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APPEAR III Project Evaluation

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Charlotte d'Elloy, Florentine Frantz, Paul Butschbacher, Katharina Warta

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Acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
ANAU	Armenian National Agrarian University
APPEAR	Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
FSM	Faecal sludge management
GAL	Gender Action Learning
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
ICT	Information and communications technology
JNEC	Jigme Namgyel Engineering College
JOOUST	Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology
MAK	Makerere University
MEDUNI	Medical University of Vienna
MMU	Uganda Martyrs University
NAR	Narrative-based action research
NOAP	National Organic Agriculture Policy
NDPIII	Third National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NUACA	Armenian National University of Architecture and Construction
SB	Selection Board
SCZHE	Scientific Center of Zoology and Hydroecology
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEEP conference	Sustainable Energy and Environmental Protection conference
SSA	Sasakawa Africa Association
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWM	Solid waste management
UIBK	University of Innsbruck
UMU	Mountains of the Moon University
URCS	Ugandan Red Cross Society
VETMEDUNI	University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna

1 Introduction

1.1 Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development

APPEAR is a programme that aims to **strengthen the scientific and institutional capacities in higher education, research, and management** in the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) priority countries.[1] APPEAR is implemented by the OeAD (APPEAR office) under a service contract of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and supported by an independent Selection board and an Advisory board support. The programme promotes long-lasting higher education partnerships between Austrian and priority countries universities. As a 'research for development' initiative, it has a much wider scope and objective than classical higher education partnerships that focus solely on scientific excellence. APPEAR's goal is to support a sustainable and peaceful development through continuous academic cooperation.

Introduced in 2010, the APPEAR programme represented a pioneering paradigm shift of 'research for development' funding for the ADC, as it extended its efforts beyond individual capacity building through scholarships towards partnerships with higher education institutions. APPEAR therefore consists of two closely intertwined components: Partnerships and Scholarships.

There are four instruments available for funding **Partnerships** between Austrian Higher Education institutions and those of eligible countries. These target different phases and needs of the applicant institutions.

- **Preparatory Funding:** Small-scale projects to elaborate joint proposals for an APPEAR Academic Partnership.

- **Academic Partnership:** Strengthen and deepen academic cooperation in higher education, research and management.

- **Advanced Academic Partnership:** Financing continued academic cooperation extending the results of the completed projects and developing new innovative designs in higher education and research for development.

- **Extended Impact Partnership:** Financing continued cooperation of APPEAR projects focused on the use and uptake of research results. Incentivising also to invite non-academic institutions to join and enhance the impact.

Besides an emphasis on partnerships, APPEAR awards individual **Scholarships** to PhD and Master students form the ADC priority countries, who intend to return to their home countries working in development related jobs, after completing their degrees in Austria. The objective is to increase the number of qualified staff and therefore improve teaching, research, and management in research institutions. The majority of scholarships is granted to students embedded in an APPEAR partnership, with an emphasis on gender balancing the beneficiaries. The dedicated evaluation of scholarships for Master and PhD students is not subject of the proposed evaluation.

Ultimately, APPEAR aims to contribute to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) specifically, Goal 4 „Quality education", Goal 10 „Reduced inequalities"; Goal 17 „Partnerships for the goals".[2] There are no top-down fixed topics, but the projects should be

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[1] Albania, Armenia, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Mozambique, Palestine, Uganda

[2] But also, in the respective thematic areas of projects namely poverty eradication, human rights, gender equality, sustainable economic development, protection of natural resources, peace, justice and strong institutions.

relevant in the specific contexts and aligned with the national/regional strategies of the priority countries and the overall objectives of the ADC. APPEAR strives to fund collaborative and innovative projects that respond to specific needs and demands, in particular for the academic institutions. Core selection criteria are seven basic principles[3] that projects must embed in their design and implementation. Further, added values[4] are meant to enrich a project proposal but are not subject to the assessment and scoring during peer review.

1.2   Objectives of the study

The initial programme was extended for two further phases. In the first two programme phases (APPEAR I, II) 43 projects and 64 preparatory funding projects were funded, and 156 scholarship holders completed their degree.[5] Both programme phases have been thoroughly evaluated on the project level (2018) and the programme level (2013, 2019). The programme is now in its third phase, which started in late 2020 and will be running until 2027. The present project evaluation is the first evaluation of APPEAR III and focuses on the 15 of the 22 ongoing projects. A further evaluation in 2026 will evaluate the programme itself and explore a potential extension of the programme, building on the findings and recommendations of this study.

