management.

Ef8. During the implementation, geopolitical situation in the region changed, leading to delays in disbursements and thus, in executing the work plans. This situation required a no-cost prolongation of the project beyond August 2024, the initial project deadline, by three months. The extension was requested in May 2024 and approved in July 2024 with no objections.

| | Results chain: Main expected results | Indicators | Baselines (incl. reference year) | Achieved | Targets (incl. reference year) | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Output 1 | Modernised infrastructure/ equipment in selected VET providers (incl. COVID 19-related investments) | No of VET facilities renovated and supplied (disaggregated by type) e.g.<br>i. Career support service centre<br>ii. Competence centre for ToT<br>iii. Learning factories (LF)<br>iv. Income generation activities (IG)<br>v. Small scale workshops | i. 0 (2020)<br>ii. 0 (2020)<br>iii. 0 (2020)<br>iv. 5 business plans (2020)<br>v. 2 workshops (2020) | i. 4 Career Centres (2021-2022)<br>ii. 1 competence Center (2022)<br>iii. 2 LF 2022<br>iv. 1 Business Plan (2022)<br><br>2 Business plans (2023)<br><br>v. 2 workshops 2022<br>2 workshops 2023 | i.7 Career Centres (2021-2022)<br>ii.1 Competence Centre for ToT (2022)<br>iii.3 LF (1 (2021), 2 (2022-2023))<br>iv. 5 IG (2021-2022)<br>v.7 workshops (2020-2022) | Output 1 was partly achieved, with the Competence Center created, and with few less Career Centres, Learning Factories and small-scale workshops achieved compared to the target. |
| | | No. of facilities receiving COVID-19 specific supplies, equipment and associated infrastructure<br>i. Production of protection materials/items<br>ii. TV studio for production of digital learning materials | i. 1 (2020)<br>ii. 0 (2020) | i. 0 (2020-2021)<br>Over 800.000 products (2021 dec)<br>ii. 1 started (2020-2021 Dec) TV studio (2022)<br>TV studio opened in May 2023 | i. 1 facility (2020-2021)<br><br>ii. 1 facility (2020-2021) | |
| Output 2 | | No of VET Provider teaching staff trained in VET skills<br><br>i. Training for curricula development | i. 49 Trainings 350 staff (2020) | i. 1 training 20 staff (2022)<br>14 trainings 283 staff (2023) | i. 10 trainings for 100 teaching staff (2021-2022) | |