The evaluation covered projects implemented across nine countries and six subcontinental regions, including partnerships with NGOs and instances of South-South cooperation. These projects produced diverse outputs such as new curricula, research, and policy recommendations, addressing themes like resource management, societal challenges, and technology development. The geographic breadth of the programme enabled intercultural exchange and region-specific approaches but also introduced coordination complexities. Implementation was further challenged by external factors such as geopolitical tensions, conflict, economic instability, and declining trust in science, all of which have complicated international scientific cooperation.

1.3   Structure of the report

The evaluation report is structured to provide a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the project.

- Chapter 2 outlines the evaluation methodology, including the use of desk research, surveys, interviews, and the heatmap as an analytical tool, along with a discussion of the challenges and limitations encountered during the process. The presentation of the evaluation findings is organised in two main parts.

- Chapter 3 addresses the findings related to the evaluation questions of relevance, effectiveness, and the impact of changing political, social, and economic conditions on the project.

- In Chapter 4, the report presents evidence of transversal findings that emerged across the different projects.

- Chapter 5 summarises the overall conclusions and provides recommendations based on the evaluation results.

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[3] Participatory approach; A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge; Practically and empirically oriented approach; Bottom-up and demand-driven approach; Gender sensitivity; Leave no one behind; Open Access – Open data.
[4] Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects; Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy; Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation; Advancement of young and particularly female researchers; Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake; Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country
[5] https://appear.at/en/projects/facts-figures

2   Methodology

The evaluation applies a mixed methods approach building on desk research, interviews as well as a survey with beneficiaries. This combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods allowed to gather and analyse comprehensive information on the projects' relevance and effectiveness (incl. effects of external factors) as requested in the terms and references by the OeAD. Appendix A shows the evaluation matrix that details which questions were answered building on which methods. Central to our methodological approach was a sensitivity to evaluations in the context of international cooperation/development. Therefore, awareness of concrete socio-political developments in the ADC partner countries is not only a core interest of the study but also shaped our methodological approaches.

2.1   Desk Research

The first layer of evidence that the evaluation capitalised on were existing documents and programme data. The desk research was conducted along a structured approach based on the evaluation matrix. In total, over 300 files were submitted by the OeAD, with about 75 of them being programme files, and the remainder being individual project files. 33 of the programme files are individual reviews of external experts of the successful APPEAR III project applications. For the purposes of the review, the programme files were first examined to obtain a more detailed overview of the programme and APPEAR III in general. Especially the annual APPEAR progress reports have been insightful regarding both project specific as well as external challenges for the projects. Project documents were then reviewed for each project individually. Each project review started with the project application and the individual reviews of external experts for the selection process, followed by documentation of the ongoing project, such as half-year and annual reports, logframes and lists of quantitative output or report assessments (about 100 individual documents in total). With a firm understanding of APPEAR III and the structure of the general project documentation from the initial document reviews, these project documents were then analysed in the light of the evaluation questions. Notes were made for each evaluation question and for each project, as a second step first takeaways were summarised.

2.2   Survey

We conducted a survey amongst beneficiaries to contextualise the preliminary results from the desk research, with their perspectives on the relevance, effectiveness, and challenges due to political, social, and economic conditions in the projects. The survey was conducted using a professional, customised online software (Limesurvey), which allows for a modular, flexible design. To disseminate the survey in line with to GDPR considerations the link to the survey as well as the introduction notice were sent directly from the APPEAR office. The survey was sent out by OeAD to the 15 project coordinators and at least to one person of partner institutions, as well as to all active scholarship holders, with the request to share the survey link with the other project members.[6] In total, 87 full responses were collected over a time span of little over 5 weeks (18 December 2024 – 25 January 2025). Figure 1 illustrates the survey population. While there were differences in how many people from each projects answered the survey, for each project at least one person responded.

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[6] An estimate of the total number of persons reached was unfortunately not available upon request.

Figure 1 Survey population

Country (n=87)

Role in the project (n=87)

- Project coordinator
- Project member
- Scholarship holder
- Other

Gender (n=87)

- Albania
- Armenia
- Austria
- Bhutan
- Burkina Faso
- Ethiopia
- Kyrgyzstan
- Mozambique
- Uganda
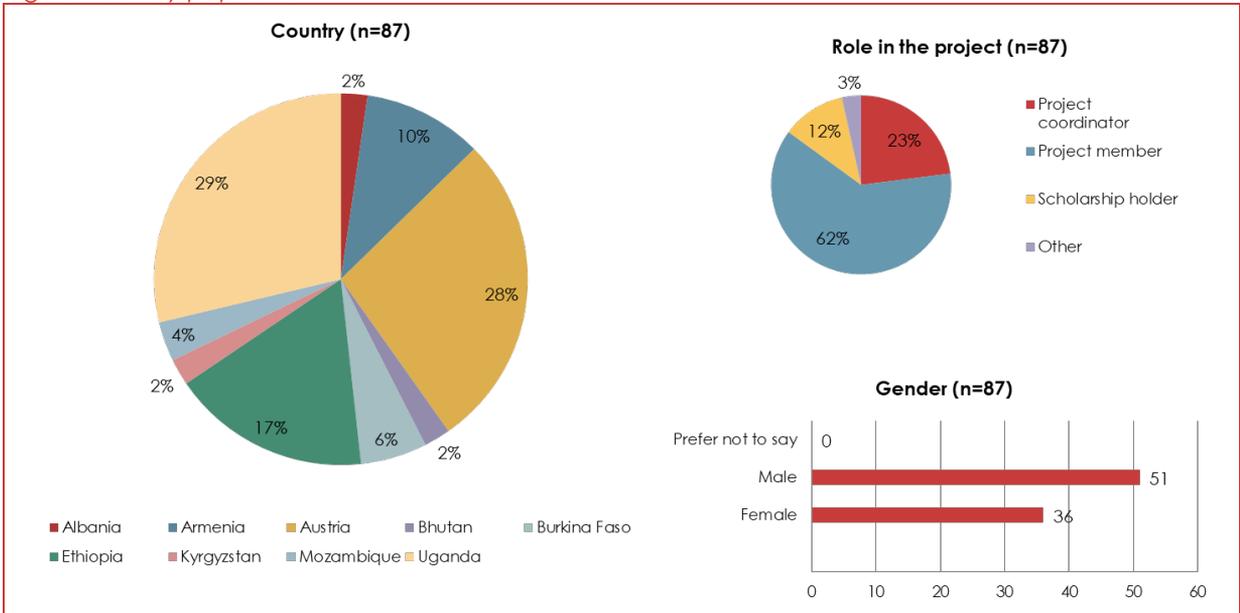
Source: Technopolis

Given the small number of projects (15), we focused the design of the survey on qualitative questions, which allowed us to zoom in on each of the projects, rather than fostering quantitative analyses across all funded projects. This allowed to better acknowledge the heterogeneous realities of the analysed projects. Qualitative data that can be linked to single projects require a sensitive handling of the data. In cases where a few project stakeholders provide answers for one specific project, anonymity may be limited. To mitigate this aspect, we drafted an introduction notice and detailed the purpose and context of the evaluation. The survey was held on an anonymous basis, ensuring the respondents feel free to provide honest reflections. This allowed us to ensure that only direct quotes are cited in the report, which the participants feel comfortable with, offered the participants the option at the end of the survey to limit the direct citing of their responses or indicate which of the shared information should be handled with particular care. The full questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

2.3   Interviews

A further central source of information for the evaluation was a series semi-structured online interview. Depending on the information interest from each interviewee, we adapted the questions, with several open questions, giving the interview partners room to describe their involvement and experiences. The interviews were recorded in writing, keeping track of the major insights. These records were used for the analysis and triangulation. Assuring the interview partners that their responses were kept confidential and the transcripts were not shared with the OeAD, was intended to invite the interview partners to express also critical perspectives. Concretely, we talked to three different stakeholder groups, each covering a different dimension of the evaluation:

- **Scoping Interviews** with one ADA representative as well as the four project coordinators of the APPEAR team in the OeAD. These interviews were conducted during an early phase of the project, allowing the team to further tailor the methodological design.

- **Project Coordinators**: We conducted three online group interviews with 10 project coordinators. Talking to several people at the same time allows us not only to as many projects as possible, but also to explore shared experiences and discuss the needs,

challenges, and potential adjustments across projects. We made sure that the project coordinators from similar contexts or with similar projects, were conducted together, allowing to go into more depth about specific challenges. Particularly, for understanding the influence of the changed political, social cultural, economic framework, this gives room to discuss the different experiences and adaption strategies.

- **Context Interviews:** To contextualise the concrete settings in which the evaluated projects are conducted, we spoke to four persons from four ADC coordination offices. Furthermore, we conducted an online group interview with six representatives of the APPEAR selection board.
- **Selection Board:** upon request of OeAD – interviews with university deans were replaced by a group interview with seven members of the Selection Board representing different organisations (incl. DAAD, ADA, SCNAT, GIZ, University of Vienna and ETHZ). The findings of the group interview regarding relevance, effectiveness and impact of external factors have been aggregated and flow into transversal findings. Qualitative data on the selection board are summarised below.