| | Improved Institutional & human resource capacity of selected VET providers | ii. Local and abroad trainings WBL related | ii. 0 (2020) | ii. 46 (30 mentors+ 16 teachers) local trainings 2022<br>137 (95 mentors+ 40 teachers + 2 SAVE) local trainings 2023<br>Abroad training 0 | ii. 35 (25 teachers+10 mentors) / (2021-2023) | Output 2 was overachieved on most of its components, and partly achieved for instructors' trainings and WBL in abroad |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | iii. Training and team building activities for career guidance | iii. 4 trainings, 33 Staff (2020) | iii. 3 trainings (2020-2021)<br><br>6 trainings and teambuilding (2021-2022)<br><br>3 trainings and teambuilding (2022- 2023) | iii. 5 trainings and 3 teambuilding (2021-2024) | |
| | | iv. Training for instructor of Competency Centre | iv. 0 (2020) | iv. 2 trainings 10 instructors (2021-2022)<br><br>2 trainings 20 instructors 2023<br>1 training for 14 cooking instructors 2023 AFSA | iv. 10 trainings for 10 instructors (2021-2022) | |
| | | v. Training for educator and assistant for work with PwD | v. 1 training, 3 teachers (2020) | v. 7 trainings (42 people, 26 teachers, 10 mentors, 2 special educators and 4 individual assistances. (2021-2022)<br>4 trainings (34 people, 23 teachers, 3 mentors, 4 special educators, 4 psychologist (2022) | v. 10 trainings (2 special needs and 4 individual assistants) (2021-2023) | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No of VET Provider managers trained by the intervention in business/financial management skills<br><br>i. Training and workshops about business skills<br>ii. Training about private sector / strategic plan development<br>iii. Training for preparation of business plans for grants | i. 1 (2020)<br><br><br><br><br>ii. 1 (2020)<br><br><br><br>iii. 1 (2020) | i. 1 training 20 people 2021<br>4 trainings for 22 people incl. 11 PwD 2022<br>4 trainings and workshop for 120 staff from 74 VE centres 2023<br>2 trainings for 72 staff from SAVE and 18 VE centres 2023<br><br>ii. 2 trainings 20 people 2022<br>2 comms training 2022-2023<br>Training about soft skills with private sector 27 participants 2023<br>iii. 4 trainings 22 people each, incl. 11 PWD in 2022<br>1 training and workshop for 16 VE managers in 2023 | i. 10 trainings and 5 workshops for 150 staff (2020-2022)<br><br><br><br><br>ii. 10 trainings for 50 staff (2021-2022)<br><br><br>iii. 5 trainings for 20 staff (2021-2023) | |
| No of advisory boards and school strategic development plans developed and established<br><br>i. No of advisory boards with private sector membership<br>ii. Strategic development plan (SDP) for four-year<br>iii. Number of training needs analysis | i. 1 (2020)<br><br>ii. 5 SDPs in 5 VET Centres (2020)<br><br><br><br>iii. 2 training needs analysis (2020) | i. 1 Advisory Board -Board of Trustees (2020-2021)<br>2 Advisory Board -Board of Trustees (2022)<br>3 Advisory Boards (2024)<br>ii. 6 SDPs (2021)<br>iii. Training Needs for 7 VET (2021-2022)<br>5 HR plan and 5 TN (2023) | i. 3 advisory boards in 3 VET Centres (2 (2021), 1 (2022))<br>ii. 6 SDPs in 6 VET Centres (2020-2021)<br>iii. Human resource plans and the assessment of training needs for five targeted VET providers (2022-2023) | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Output 3 | Innovative VET services introduced into VET providers | No of new VET curricula adopted by VET providers<br><br>i. long-term course (incl. adjusted to needs of PwDs and vulnerable groups)<br>ii. short-term course (incl. adjusted to needs of PwDs and vulnerable groups)<br>iii. training materials (incl. adjusted to needs of PwDs and vulnerable groups)<br>iv. new programs are implemented | i. 42 courses without any adjustment (2020)<br><br>ii. 14 courses without any adjustment (2020)<br><br>iii. 118 training materials without any adjustment (2020)<br>iv. 35 courses without any adjustment (2020) | i. 7 new curricula (3 WBL, 2 PwD, 2 Higher VET) (2021-2022)<br>3 new curricula (1 PwD, 2 Higher VET) 2022<br>28 new curricula (1 WBL, 2 Higher VE, 10 Technical VE+ 15 short-term) 2023<br>ii. 3 short-term courses (2022)<br>15 short-term courses (2023)<br>iii. 23 Modules (2022)<br>25 Modules 2023<br>iv. 4 new programme (2021-2022)<br>6 new programme (2022)<br>13 new programme (2023) | i. 40 new curricula (incl. WBL, dual degree, future skills and adjustment to need PwDs) / (10 (2021-2022), 2 (2023)<br><br>ii. 18 short-term curricula (2021)<br><br><br>iii. 78 training materials / (28 (2021-2022), 50 (2023)<br><br>iv. 20 new programs 5 (2021-2022), 4 (2023), 11 (2024) | Under Output 3, the curricula modernisation and the research/needs analysis support were fully achieved. The recruitment of students for new programs was partly achieved, while the study tour and exchange program were not implemented. |
| | | No of support activities related of implementation of new programs by VET providers<br>i. Needs analysis: implementation of dual degree/diploma; needs of PwD and vulnerable groups,<br>ii. Guidelines and tools for work with PwD are developed<br>iii. Recruitment of teachers/mentors and | i. 0 (2020)<br><br>ii. 0 (2020)<br><br><br>iii. 0 (2020)<br><br><br>iv. 1290 students, 0 adult, | i. 2 desk review PIETA + Int consultant<br>ii. 1 toolkit for PwD training (2020-2021)<br>iii. 42 people- out of 26 teachers, 10 mentors, 2 special educators and 4 individual assistances. (2021-2022)<br>34 people-out of 23 teachers, 3 mentors, 4 special educators, 4 psychologist (2022-2023) | i. 2 Desk reviews (2021)<br>ii. 1 toolkit for Disability awareness training (2021-2022)<br><br>iii. 25 teachers, 10 mentors, 2 special needs educators and 4 individual assistants (2021-2023) | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | special needs educator and individual assistants<br>iv. Recruitment of students for new programs<br>v. study tour<br>vi. Teacher and student exchange<br>vii. Preparation of programs for international certification | 17 PwD (2020)<br>v. 0 (2020)<br>vi. 0 (2020)<br>vii. 0 (2020) | iv. 139 students WBL, 250 adults for short-term, 70 students PwD and vulnerable group 2022<br>535 students/435 (263 M, 172 F) students from Dual TVET/100 (37 M, 63 F) out of 27 PwDs (11 M, 13 F) (2023) | iv. 340 students WBL, 1500 adult for short-time course, 100 students of PwDs and vulnerable group (2022-2024)<br>v. 1-week study tour (2021-2022)<br>vi. 30 people, including managers, teachers and students (2022-2024)<br>vii. 1 program (2023-2024) | |
| | | No of Career Support Centres established and operational<br><br>i. Needs assessment about career guidance service.<br>ii. Research about low interest towards VET<br>iii. Creation of Career Support Centre<br>iv. New career guidance developed<br>v. Support of employment of student after study<br>vi. Activities boost attractiveness of VET schools and career service | i. 0 (2020)<br><br>ii. 0 (2020)<br><br>iii. 0 (2020)<br><br>iv. 0 (2020)<br><br>v. 592 out of 2218 students (2020) | i. Need Assessment of Career Services in country and Strategy for career guidance services in VE Centres (2021)<br><br>ii. Research report (2020-2021)<br><br>iii. 6 Career Support Center (2021-2022)<br>1 Career Support Center 2023 (Shaki)<br>iv. Career guidance produced in 2021<br>v. 75 (35 F, 40 M) graduates out of 119 (61 % graduates of WBL program) / 34 (11%) (27 F, 6M) adults of short-term courses out of 247 /incl. 2 PwDs (2022) | i. NA about Career guidance and handbook (2021)<br>ii. Assessment report (2020-2021)<br><br>iii. 7 VET Centres (3 (2021), 4 (2022))<br><br>iv. Development of guidance (2021)<br><br>v. 750 adults and 170 students (2021-2024), 10 training about business and soft skills / support of 20 PwD applicants of self- | The Career Centres were operationalised timely and with appropriate technical support. The field visits recorded very positive feedback. Career fairs and other events were partly achieved. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | vi. 0 events in secondary schools (2020)<br>0 events with PwDs (2020)<br>0 open door days (2020)<br>0 exhibitions (2020)<br>0 career days (2020)<br>0 graduate days (2020) | 249 (131 M, 69 F) graduates out of 358 (70% of graduates of Dual TVET)/ 12 (10%) (1 M, 11 F) adults of short-term courses out of 100/ incl. 2 PwDs (2023)<br>vi. 10 in Ganja + 2 in Shaki secondary school visit, 3 offline open-door days (Ganja, Jalilabad) - 3 online open days (Ganja, Shaki, Baku),1 exhibition 2021<br>188 events in secondary schools, 9 events with PwDs, 5 open door days, 1 graduation days 2022<br>2 events with PwDs, 2 open door days, 2 graduation days, 5 career days, 2 sectoral exhibitions 2023 | employed projects (2022-2024)<br><br>vi. 60 events in secondary schools, 10 events with PwDs, 10 open door days, participation on 6 exhibitions, 5 career days, 3 graduate days | |
| Output 4 | Skills VET providers through digitalization and online training enhanced | No of activities related skills development through digitalization and online training<br><br>i. Concept for integration of digitalization and future/green skills to VET content<br>ii. Development of digital learning resources | i. 0 (2020)<br>ii. 250 video lessons, 0 online course (2020)<br>iii. 1 online tool and platform for student assessment (MS Teams, video.edu.az).<br>0 skills sharing, career support. | i. 0<br>ii. 1 online course, 51 video lessons (2021)<br>iii. 4 platforms and 1 tool (2022)<br>-skills sharing, career support.<br>-Game application<br>-Online sales platform<br>-Career selection platform<br>-Assessment Tool<br><br>- | i. 1 Concept (2022)<br><br>ii. 5 online courses, 50 video lessons (2020-2024)<br><br><br>iii. 4 platforms and 1 tool (2020-2024) | Output 4 was partly achieved; one online course was created and 4 will be delivered by the end of project, while the platforms were established, but are not functional. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | iii. Online tools and platforms for student assessment, skills sharing, career support, game application and online sales of products of VET providers are developed and implemented | 0 game application. 0 online sales of products of VET providers (2020) | | |
| (Sub) Output 5 | VET competitive financing mechanisms operational | No of activities related development and implementation of innovative financing in selected VET providers.<br><br>i. Guidelines for income generation activities and competitive financing mechanism (small grants) are prepared<br>ii. No of small-scale programs/in kind support provided to VET providers<br>iii. Innovative financing schemes for VET sustainability adopted/piloted by VET providers<br>iv. Feasibility and business plans for private sector cooperation and | i.  0 (2020)<br><br>ii.  0 (2020)<br><br>iii.  0 (2020)<br><br>iv.  0 (2020) | i. Guidelines for income generation activities (2021) Guideline for organizing a competition designed to endorse initiatives from vocational education providers (2022)<br>ii.0<br>iii. 1 Business plan for income gen.act 2022 2 Business plans for income gen.act 2023<br><br>iv.3 Feasibility, 5 Business Plan (2021-2022) | i.  2 (1 income generation + 1 small grant) / (2021)<br>ii. 10 in kind contributions (2021-2022)<br>iii. 5 income generation activities for innovative finance schemes (2021-2023)<br>iv. 3 feasibility studies (2021-2022) and 3 business plans (2022-2023) | The activities under VET competitive financing mechanisms were partly achieved, as no small-scale programs/in-kind contributions were implemented. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | establishment of learning factory | | | | |
| (Sub)-Output 6 | New programme to engage youth in VET established and operational | i. No of new programs adopted by VET providers | 0 (2020) | 2 programs (1 Könüllü & Peşə Könüllüsü) / 300 students (1 Könüllü) and 80 youngh people (Peşə Könüllüsü) / 2020-2024 | | Activities related new programme on engaging youth in VET were achieved. |
| | | ii. No of pilot actions run (disaggregated by programme) | 0 (2020) | 15 pilot actions (3 events for "Bir Könüllü" / 10 trainings and 2 team building events for "Peşə Könüllüsü" / 6 small social projects) (2020-2024) | | |
| Output 7 | Capacity of national VET institutions strengthened | No of Competency centres for training of teachers established<br>i. Competency centre<br>ii. Study tour<br>iii. Pre-service training program for new teacher and instructors<br>iv. Webinars for training of teacher and managers | i. 1 (2020)<br>ii. 2 (2020)<br>iii. 0 (2020)<br>iv. 2 (2020) | i. 1 Competence centre (2022)<br><br>ii. 1 week study tour to Germany in November 2022<br>iii. 2 training programmes for new teachers/tutors developed and delivered to 53 HVE teachers and 19 HTVE tutors in 2022-2023.<br>iv. 1 webinar (2021)<br>9 webinars (2022) | i. 1 Centre (2021-2022)<br>ii. 1-week study visit (2021)<br>iii. 2 trainings (2021-2023)<br>iv. 10 webinars (2022-2024) | |
| | | No of staff trained from State institutions (disaggregated by institution) in VET related issues<br>i. No of developed training program<br>ii. No of delivered trainings<br>iii. No of Teacher and staff of VET providers | i. 7 in ICT (2020)<br>ii. 30<br>iii. 600<br>     a. 600<br>     b. 0 | i. 2 trainings 2020-2021)<br>1 training programs 2022<br>2 trainings programs 2023<br>ii. 12 trainings 2022<br>19 trainings 2023<br>iii. 55 teacher and managerial staff 2021-2022<br>a. 55 from 11 VET of SAVE | i. 5 training programs (2022)<br>ii. 30 trainings (2022)<br>iii. 200 teacher and staff of VET<br>a.150 from 74 VET of SAVE (2022-2024)<br>b. 50 from VET providers other organizations (2022-2024) | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | a. from 74 VET providers of SAVE and<br>b. from VET providers of other VET providers | | 140 teacher and managerial staff from 74 providers and SAVE 2023<br><br>72 teacher and managerial staff from SAVE and VE Centres 2023<br><br>b. 120 from 74 VET providers of SAVE and<br><br>20 from VET providers other organization in 2022-23 | | |
| Output 8 | Strengthened national coordination of VET | i. No of National Skills Council (NSC) on VET of Azerbaijan established and operational | 0 (2020) | i.1 NSC (all documents developed and submitted. 2nd meeting will be held in December 2021.<br><br>The NSC was established in December 2022. | 1 council (2021-2024) | Government of Azerbaijan committed to establishing and resourcing the NSCoA |
| | | ii. No of staff from NSC on VET trained in relevant skills | 0 (2020) | ii. 26 staff (2022) | 15 staff (2021-2023) | |
| | | iii. Round table with employers | 6 (2020) | iii.8 roundtables (2021)<br>5 roundtables (2022)<br><br>1 roundtable (2023) | 15 roundtables (2021-2024 | |
| Output 9 | | i. No of communication strategies (developed by the intervention) adopted by SAVE | 0 (2020) | Comms strategy (2021) | 1 strategy (2020-2021) | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | VET communication capacity enhanced | ii. No of staff trained in communications skills (VET Providers, SAVE staff) | 1 training (1 staff of SAVE 10 staff of VET providers) (2020) | i. 20 VET providers, 10 SAVE staff (1 training and 1 teambuilding event (2020-2021)<br><br>29 from VET providers, 2 SAVE staff, 6 Private sector reps (3 trainings) 2022<br><br>30 VE staff (2 trainings and 2 teambuilding events) 2023 | 50 staff (5 training and 2 teambuilding events) / (2021-2024) | |
| | | iii. Percentage of activities to be implemented underdeveloped communication strategy for SAVE | 0 (2020) | At least 5% in 2020-2021<br><br>At least 15% in 2022<br><br>At least 40% in 2023<br><br>At least 90% in 2023 | 30% of activities during project implementation cycle | |
| Output 10 | | No of support activity for organization of local skills competition in VET<br>i. Guidelines / standards<br>ii. Study tour<br>iii. Organization of local competition | i. 0 (2020)<br>ii. 0 (2020)<br>iii. 0 (2020) | i. WS provided guideline and standards, therefore cancelled.<br>ii. 0<br>iii. National skills competition (2022) | i. 1 Guidelines / standards (2021)<br>ii. 1 study visit (2021)<br>iii. 3 local competitions (2021-2022) | During the project's no-cost extension, the number of conferences was reduced from two |
| | Increased attractiveness | No of support activity for organization of international skills competition in VET<br>i. Training for participant by local trainer | i. 0 (2020)<br>ii. 0 (2020) | | i. 6-month trainings by 2 local trainers (2022-2024)<br>ii. 6-month trainings by 2 international trainers (2021-2022) | |

| | and awareness of VET | ii. Training for participant by international trainer | | | | to one, and the number of training sessions and fairs were increased, reflecting the demand. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No of conferences to present vocational education reforms and achievements and a fair to promote VET providers and services | i. Three conferences (2020)<br>ii. one fair (2020) | i. 0<br><br>ii. One fair (2022)<br><br>One fair (2023) | i. 1 conference (2022-2024)<br><br>ii. 3 fairs (2023-2024) | |

*Table 3: Project outputs and their achievement assessment*

Colour legend for achievements (as per ToR):

| Green= Achieved | Yellow= On target to be achieved | Red= Not on target to be achieved |
|---|---|---|

| | Results chain: Main expected results | Indicators | Baselines (incl. reference year) | Targets (incl. reference year) | Value by time of evaluation | Sources of data |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Impact** <br><br> **(Overall Objective)** | Better job/career prospects for young people/unemployed/People with disabilities who have accessed VET services | i. No of people from the target groups (TG) who have benefited from institution or workplace-based VET/skills development (disaggregated by sex/TG) via this EU intervention (this is EU Results Framework indicator no. 2.15 <br> ii. No of VET graduates (from the selected VET providers) successfully gaining employment in their chosen field of skills (sex/TG disaggregated) | i. 400 students / 0 students for WBL programs / 0 adults / 6 PwDs (2020) <br><br> ii. 592 long-term (344M – 248F), 0 WBL, 0 adult, 2 PwD (2020) | i. 3000 young people (incl. 340 WBL) for new programs /1500 adults /100 PwDs (2024) <br><br> ii. 170 students (50 % of students of WBL program) / 750 adults of short-term courses/ 20 PwDs (2024) | 439 students / 139 ( 55 M, 84 F) students for WBL programs / 300 (87 M, 213 F) adults / out of 70 PwDs ( 36 F, 34 M) (2022) <br><br> 535 students/435 (263 M , 172 F) students from Dual TVET/100 (37 M, 63 F) out of 27 PwDs (11 M, 16 F) (2023) 75 (35 F,40 M) graduates out of 119 (61 % graduates of WBL program) / 34 (11%) (27 F, 6M )adults of short-term courses out of 247 /incl. 2 PwDs (2022) 249 (131 M, 118 F) graduates out of 358 (70% of graduates of Dual TVET)/ 12 (10%) (1 M, 11 F) adults of short-term courses out of 100/ incl. 2 PwDs (2023) | 1. Admission plan approved by Cabinet of Minister <br> 2. Centralised IT system of Vocational Education <br> 3. Annual reports of Ministry of Science and Education and State Statistic Committee |

*Table 4: Project's contribution to impact level*

Ef9. The previous stage of the project, implemented between 2017 and 2020 ("Establishment of Regional Industrial VET Competence Centre in Ganja"), benefited from a similar final evaluation. Most of the recommendations were integrated in the current project, including the recommendation referred to increasing the skills related to Results-Based Management, namely in formulating outcome- and impact-oriented objectives with corresponding indicators.

Ef10. As an example of successful approach, the information provided and the interviews highlight the Dual Vocational education system, where private sector actors were also actively involved. In some instances, the approach where students were taught one day theoretical knowledge in a VC, then they had the chance to apply the knowledge practically in a private facility, was very welcomed both by students and by the entrepreneurs. This way of teaching new skills increases students' motivation, who see quite fast the results of their education. In Ganja, the partnership with a privately owned retail chain is another example of good practice, where the students were able to effectively blend the theoretical courses with the practical work. The students managed in relatively short time to perform a god quality job, for a comparatively lower salary, increasing supermarkets' productivity. Now, all supermarkets' of Bazarstore in Ganja employ graduates from the vocational school.

Ef11. To ease students' accessibility to vocational programs, the VCs should also create innovative solutions for transportation. Some students reside at distances which can prove to be an accessibility barrier. In this situation, as VCs cannot rely solely on limited public resources, partnerships with the private agents can prove effective to provide easier accessibility to the vocational programmes. One success example in this approach is the partnership with the "Woodpecker" company in Jalilabad,

Ef12. For tourism specialization, interviews revealed that the seasonality was correctly considered in the activities planning, while the foreign languages still constitute a weakness, and the students and the private sector agents would benefit from more attention on this skill.

Ef13. Although mentioned in the activity matrix under outputs 2 and 3, the project didn't focus on building capacities and training for soft skills, accompanying the hard skills embedded in the curricula and trainings (Finding 9). Soft skills play a crucial role in vocational training by enhancing employability and workplace effectiveness:

- Communication skills: Facilitates clear interactions and understanding in diverse work environments.
- Teamwork: Encourages collaboration and productivity among colleagues.
- Problem-solving: Enables innovative solutions to challenges in various tasks.
- Adaptability: Prepares individuals to adjust to changing circumstances and technologies.
- Time Management: Helps prioritize tasks and meet deadlines efficiently.

- Leadership: Inspires and guides teams towards achieving goals.

Integrating soft skills into vocational training prepares individuals not just for technical tasks but for overall success in their careers.

Visibility

Ef14. The project prioritized compliance with the Communication and Visibility Manual for European External Actions, ensuring that all publications and events featured the EU's visual identity. Official confirmations from the EU were obtained for content and design, with adjustments made as needed.

Ef15. Trainings, workshops, and seminars prominently used UNDP and EU visibility tools like banners and roll-ups. Press releases and media coverage, including TV and press, documented the project's progress.

Ef16. In the following year of implementation, the project has maintained close collaboration with SAVE and MoSE, adhering strictly to the EU's communication and visibility guidelines. Visibility materials were disseminated through UNDP Azerbaijan's and the beneficiaries' official channels, social media platforms, and press, with activities promoted in agreement with the EU delegation in Azerbaijan and uploaded to the EU Digitool platform.

Ef17. The communications targeted specific groups:

- Direct Beneficiaries: Ensuring awareness of project activities, impacts, donors, and implementers.
- Stakeholders: Regular updates on project progress, activities, and participation invitations, highlighting the support providers.
- General Public: Raising awareness of the project's role in improving education quality and its implementers and funders.
- Multipliers: Informing about project goals and activities, fostering program success, and promoting EU and UN values.
- High-profile events and public campaigns were regularly organized, with media and social media serving as key platforms for engaging multipliers. Corporate EU and UNDP websites and social media accounts continuously disseminated project information.

Ef18. The visibility activities benefitted from the requirements, standards and from the resources of EU and UNDP.

Ef19. As a result of the visibility activities and the improved perception on VET, the E-Twinning project implemented by the Information and Digitalization department of the Ministry of Science and Education contacted the VET4Future project in order to increase synergies. In

March 2023, a seminar[14] on "Networking and exchange of experience in vocational education" was held in Baku, exploring the possibilities of involving the staff of vocational education institutions in the "eTwinning" project, and was acknowledged that project is relevant to the implementation of innovations in VET centres, as well as capacity building and development of networking.

## 4c. Efficiency

Ey1. The total project budget was foreseen at US$ 6.635.071 (100 per cent EU contribution). The split per components was initially US$ 1,301,648 for Output 1 (19.6 per cent), US$ 2,138,565 for Output 2 (32.2 per cent), US$ 404,953 for Output 3 (6.1 per cent), and 583,556 for horizontal measures (8.7 per cent). The remainder of 33.4 per cent was constituted by project management, evaluation, and General Management Support, as per the UNDP standard. By the mid-term of implementation (ROM report), the financial execution was at around a third, reflecting the delays in the beginning stage. Project activities were slowed up by financing delays independent of the project management, partially impacting activities. The activities were accelerated gradually, and by the time of the final evaluation, the financial execution indicates the project will be completely executed by the end of implementation. Due to the financing delays, it was necessary for a no-cost project extension to be requested, approved in July 2024.

Ey2. The project design followed the UNDP Rules and Regulations for Project Management, establishing a Project Governance Structure, and assigning the roles of Implementing Agency to the Ministry of Science and Education, with the State Agency on Vocational Education as Government counterpart. The formal engagement of the stakeholders was ensured through the Project's Steering Committee (PSC), where EUD, MoSE, SAVE and UNDP represent their interests. The first meeting was organized in February 2021, when the inception stage and the progress achieved in 2020 have been assessed, and the decision to convey the PSC once a year was agreed. The PSC held another two meetings in October 2021 and May 2023 as no issues requested for more frequent meetings. Before the end of the implementation, and to provide clearance for the project prolongation, a fourth PSC meeting is scheduled for July 2024.

Ey3. The project faced challenges in recruiting timely the necessary experts and companies for several project components. For example, the expertise to conduct a comprehensive analysis of international trends and benchmarks for the establishment of Dual Diploma Programme within the context of Azerbaijan was several times advertised, delayed, and – in the end – the recruited expert did not deliver the appropriate quality of work. The Project management highlighted the delay and correctly reported on the causes and implications.

---

[14] https://etwinningplus.edu.az/news/99 - last consulted in June 2024

Evaluation Report – "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"– July 2024

The delay did not cause serious disadvantage in the context of the general delay of the project, as the second-best candidate was eventually involved into the process.

Ey4. The project also had instances of flexibility to be considered positive lessons. One example is that, after the Career Centres started initially with supporting writing cover letters and CVs (which didn't bear the expected positive results), the approach was switched to providing internship opportunities to small groups of students, which was better welcomed by the students and entrepreneurs as connecting the students with real needs in the labour market.

Ey5. Income generation was also considered in the project design and included support for vocational education competitions for income-generating activities. Generating revenues supports efficiency of used funds and increases the likelihood for sustainability. In the beginning of the project, legal framework was not clear on allowing VCs on generating income under project activities. After clarifying the options, five business plans were developed and supported aiming for income generation by the targeted VET providers. The business plan viability remains to be proven.

Ey6. The Monitoring and Reporting system was well defined and put in place. Constant data gathering took place. Annual Narrative Reports were produced with good quality and quantity of details regarding activities implemented, outputs and some analysis of outputs contributing to achieving outcomes. Simplified updated stakeholder analysis was also included in the annual reports, as well examples of visibility activities implemented. The work plans detailed for each implementation year were very detailed, with clear milestones for each activity. The Project's Logical Framework (LogFrame) was designed to be aligned with the corresponding to the EU Delegation's standards and to the one used by SAVE.

Ey7. By the end of 2022, a Results-Oriented Monitoring mission was performed, a standard approach for projects funded by the EU. The ROM report gave a clear picture of the achievements of the project by mid-term, and suggested changes to improve project implementation and results. The UNDP Management Response accepted and committed to addressed five issues or recommendations. The recommendation of drafting an exit strategy from the project will be completed after the current evaluation.

Ey8. According to several interviews, partnerships with agents from the private sector improved in the last years, but there is still room for improvement. Many initiatives are ad-hoc or not transparent, and their replication to a larger scale is not ensured. Corporate structures like the Chamber of Commerce or National Confederation of Entrepreneurs are not active partners in vocational education yet.

Ey9. Networks for sharing knowledge and best practices play a pivotal role in enhancing vocational education systems by fostering collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. The key roles they may play are facilitating collaboration, sharing best

practices, enhancing curriculum development and innovation, improving alignment with industry, increase visibility and recognition, and enhances quality assurance. (Finding 10).

## 4d. Sustainability

S1. The Project Document refers already sustainability considerations being take already at the design stage. The project is a development of the previously implemented projects "Modernizing Vocational Education and Training (VET) Centres in Azerbaijan" (2017 – 2020), by expanding the results achieved and embedding lessons learned in the project design. The project design foresaw sustainability considerations under four criteria: financial, institutional, policy and environmental.

S2. The *financial sustainability* was supposed to be ensured by the income generation activities of the vocational centres, and by providing trainings on entrepreneurial activities and mindset, as well as development and implementation of Business Plans.

S3. The institutional sustainability was correctly defined in the ProDoc and included building capacities and establishing working procedures to ensure continued involvement from the stakeholders. The project successfully involved some private sector agents in the VET programmes (through "Dual Education" programme, Open Door days, curricula development, round tables etc.), serving as living examples of functional partnerships that could be replicated at a larger scale, numerically and geographically.

S4. One of the main ways to ensure sustainability of the project was to develop the capacity of individuals involved in VET. The project aims to improve training programs for teachers and management personnel of VET providers, and to introduce new career guidance services. Additionally, it also includes enhancing the capacity of other stakeholders such as SAVE and industry sector representatives. This approach is expected to lead to sustainable learning benefits, including improved inclusive education for people with disabilities, the adoption of innovative methodologies, and better business knowledge along with an entrepreneurial mindset.

S5. In the context of policy sustainability, the Government of Azerbaijan recognizes the importance of developing the VET system in the "Strategic Roadmap for Vocational Education and Training" of 2016, "Socio-economic development strategy of Republic of Azerbaijan for 2022-2026" identifying strategic and prioritized directions in development of VET sector and other government declarations. The goal is to reform Azerbaijan's VET system through improvements in infrastructure, educational content, professional capacity, recognition of prior learning, internal quality assurance, and social partnerships. This political support impacts financial sustainability, which seems promising despite the current lack of specific commitments. The centres are capable of maintaining infrastructure and strengthening financial prospects through improved connections to the private sector and income generation activities.

S6. In some Vocational Centres, the infrastructure was modernised at least in part during the previous project, and one of the challenges for sustainability was ensuring well-qualified personnel to operate modern machines. The field visit in Ganja was on such example, with machinery barely used as skilled operators are hard to find. The current stage of the project considered better this aspect, by focusing more on training future trainers.

S7. On the remaining challenges side, some centres may need ongoing support to maintain these new practices beyond the duration of the project, particularly in areas such as establishing and maintaining contacts between VET centres and the private sector, which has been facilitated by UNDP. The planned presence of an exit strategy, outlining the steps to be taken once UNDP's support ends, is a strength that needs to be maintained.

S8. As the ROM report and some interviews highlighted, towards the end of the implementation is good the project will draft an exit strategy, to be cleared by the PSC. The exit strategy should provide options on how to ensure the results are being used by stakeholders to continue the positive changes in perception, quantity and quality delivered by the renewed components of VET in the country. The strategy should contain a brief assessment of the situation at the end of the project, then the knowledge transfer, suggestions to MoSE/SAVE for strategic and operational continuation, stakeholders contribution after the end of the project, and – eventually – a communication strategy.

S9. The sustainability is also enhanced by the Training-of-Trainers project component. In the first year, preliminary activities were carried out, including planning a trip to Germany, as study case for best practices for the establishment of Competence Center for ToT. The study tour took place in October – November 2022, where SAVE and project staff was able to get insights into teacher training and professional development practices, with a particular emphasis on competency centres.

## 4e. Cross-Cutting Issues

CC1. The ProDoc contains general mentioning of inclusive vocational education, without a specific stated focus. In the UN context, inclusivity refers to ensuring equal opportunities and access for all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances. This can refer to promoting equality, embracing diversity, reducing disparities, empowering marginalised groups, and fostering participation.

CC2. Several project components considered gender-balanced approach and included activities targeting people with disabilities. For example, in 2023, VE Centres in Baku and Ganja provided inclusive vocational education opportunities for 100 students, including people with disabilities, offering courses in stained glass, pottery, computer operations, and tailoring. These programs were designed with a keen focus on achieving gender balance and

promoting inclusivity within vocational education, as stated in the work plan and in the annual report post implementation.

CC3. Attention to ensure gender balance within activities has been formulated already in the ProDoc, and has been consistently mentioned in work plans, and reported in narrative annual reports. For almost all activities, the gender distribution of beneficiaries has been recorded. Due to specificities of certain job profiles, in some activities more women have been trained (e.g., ceramic, courses, stained-glass production), while in others equal gender representation has been achieved.

CC4. The inclusivity can be embedded at all levels - design of curricula, access to trainings and courses, infrastructure (access ramps, disability-oriented workplace, sanitation units, etc), and building soft skills. Some principles and actions can be improved and better aligned in the future according UN's Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). According to this, being aligned with the accessible to individuals with disabilities, works to make its platforms, communications, and materials accessible to individuals with disabilities, and engages in capacity-building initiatives to enhance the understanding and skills of its staff, partners, and volunteers regarding disability inclusion.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on facts and findings outlined in the previous section (4. Analysis and findings above), the following conclusions are being drawn:

*Relevance*: UNDP has significantly contributed to enhancing vocational education in Azerbaijan. These efforts are aligned with broader goals such as promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development and strengthening institutions for better public and social service delivery. Additionally, the European Union's Eastern Partnership and collaborations with entities like the ETF have further supported vocational education reform in Azerbaijan.

Vocational education is recognized as a critical element in bridging the needs of students with those of society and the private sector. Accurate and reliable data collection is essential for planning and implementing vocational education programs effectively. The recent expansion of geographic areas for vocational education presents new opportunities, with projections indicating significant growth in the number of VET students. The image of VET in Azerbaijan has improved due to various modernization efforts and alignment with private sector needs. UNDP's involvement brings global expertise and resources, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of vocational education projects. However, there is a need for better coordination among donors to maximize synergetic opportunities and address gaps in areas such as curriculum development and coordination of Dual VE Programmes.

Overall, the strategic partnerships and focused initiatives by the UN, EU, and other stakeholders are paving the way for a robust and responsive vocational education system in Azerbaijan, contributing to the country's sustainable development and economic resilience. Additionally, better coordination amongst donors is desired by several beneficiaries, as well as larger-scale similar activities, to reach critical mass. With all these considerations, the relevance is rated as *Satisfactory*.

*Effectiveness*: The project, initiated in August 2020 amidst the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, has successfully implemented a range of innovative strategies to modernize vocational education and training in Azerbaijan, focusing on enhancing collaboration with the private sector, improving curricula, and providing digital resources. Key achievements include the establishment of career guidance services, the introduction of inclusive education practices, and the development of new educational programs, all aimed at equipping students with relevant skills for the workforce. Under Pillar 2, the project made efforts in enhancing vocational education and training by establishing workshops, integrating innovative learning factories, and addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, all while promoting inclusivity and accessibility for persons with disabilities. These efforts not only improve infrastructure and educational content but also create income-generating opportunities and empower students in the creative industry. Under pillar 3, the establishment of the National Skills Council in Azerbaijan aims to enhance coordination between vocational education providers, the private sector, and other stakeholders to better align labour market needs with skilled professionals. Additionally, the creation of a Competence Center at the Baku State Vocational Education Center is crucial for improving the quality of vocational education by providing training programs for teachers and capacity-building initiatives to enhance skills in VET, industry, and innovation.

The project has also demonstrated significant progress in vocational education and training, particularly through effective partnerships and innovative teaching methods, while also highlighting the need for enhanced focus on soft skills to improve overall employability. Additionally, the successful visibility efforts have fostered greater awareness and collaboration among stakeholders, further supporting the project's objectives.

Among the success stories, the Dual Vocational Programme involved a very good blending of theoretical learning with internships and on-site" learning by doing", appreciated unanimously by VCs and private sector representatives.

Among the areas where improvements can be made, an institutionalized knowledge and best practices sharing platform should be reinstated, where directors and other VC employees can exchange opinions, and experiences to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the activities. Additionally, more focus on soft skills, especially relevant for entrepreneurial activities of graduates, would be beneficial.

*Efficiency*: The project faced initial delays but showed accelerated financial execution over time. It followed UNDP regulations, engaging key stakeholders through a Project Steering Committee, with meetings scheduled to ensure oversight and progress. Challenges included delays in recruiting qualified experts and companies according UNDP rules, affecting the analysis of skills and novelty approaches. However, these delays were managed without significant disruptions.

Income generation was addressed by supporting business plans for vocational centres, despite initial legal ambiguities. A robust monitoring system ensured detailed annual reporting and alignment with EU and UNDP standards. Partnerships with the private sector improved but need further development for consistency and scalability. Knowledge-sharing networks among vocational centres remain underutilized, highlighting areas for future focus.

*Sustainability*: The Project, having embedded sustainability from the outset building on lessons from a previous initiative, aimed to ensure sustainability through financial, institutional, policy, and environmental considerations. It focused on capacity building, partnerships with the private sector, and government support to reform the VET system in Azerbaijan. The results signal a highly likely sustainability under the assumption that SAVE is capable to collect the most accurate data, on which to base its future activities. However, challenges such as maintaining modern infrastructure, secure sufficiently qualified personnel and developing an exit strategy need to be addressed for long-term sustainability.

Financially, VET centres aim to generate income through public and private training programs. Institutionally, the project has successfully engaged private sector partners through dual education models, setting the stage for wider replication. Capacity building for teachers, managers, and stakeholders like SAVE is crucial for enduring benefits, including improved education for people with disabilities and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. Policy-wise, government backing, reflected in the 2016 "Strategic Roadmap for Vocational Education and Training," underscores the commitment to reform, enhancing the potential for financial and structural sustainability. While infrastructure upgrades are underway, challenges remain, particularly in training personnel to utilize modern machinery effectively. Sustained success requires ongoing support to maintain private sector relationships and a strategic exit plan.

The project will develop an exit strategy to ensure the continuity of achievements post-implementation, outlining knowledge transfer and stakeholder roles, and solidifying the project's impact on Azerbaijan's VET system.

*Cross-cutting Issues*: The project emphasizes inclusivity in vocational education, aligning with UN principles to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of background or identity. Efforts to promote gender balance and support people with disabilities are evident in various initiatives, such as courses offered in Baku and Ganja for diverse groups, including 100 students with disabilities. The project maintains a strong focus on gender equality, consistently recording the gender distribution of participants across activities. While certain

programs have naturally attracted more female participants, others have achieved balanced representation. Inclusivity is integrated at all levels, from curriculum design to infrastructure access. Future efforts should align more closely with the UN's Disability Inclusion Strategy, enhancing accessibility and building capacity among staff and partners for improved disability inclusion.

According to the ToR, the project components are rated according to the scale provided

| Measure | Rating | Achievement Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Relevance** | **Satisfactory (S)** | The Project is highly relevant on almost all components. Additional focus can be placed in the future on supporting SAVE/MoSE in strengthening data collection and processing before designing, testing and implementing policies and interventions. |
| **Progress Towards Results** | Pillar 1 Achievement Rating: **Satisfactory (S)** | All activities have been timely implemented and mostly achieved their results. Minor variations (e.g., VR technology not being applicable yet, or the Knowledge Share academy not being used by SAVE at its full potential) do not significantly impact the overall achievements. |
| | Pillar 2 Achievement Rating: **Highly Satisfactory (HS)** | Almost all activities under Pillar 2 were properly and timely implemented (save for the teachers/mentors training programme, with chances to be achieved by the end of project) |
| | Pillar 3 Achievement **Highly Satisfactory (S)** | Almost all activities under Pillar 3 were properly and timely implemented (save for the implementation of business/development plans, with three out of five) |
| | Horizontal measures to support system delivery **Satisfactory (S)** | Results under Activities 4.1 and 4.3 were largely achieved, whereas under 4.2 and 4.4 they are still under completion, with a fairly good probability to be achieved by the end of the prolonged end of the project. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Project Implementation & Adaptive Management** | **Highly Satisfactory (HS)** | Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |
| **Sustainability** | **Likely (L)** | The sustainability was embedded in the ProDoc and design philosophy, including knowledge transfer mechanisms to trainers, teachers, and partnerships with the private sector. The upcoming Exit Strategy will increase Sustainability probability. |

*Table 5: Evaluation ratings and achievement summary table for project*

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the evaluation formulates the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: UNDP should consider providing support (technical, capacity building) to strengthen the data collection and analysis, important in the logical chain generating modern VET.** As vocational education acts in a fast-changing environment (dependent on the technological advance and the dynamic private sector), it is critical for SAVE and MoSE to access the most reliable and comprehensive data on which they define their policies and actions. The best policies or activities cannot be effective if they rely on incomplete or erroneous data. (Based on Finding 2 in relevance chapter).

> **Recommendation 1a: Ensure that yearly curricula update encompass best practices (**methodological and content**), based on comprehensive private sector needs analysis.** Provide continued support to ensure standardisation methodology for writing or adapting new curricula, to avoid inconsistencies in quality. (Based on Findings 1 and 4).

> **Recommendation 1b. Explore the options and potential added value of creating a digital library with training material**. Existing models can be reached and adapted to the local needs (see proposed models from Germany, Korea). Operating a digital library would increase accessibility of all students' categories to up-to-date information and knowledge.

**Recommendation 2:** Continue to improve people's perception on VET, through popularising the positive results of existing VCs (visibility activities) as well as by upscaling activities and results. (Based on Finding 3) Activities in a previous project were implemented in two vocational centres. Based on the lessons learned, the current project expanded activities in eight centres. Although the growth is significant, more vocational centres.

**Recommendation 3: Investigate ways to prominently link Career Centres with Dual vocational education programme.** Both the dual career programme and the career centres were welcomed by most stakeholders. This approach will ensure better sustainability and increased synergies. (Based on Finding 6).

>**Recommendation 3a: Consider expanding the psychological training for career specialists in career centres,** to enhance their understanding on the psychology of the students, who go through a critical age in taking life decisions (especially relevant in schools not having psychologists; based on Finding 7).

**Recommendation 4: Strengthen the principle of market fairness.** In the provinces, interviews indicated that, in some instances, the collaboration between the vocational centres and the private sector agents was mainly done based on personal relations. Although this approach ensures partners' involvement, the results might produce unwanted results: not the most appropriate partners might be chosen; and market unbalances might be triggered, arbitrarily producing advantages for some players only (based on Finding 5).

**Recommendation 5: Consider new training elements, according to newest developments on the labour market.** New training trends on Virtual Reality (Finding 8) or more focus on soft skills (Finding 10) should be included more consistently in curricula and trainings (especially relevant for entrepreneurial skills) can be considered. These elements should be validated by proper market analysis performed for or by SAVE (see also Recommendation 1).

>**Recommendation 5a: For tourism specialisation,** additional attention should be placed on extra courses of foreign languages. They will help students and graduates to get enhanced communication skills, facilitate improved customer service, competitive advantage, and might facilitate professional growth (by easing access for self-study).

>**Recommendation 5b: Consider a more prominent role of soft skills to be taught to students.** Accompanying the hard skills acquired during vocational education, soft skills (e.g., time management, critical thinking, teamwork, creativity, conflict resolution, communication skills) play a critical role, especially for students who might consider a self-standing career (Finding 9).

**Recommendation 6: Consider (re)creating networks for sharing knowledge and best practices.** The networks play a pivotal role in enhancing vocational education systems by fostering collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. (Based on Finding 10). A similar structure - Directors' Council – existed before and was discontinued. Communication groups based on social media, although convenient, do not cater for safety considerations and forces people/schools to use tools otherwise not required.

**Recommendation 7: Future similar projects should also consider potential pathways for graduates increasing in value for vocational education.** Some students could use the acquired hard and soft skills, and - with a grant programme - can be encouraged to develop

their own business. Fostering entrepreneurship attempts in the country increases the value added in the economic environment, compared to just providing "skilled" employable workforce on the labour market.

**INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT PROCUREMENT NOTICE**

Date: February 19, 2024

**Country:** Azerbaijan

Description of the assignment: International Expert on Final Evaluation of the Project

**Project name:** **"VET for the future: development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"**

**Period of assignment/services (if applicable):** March 2024 – May 2024 (25 consultancy days combination of 7 days in field and 18 days home based work)

## 1. BACKGROUND

**a. Background**

The EU funded UNDP implemented project **"VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"** is intended to support the modernization of VET institutions in Azerbaijan to deliver competence-based training in order to increase the attractiveness and labour market relevance of VET.   Project activities will be piloted in eight Vocational Education (VE) schools/centers (four in Baku and four in the regions - Ganja, Jalilabad and Sheki). The selected regions are a top priority for the Ministry of Science and Education, especially for State Agency on VE and have been selected based on factors such as labor market relevance, priority sectors for country development, private sector interest and the existence of required infrastructure. The project's main target groups are youth, adults, people with disabilities, professional, administrative and management staff of the center and unemployed men and women. The project is also expected to increase public awareness, change occupational stereotypes, improve inclusivity, support for people with disabilities and attract more women to VET and increase capacity of VE providers to implement innovate income generating small projects. The best practices derived through this project in the targeted locations with be later further replicated in other regions.

The final evaluation will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outcomes as specified in the Project Document, and assess the relevance and sustainability of outputs as contributions to mid-term and longer-term outcomes. The evaluation will also review the project's strategy, its risks to sustainability.

The evaluation must provide evidence based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The evaluator will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. UNDP Initiation Plan, the Project Document, project reports, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the evaluator considers useful for this evidence-based review).

The evaluator is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach[1] ensuring close engagement with the UNDP Country Office, EUD, project team, government counterparts (project beneficiary) and other key stakeholders. Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful evaluation. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities; key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project team, project stakeholders, etc.

The final evaluation report should describe the full evaluation approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

## 2. SCOPE OF WORK, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ANALYTICAL WORK

### 1. Scope of Work

The scope of the final evaluation will cover all activities undertaken in the framework of the project. The evaluator will compare planned outputs of the project to actual outputs and assess the actual results to determine their contribution to the attainment of the project objective.

The evaluator will assess the following four categories of project progress.

Project design:

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions.  Review the effect of any incorrect assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.

- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results.  Were lessons from other relevant project properly incorporated into the project design?

---

[1] For ideas on innovative and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and techniques, see UNDP Discussion Paper: Innovations in Monitoring & Evaluating Results, 05 Nov 2013.

- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country project)?

- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?

- If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.

Results Framework/Logframe:

- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).

- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?

- Examine if progress so far has led to, or could in the future catalyse beneficial development effects (i.e. income generation, gender equality and women's empowerment, improved governance etc...) that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.

- Ensure broader development aspects of the project are being monitored effectively. Develop and recommend SMART 'development' indicators.

**ii. Progress Towards Results**

Progress Towards Outcomes Analysis:

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets using the Progress Towards Results Matrix and colour code progress in a "traffic light system" based on the level of progress achieved; assign a rating on progress for each outcome; make recommendations from the areas marked as "Not on target to be achieved" (red).

**Table. Progress Towards Results Matrix (Achievement of outcomes against End-of-project Targets)**

| Project Strategy | Indicator[2] | Baseline Level[3] | Level in 1st Narrative session (self-reported) | Midterm Target[4] | End-of-project Target | Midterm Level & Assessment[5] | Achievement Rating[6] | Justification for Rating |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Objective:** | Indicator (if applicable): | | | | | | | |
| **ER/Outcome 1:** | Indicator 1: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 2: | | | | | | | |
| **ER/Outcome 2:** | Indicator 3: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 4: | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **ER/ Outcome 3:** | Indicator 5: | | | | | | | |
| | Indicator 6: | | | | | | | |

**Indicator Assessment Key**

---

[2] Populate with data from the Logframe and scorecards

[3] Populate with data from the Project Document

[4] If available

[5] Colour code this column only, if available

[6] Use the 6 point Progress Towards Results Rating Scale: HS, S, MS, MU, U, HU

| Green= Achieved | Yellow= On target to be achieved | Red= Not on target to be achieved |
|---|---|---|

In addition to the progress towards outcomes analysis:

- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.

- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits.

### iii. Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

Management Arrangements:

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.

- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) (UNDP) and recommend areas for improvement.

- Review the quality of support provided by the Project Beneficiary (State Customs Committee) and recommend areas for improvement.

Work Planning:

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.

- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?

- Examine the use of the project's results framework/ logframe as a management tool and review any changes made to it since project start.

Finance and co-finance:

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

- Review the changes to fund allocations as a result of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.

- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?

- Informed by the co-financing monitoring table to be filled out, provide commentary on co-financing: is co-financing being used strategically to help the objectives of the project? Is the Project Team meeting with all co-financing partners regularly in order to align financing priorities and annual work plans?

Project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- Review the monitoring tools currently being used:  Do they provide the necessary information? Do they involve key partners? Are they aligned or mainstreamed with national systems?  Do they use existing information? Are they efficient? Are they cost-effective? Are additional tools required? How could they be made more participatory and inclusive?

- Examine the financial management of the project monitoring and evaluation budget.  Are sufficient resources being allocated to monitoring and evaluation? Are these resources being allocated effectively?

Stakeholder Engagement:

- Project management: Has the project developed and leveraged the necessary and appropriate partnerships with direct and tangential stakeholders?

- Participation and country-driven processes: Do local and national government stakeholders support the objectives of the project?  Do they continue to have an active role in project decision-making that supports efficient and effective project implementation?

- Participation and public awareness: To what extent has stakeholder involvement and public awareness contributed to the progress towards achievement of project objectives?

Reporting:

- Assess how adaptive management changes have been reported by the project management and shared with the Project Board.

- Assess how well the Project Team and partners undertake and fulfil reporting requirements.

- Assess how lessons derived from the adaptive management process have been documented, shared with key partners and internalized by partners.

Communications:

- Review internal project communication with stakeholders: Is communication regular and effective? Are there key stakeholders left out of communication? Are there feedback mechanisms when communication is received? Does this communication with stakeholders contribute to their awareness of project outcomes and activities and investment in the sustainability of project results?

- Review external project communication: Are proper means of communication established or being established to express the project progress and intended impact to the public (is there a web presence, for example? Or did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?)

- For reporting purposes, write one half-page paragraph that summarizes the project's progress towards results in terms of contribution to sustainable development benefits, as well as to global benefits.

**iv. Sustainability**

- Validate whether the risks identified in the Project Document, Narrative reports are the most important and whether the risk ratings applied are appropriate and up to date. If not, explain why.

- In addition, assess the following risks to sustainability:

Financial risks to sustainability:

- What is the likelihood of financial and economic resources not being available once the EU grant assistance ends (consider potential resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and other funding that will be adequate financial resources for sustaining project's outcomes)?

Socio-economic risks to sustainability:

- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outcomes? What is the risk that the level of stakeholder ownership (including ownership by governments and other key stakeholders) will be insufficient to allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Do the various key stakeholders see that it is in their interest that the project benefits continue to flow? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long term objectives of the project? Are lessons learned being documented by the Project Team on a continual basis and shared/ transferred to appropriate parties who could learn from the project and potentially replicate and/or scale it in the future?

Institutional Framework and Governance risks to sustainability:

- Do the legal frameworks, policies, governance structures and processes pose risks that may jeopardize sustenance of project benefits? While assessing this parameter, also consider if the required systems/ mechanisms for accountability, transparency, and technical knowledge transfer are in place.

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

The evaluator will include a section of the report setting out the evaluation's evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings.

Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant.

The evaluator should make no more than 10 recommendations total.

**Ratings**

The evaluator will include the ratings of the project's results and brief descriptions of the associated achievements in *Evaluation Ratings & Achievement Summary Table* in the evaluation report. See Annex E for ratings scales. ***No rating on Project Strategy and no overall project rating is required.***

**Table. Evaluation Ratings & Achievement Summary Table for Project**

| Measure | Rating | Achievement Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Project Strategy** | N/A | |
| **Progress Towards Results** | Objective Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) | |
| | Outcome 1 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) | |
| | Outcome 2 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) | |
| | Outcome 3 Achievement Rating: (rate 6 pt. scale) | |
| | Etc. | |
| **Project Implementation & Adaptive Management** | (rate 6 pt. scale) | |
| **Sustainability** | (rate 4 pt. scale) | |

Deliverables

The Individual consultant shall deliver the followings:

| # | Deliverable | Description | Timing | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Initial desk review and working plan** | Evaluator clarifies objectives, methods and timing of review | No later than 3 days before the review mission | Evaluator submits to the UNDP CO |
| 2 | **Presentation** | Initial Findings | End of review mission | Evaluator presents to project management and UNDP CO |
| | **Draft Final Report** | Full report (using guidelines on content outlined in Annex B) with annexes | Within 7 days of ending the mission | Sent to the UNDP CO, reviewed by Project Coordinating Unit, EUD |
| | **Final Report\*** | Revised report with audit trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final review report, including up to 10 recommendations to be implemented till end of the project and share with the beneficiary. | Within 10 days of receiving UNDP comments on draft | Sent to the UNDP CO |

All the reports, proposal etc. should be sent in electronic form (Microsoft Word and PDF and, if applicable, other relevant formats) in English.

### 3. Period of assignment and travels

The total duration of the final evaluation will be approximately (3 months) starting from March 2024 to May 2024. Total number of working days is 25. It's expected that the expert will conduct **one week trip** to Azerbaijan and project assigned regions. Total number of days spent in the country is 7 days (*4 days in Baku and 3 days in the region*).

Supposed place of field work is Baku and other regions of Azerbaijan, depending on the location on awarded VE providers.

### 4. Deliverables, timing and proposed payment terms

The local consultant is responsible for contribution to the following deliverables:

| № | Description of the deliverable | Timing (Deadline) | Payment term (in % of total contract value) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Deliverable 1:** | **April 2024** | 30 % |
| 2 | **Deliverable 2:** | **May, 2024** | 70 % |
| **Total** | | | 100% |

Payment will be done upon completion of above-mentioned deliverables and submission of regular progress reports and timesheets.

### 5. Approval Process

The authorization for each respective payment will be made by UNDP Programme Advisor after the acceptance of each deliverable by the Project Manager.

## 3. REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

I. Academic Qualifications:

- At least bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline (e,g. social sciences, education, economics, law and other field relevant to ToR;

II. Years of experience:

- Professional experience (minimum 5 years) with result-based management evaluation methodologies and applying SMART indicators, reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios;
- Professional experience in relevant areas for at least 5 years (social sciences, education, economics, law and other field relevant);
- Project evaluation/review experiences within UN/EU system;
- Excellent communication skills (written and spoken English; Russian will be an asset);

- Sharing knowledge and experience, communicating ideas and managing information flow;
- Good ability in partnering and networking;
- Demonstrable analytical skills;
- Outstanding time management and organizational skills;

III. Competencies:

- Demonstrates integrity by modelling the UN's values and ethical standards;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability;
- Good problem-solving skill required;
- Demonstrates good oral and written communication skills;
- Ability to work efficiently in a team, and reporting;
- Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude.

## 4. DOCUMENTS TO BE INCLUDED WHEN SUBMITTING THE PROPOSALS.

The Consultant has to provide:

- Offeror's letter to UNDP conforming interest and availability for the Individual Contractor (IC) Assignment;
- Filled out and signed P11 Form or updated CV;
- Copy of Academic Diploma;
- Breakdown of Costs (in USD) Supporting the Final All-Inclusive Price;
- Work approach;
- Two Reference Letters

## 5. FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

Candidate along with technical proposal, have to submit financial proposal.

The assignment involves a combination of field visits and home-based work.

The expert will report to the Project Manager and UNDP Programme Advisor. The payment will be a **lump-sum** payment inclusive of consultancy fee, DSAs for in-country full consultancy days, round-trip tickets and concomitant terminal expenses.

The consultant should take into consideration the DSA rates in the country based on UNDP rules (https://icsc.un.org/).

Interested candidates, along with their technical proposal, will have to submit their financial proposal by taking into account those expected travels, and showing in their financial proposal's breakdown of financial expenses for consultancy fee.

## 6. EVALUATION

Individual consultants will be evaluated based on the following methodologies:

1. *Cumulative evaluation that takes into account both financial offer and the technical expertise of the potential candidates*

*A two-stage procedure will be utilized in evaluating the proposals, with evaluation of the technical component being completed prior to any price component being reviewed and compared. The Price Component will be reviewed only for those individuals whose Technical Component meets the requirements for the assignment. The total number of points which individual may obtain for both components is 100.*

A total possible value of the technical component is 100 points.

If the substantive presentation of a technical proposal achieves the minimum of 70 points, the competitiveness of the offered consultancy expenses will be taken into account in the following manner:

The total amount of points for the fee's component is 30. The maximum number of points shall be allotted to the lowest fees proposed that is compared among those invited individuals which obtain the threshold points in the evaluation of the technical proposal. All other proposals shall receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest fees; e.g;

[30 Points] x [US$ lowest]/[US$ other] = points for other proposer's fees

The technical component, which has a total possible value of 100 points, will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- At least bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline (e,g. social sciences, education, economics, law and other field relevant to ToR (**15 points**);

- Professional experience (minimum 5 years) with result-based management evaluation methodologies and applying SMART indicators, reconstructing or validating baseline scenarios **(25 points);**

- Professional experience in relevant areas for at least 5 years (social sciences, education, economics, law and other field relevant **(25 points);**

- Project evaluation/review experiences within UN/EU system **(10 points);**

- Work Approach **(10 points);**

- Interview with shortlisted candidate **(15 points)**

The minimum threshold for the technical part of the offers is **70 points.**

**ToR ANNEX A: List of Documents to be reviewed by the evaluator**

1. UNDP Project Document

2. All Project Implementation Reports (annual reporting to EU, Narrative sessions)

3. Some consultants reports, if requested

4. Oversight mission reports

5. Financial and Administration guidelines used by Project Team

The following documents will also be available:

6. Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures

7. UNDP country/countries programme document(s) and others

**ToR ANNEX B: Guidelines on Contents for the Final Evaluation Report**[7]

**i.** Basic Report Information *(for opening page or title page)*

- Title of UNDP supported EU financed project

- UNDP project ID#

- Evaluation time frame and date of evaluation report

- Region and countries included in the project

- Executing Agency/Implementing Partner and other project partners

- Acknowledgements

**ii.** Table of Contents

**iii.** Acronyms and Abbreviations

**1.** Executive Summary *(3-5 pages)*

- Project Information Table

- Project Description (brief)

- Project Progress Summary (between 200-500 words)

- Evaluation Ratings & Achievement Summary Table

- Concise summary of conclusions

- Recommendation Summary Table

---

[7] The Report length should not exceed *40* pages in total (not including annexes).

**2.** Introduction *(2-3 pages)*

- Purpose of the Final Evaluation and objectives
- Scope & Methodology: principles of design and execution of the evaluation, evaluation approach and data collection methods, limitations to the final evaluation
- Structure of the Final Evaluation Report

**3.** Project Description and Background Context *(3-5 pages)*

- Development context: socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope
- Problems that the project sought to address: threats and barriers targeted
- Project Description and Strategy: objective, outcomes and expected results, description of field sites (if any)
- Project Implementation Arrangements: short description of the Project Board, key implementing partner arrangements, etc.
- Project timing and milestones
- Main stakeholders: summary list

**4.** Findings *(12-14 pages)*

**4.1** Project Strategy

- Project Design
- Results Framework/Log frame

**4.2** Progress Towards Results

- Progress towards outcomes analysis
- Remaining barriers to achieving the project objective

**4.3** Project Implementation and Adaptive Management

- Management Arrangements
- Work planning
- Finance and co-finance

- Project-level monitoring and evaluation systems

- Stakeholder engagement

- Reporting

- Communications

### 4.4 Sustainability

- Financial risks to sustainability

- Socio-economic to sustainability

- Institutional framework and governance risks to sustainability

- Risks to sustainability

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations *(4-6 pages)*

### 5.1 Conclusions

- Comprehensive and balanced statements (that are evidence-based and connected to the evaluation findings) which highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project

### 5.2 Recommendations

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project

- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project

- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives

## 6. Annexes

- Final Evaluation ToR (excluding ToR annexes)

- Final evaluative matrix (evaluation criteria with key questions, indicators, sources of data, and methodology)

- Example Questionnaire or Interview Guide used for data collection

- Ratings Scales

- Evaluation mission itinerary

- List of persons interviewed

- List of documents reviewed

- Co-financing table (if not previously included in the body of the report)

- Signed UNEG Code of Conduct form

- Signed evaluation final report clearance form

**ToR ANNEX C: Evaluative Matrix Template**

| Evaluative Questions | Indicators | Sources | Methodology |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Strategy: To what extent is the project strategy relevant to country priorities, country ownership, and the best route towards expected results?** | | | |
| (include evaluative question(s)) | (i.e. relationships established, level of coherence between project design and implementation approach, specific activities conducted, quality of risk mitigation strategies, etc.) | (i.e. project documents, national policies or strategies, websites, project staff, project partners, data collected throughout the evaluation mission, etc.) | (i.e. document analysis, data analysis, interviews with project staff, interviews with stakeholders, etc.) |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| **Progress Towards Results: To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved thus far?** | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management: Has the project been implemented efficiently, cost-effectively, and been able to adapt to any changing conditions thus far? To what extent are project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, reporting, and project communications supporting the project's implementation?** | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| **Sustainability: To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-economic, and/or other risks to sustaining long-term project results?** | | | |
| | | | |

## ToR ANNEX D: UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators/Midterm Review Consultants[8]

**Evaluators/Consultants:**

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

### Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Consultant: _____

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____

**I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.**

Signed at _____ *(Place)* on _____
*(Date)*

Signature: _____

---

**ToR ANNEX E: Evaluation Ratings**

| | | Ratings for Progress Towards Results: (one rating for each outcome and for the objective) |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | Highly Satisfactory (HS) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve or exceed all its end-of-project targets, without major shortcomings. The progress towards the objective/outcome can be presented as "good practice". |
| 5 | Satisfactory (S) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets, with only minor shortcomings. |
| 4 | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve most of its end-of-project targets but with significant shortcomings. |
| 3 | Moderately Unsatisfactory (HU) | The objective/outcome is expected to achieve its end-of-project targets with major shortcomings. |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory (U) | The objective/outcome is expected not to achieve most of its end-of-project targets. |
| 1 | Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | The objective/outcome has failed to achieve its midterm targets, and is not expected to achieve any of its end-of-project targets. |

| | | Ratings for Project Implementation & Adaptive Management: (one overall rating) |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | Highly Satisfactory (HS) | Implementation of all seven components – management arrangements, work planning, finance and co-finance, project-level monitoring and evaluation systems, stakeholder engagement, reporting, and communications – is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. The project can be presented as "good practice". |
| 5 | Satisfactory (S) | Implementation of most of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management except for only few that are subject to remedial action. |

| 4 | Moderately Satisfactory (MS) | Implementation of some of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management, with some components requiring remedial action. |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU) | Implementation of some of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive, with most components requiring remedial action. |
| 2 | Unsatisfactory (U) | Implementation of most of the seven components is not leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |
| 1 | Highly Unsatisfactory (HU) | Implementation of none of the seven components is leading to efficient and effective project implementation and adaptive management. |

| **Ratings for Sustainability:** (one overall rating) | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Likely (L) | Negligible risks to sustainability, with key outcomes on track to be achieved by the project's closure and expected to continue into the foreseeable future |
| 3 | Moderately Likely (ML) | Moderate risks, but expectations that at least some outcomes will be sustained due to the progress towards results on outcomes at the Midterm Review |
| 2 | Moderately Unlikely (MU) | Significant risk that key outcomes will not carry on after project closure, although some outputs and activities should carry on |
| 1 | Unlikely (U) | Severe risks that project outcomes as well as key outputs will not be sustained |

**ToR ANNEX F:  Report Clearance Form**

*(to be completed by the Commissioning Unit)*

**Final Evaluation Report Reviewed and Cleared By:**

**Commissioning Unit**

Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date:
_____

**UNDP Programme Advisor**

Name: _____

Signature: _____   Date:
_____

## Annex II – Inception Report



Microsoft Word
Document

## Annex III – List of consulted documents

United Nations-Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) 2016 – 2020; UN-Azerbaijan Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDF) 2021 – 2025; UNDP Country programme document for Azerbaijan (2021–2025); ; the initially approved VET4Future Project Document;  The Report on Baseline Assessment of 7 Pilot VET Centres; steering committee reports from 2021 and 2021; narrative annual reports for the four years of implementation; work plan for the four years of implementation; the Research Report on "Investigation of lack of interest in Vocational Education"; EU commissioned Results Oriented Monitoring Report (October 2022); the UNDP Management Response on the ROM Report; the addendum no. 1 to contribution agreement no. ENI/2020/418-025; OECD Spotlight on Vocational Education and Training (2023); UNESCO TVET Country Profile Azerbaijan available at        https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Dynamic+TVET+Country+Profiles/country=AZE (International Labour Organization – ILO - The Future of Work and Lifelong Learning: Strengthening work-based learning in VET institutions (2023).

Note: each discussion guide will be adapted to the respective interviewee with due regard to their areas of involvement and expertise.

Note: each discussion guide will be adapted to the respective interviewee with due regard to their areas of involvement and expertise.

# Evaluation of the project
# "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan"

**Questions Guideline –** 20 April 2024

**Intro** – describing the evaluation of the project "VET for the future: Development of VET providers' excellence in Azerbaijan" and purpose of the evaluation and of the interview.

- What is your job title? How long have you been in this position?
- What are your current responsibilities?
- Please describe your involvement with the Project Vet4Future.

=========================================================================

## Relevance
- Is the project and its objectives catering to the needs (current and emerging) of the education and private sector?
- Was the project concept in line with the national education development priorities and plans of Azerbaijan?
- Were lessons from other relevant project properly incorporated into the project design?
- What is the comparative advantage of UNDP in comparison to other donors in supporting the institutional beneficiaries in Azerbaijan?
- Which improvements could be made in the future, to make the VET supporting projects even more relevant to Azerbaijan, UNDP and towards achieving the SDGs?
- Are sufficient and quality data on the labour market relevant for VE available, and being used to design relevant VE policies?

=========================================================================

**Efficiency -** Were the actions to achieve the results **Efficient?** (*Have things been done right*?)

- How much time, resources and effort it takes to manage the project? What could be improved? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear?

- Are there any delays present in project start-up and implementation? What caused the delays? How were they resolved?

- To what extent did monitoring systems provide data that allowed UNDP Azerbaijan to learn and adjust implementation accordingly?

- Has UNDP succeeded in building synergies and leveraging with other programs and development agencies with the help of the UNV categories?

- Is there a functional knowledge-exchange platform among Vocational Centers across the country, to facilitate experience and Best Practices exchange?

========================================================================================

**Effectiveness** Were the actions to achieve the results **Effective?** (Have the right things been done?)

- What has been achieved from the planned results (activities, outcomes)?
- How does each of the intended outputs and outcomes contribute to the overall objective of the Project? What are the major factors influencing achievement or non-achievement?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of programme's objectives and expected results?
- To what extent were women and men equitably impacted by the results of the project, and to what extent have marginalized groups benefited?
- (Where applicable) In your perception, how well are defined the project's logframe indicators and targets? (including whether they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- Are the project's objectives and outcomes or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?

========================================================================================

## Sustainability

Do you think the results of the activities are **sustainable and long-lasting**? Will the results lead to benefits beyond the life of the existing portfolio?

- Is the financial model considering the financial sustainability (i.e., what will happen after the end of the project, and of the EU financing)?
- What indications are there that the outcomes will be sustained, e.g., through requisite capacities (e.g., systems, structures and staff)? To what extent do the mechanisms established by the Project ensure sustainability of the policymaking interventions?
- Which improvements could be made in the future?
- What are major factors that influence the sustainability of the capacity built in the VET Centres?

============================================================================

## Cross-cutting Themes

- To what extent have UN Volunteer categories been conducive to the incorporation of core principles such as human rights, gender equality, equal opportunities for people with disabilities and marginalized groups, resilience and leaving no one behind into UNV's and host entities' work?

- To what degree are the volunteer categories robust, flexible, and adaptable to address the challenges caused by multidimensional crises?

- How do the stakeholders foresee the evolvement of their future needs in the current context and beyond?

============================================================================

## Closing Questions and Final Remarks

1. What do you think should be the next steps for UNDP to sustain or further develop the vocational education in Azerbaijan?
2. If you had the power to time-travel back to the start of the project, is there anything you would do differently, knowing what you know now?
3. And finally, any other questions, which we didn't ask but should have?

If we have any follow up questions later in the research phase, may we contact you again, perhaps via email?

## Thanks, and close

## Annex V – List of interviewed stakeholders

| Day | Institution / Role | Venue and time | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thu, 11 Apr 2024 | UNDP Azerbaijan, Project Manager | Online meeting | |
| Fri, 19 Apr 2024 | - UNDP Azerbaijan, Project Manager; Vocational Education Coordinator; Project Officer; Private sector Specialist; Communication Specialist<br><br>- UNDP Senior Adviser<br><br><br>- Yusif Akhundov, head of department | 10:00 am, EUD office Azerbaijan. Meeting with EUD task manager, Marjam Haji-Ismayilova<br><br>11:30 – 13:00 pm Meeting the project team, ***UNDP AZE office***<br><br>14:30 pm UNDP main building, Meeting with Elnur Khalilov<br><br>15:00 – 16:00 pm Meeting the project team, ***UNDP AZE office***<br><br>17:30 pm, Meeting with Yusif Akhundov, SAVE building | |
| Sat, 20 Apr | – Meeting "Bir Konullu"<br><br>– Meeting with E-Twinning | 10:30-11:30 am – Ms. Gulpari Muradova, in Baku, venue is SAVE building, project office.<br><br>12:00- 13:00 pm – Mrs. Natavan Badalova, in Baku, venue is SAVE building, project office | **EO and ZA** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mon, 22 Apr 2024 | - State Agency on Vocational Education (SAVE), Head of departments.<br>- Baku SVEC on Innovation and Technologies.<br>- Baku SVEC on Communication and Information Technologies. | Narmin Mammadova 10:00-10:45 am<br><br>Kanan Hasanli, 10:50-11:40 am<br><br>12:30 - 13:30 pm Trip to Innovation and Technologies/<br><br>14:30-15:30 pm Communication and Information Technologies VC | **ZA** |
| Tue, 23 Apr | - Baku SVEC for Tourism and Social Services.<br>- Baku SVEC on Culture and Craft | Kifayet Bayramova, director of Tourism and Services, 09:30 – 11:00 am + Seide hanim, Career Specialist<br><br>30 minutes driving to culture and Craft + Sonak hanim CS<br><br>11:30 am -12:30 pm<br><br>Lunch and travel to Ganja city from SAVE at 15:30-19:30 pm (Leon Hotel) | |
| Wed, 24 Apr | - Ganja State Vocational Education Centre (SVEC) on Industry and Technologies.<br>- Ganja SVEC on Trade and Services.<br>- Shaki SVEC including Career Support Centre (CSC).<br>- Shaki Palace, Shaki Markhal and working graduates | 09:00 am-10:00 am Meetings in Ganja SVECs and dual students<br><br>10:30- 12:00pm one or two private sector representatives- Imperial Restaurant Group and Bazarstore MMC<br><br>16:00 pm meeting with Director of Shaki SVEC, | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Meeting with two representatives of private sector - | |
| Thu, 25 Apr 2024 | - Travel to Jalilabad and drive back to Baku<br>- Jalilabad SVEC director and students/graduates,<br>- Woodpecker, Aliyar m confirmed. | Early morning travel from Shaki to Jalilabad<br><br>Meeting with Jalilabad SVEC – Vice Director - Valiaga Mammadov<br><br>Meeting with Woodpecker and working graduates of dual programme<br><br>Travel to Baku, departure time TBD | **Jafar mm** will accompany from Shaki, to Jalilabad and back to Baku; **Chinara hanim** organisational support |
| Fri, 26 Apr | - State Employment Agency<br><br>- Education Institute of the Republic of Azerbaijan | 11:30 – 12:30 Mr. Parviz Afandizadeh (theme: Career Center, CC trainings) currently awaiting response regarding the meeting/ Confirmation should be sought from their International Cooperation Department.<br><br>12:30- 13:30 pm Mrs. Nazakat Mehdiyeva (theme: trainings, lack of interest, VET reform and project support) in Baku, venue is SAVE building, project office.<br><br>15:00 – 17:30 Meeting with project staff: Chinara, Leyla, | **ZA will accompany.** |

| | | | | Entered into the calendar and approved by RR a.i |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mon, 29 Apr | RR a.i., Alessandra Roccasalvo, debriefing meeting, | 11:00AM, RR Office., | | **Eltekin O** |

*All times: GMT+4 (Baku time); Dates: 19-29 April 2024*

## Annex VI – Correlation between findings, conclusions and recommendations

| Finding | Section/Paragraph | Topic | Relation to Recommendation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Finding 1 | Background / B5 | Emerging trends require that the curricula and training materials should be updated on yearly basis, and continued support is required in this area including by involving private sector. | Recommendation 1a |
| Finding 2 | Relevance / R4 | it is critical for SAVE to have valid data of the potential students following VET programmes and – at the same time – of the needs of the economic sectors for vocational services. The data should be of high quality and collected both quantitatively and qualitatively. | Recommendation 1 |
| Finding 3 | Relevance / R6 | The parents' perception on VET still has room for improvement | Recommendation 2 |
| Finding 4 | Effectiveness / R8 | The standardisation methodology for writing or adapting new curricula is not fully established, apparently leading to inconsistencies in quality. Additionally, | Recommendations 1a and 1b |

| | | the creation of a digital library containing training materials from all VCs would increase accessibility of all students' categories to up-to-date information and knowledge. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Finding 5 | Effectiveness / Ef5 | Some partnerships might produce unwanted results: not the most appropriate partners might be chosen; and market unbalances might be triggered, arbitrarily producing advantages for some players only. | Recommendation 4 |
| Finding 6 | Effectiveness / Activity 1.4 | Unanimously, the perception of interviewees on the quality delivered by the Career Centres is very good, confirming the high relevance and quality of the services provided. Career Centres would strengthen the cooperation with the Dual vocational programme. | Recommendation 3 |
| Finding 7 | Effectiveness / Activity 1.4 | Career specialists could benefit from psychology courses, to enhance their understanding on the psychology of the students, living a critical age in taking life decisions. | Recommendation 3a |
| Finding 8 | Effectiveness / Activity 2.2 | A new trend in TV production which can be relevant for future support is the Virtual Reality (VR) production, considered by output 1.5.3 | |
| Finding 9 | Effectiveness / Ef13 | Soft skills play a crucial role in vocational training by enhancing employability and workplace effectiveness. Although mentioned in the activity matrix under outputs 2 and 3, the project didn't focus on building capacities and training for soft skills, accompanying the hard skills embedded in the curricula and trainings | |
| Finding 10 | Efficiency / Ey9 | Networks for sharing knowledge and best practices play a pivotal role in enhancing vocational education systems by fostering collaboration, innovation, | Recommendation 5 (partly interdependent with |

| | | and continuous improvement. The key roles they may play are facilitating collaboration, sharing best practices, enhancing curriculum development and innovation, improving alignment with industry, increase visibility and recognition, and enhances quality assurance | Recommendation 1) and Recommendation 6 |