Selection board members praised the well-structured, transparent process and high-quality input from OeAD. The board's balanced mix of academic and practical expertise supports the selection of impactful, developmentally relevant projects. Members value the intellectually enriching, cross-disciplinary exchange despite the heavy workload. Some expressed interest in more systematic feedback loops and ongoing insight into project outcomes beyond the selection phase.

2.4   Heatmap as an analytical tool of transversal findings across the projects.

To facilitate a systematic comparison across projects and to reflect transversal findings, the project team prepared a heatmap. It enabled to compare the project performance along a set of evaluation criteria. Each project was ranked between exceptional, standard, or below expectations for each evaluation criterion. Developing the heatmap involved an iterative process of qualitative assessment of the criteria, where evaluators compared project outcomes, refined their judgments, and carefully characterised the descriptions associated with each performance level. This approach ensured a consistent and nuanced evaluation, allowing the heatmap to highlight patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement across the projects. The heatmap excel file was provided to the APPEAR office for potential further analysis.

2.5   Challenges and limitations

In terms of methodological challenges and limitations of the evaluation, there were for some projects low survey response rates, with fewer than four responses for six projects as well as a limited number of scholarship holders. In addition, only ten project coordinators took part in the group interviews, due to last-minute cancellations of five projects, limiting the breadth of qualitative insights for these projects. Overall, it proved difficult to assess the concrete progress of in some cases, when goals and measures of success were not clearly defined. Furthermore, there was only limited evidence available regarding shifts in gender attitudes, as this is a long-term goal and mid-project indicators, and baseline measurements were not consistently established. Another limitation is that the originally suggested interviews with university rectors and deans, were deprioritised, which may have restricted the perspective at the institutional leadership level. Concrete limitations for assessing each project, are detailed in the description of each project.

3   Findings from the Project Evaluation

The presentation of findings is structured across two chapters. The present chapter provides a detailed assessment of each project along the evaluation questions, to offer an overview of its performance, based on the data available to the evaluation team. Evidence supporting the analysis as well as limitations hampering evaluative assessments are flagged in the footnotes.

3.1 Project 242 – GIRT: Strengthening Research and Educational Competences of HEIs for Gender sensitive Urban (InfoRmal Settlement) Transformation

Status: ongoing (1 May 2022 – 30 April 2026)

Stakeholders and their role: Austria: University of Continuing Education Krems (coordination); Ethiopia: Mekelle, Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar University and Mozambique: Lurió University.

Data quality assessment: The survey yielded a high number of responses (14) comparatively to other projects however, survey results were compromised by some survey respondents replicating their answers. It was treated as a genuinely shared opinion not to dismiss Global South voices. Project documentation is vague and lacks precision according to the report assessment drafter (objectives, definitions of gender mainstreaming or transdisciplinary, overall progress percentage, etc.). Limitations hampering evaluative assessment have been flagged along the text in footnotes.

The evaluation finds the project is **relevant to the beneficiaries and partners**.[7] It has been well-received by its beneficiaries, who believe its objectives align with the development needs of the partner countries, particularly in addressing rapid urbanisation and infrastructure gaps. They highlight the importance of contributing to academic discourse and promoting transdisciplinary research that involves both scientific communities and local stakeholders to better identify priorities.[8] They agree on the significance of South-South and North-South collaboration given Ethiopia's growing university sector as confirmed by the ADC local office which stressed the lack of technical capacities and staff qualification. Austrian researchers also find the project relevant, particularly in understanding housing informality in African cities and how residents adapt. They report gaining insights into bureaucratic processes, teaching methods, and teamwork at the local level, which contributed to their intercultural communication skills. There was a shift in the relevance of guiding principles (GP) and added value (AD). The project's initial focus remained the same for participatory, empirical, and gender-sensitive approach (GP) and for a) south-south cooperation (AD), however leaving no-one behind and culturally open-minded knowledge (GP) are now also taken into account[9], while inclusion of persons with disabilities and alignment with ADC (AD) no longer are.[10] This is consistent with the qualitative data collected in an interview, which revealed that stakeholders were having difficulty connecting with each other due to the social divide between project researchers and slum dwellers. Gender mainstreaming is part of the project design[11], but measurable changes in attitudes toward gender are limited[12], and due to delays incurred by the war in Ethiopia and the timing of evaluation.

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[7] The limited availability of data on stakeholders' perception of the project's relevance for the partner universities does not allow for a robust evaluative assessment. The project's alignment with and contribution to SDGs 5 and 11 cannot yet be assessed however desk research indicates a positive direction: the project works towards SDG 5 and 11 but concrete evidence is not explicit in the deliverables (progress reports, online materials) on how gender is included and the methodology for including women. In addition, there is only anecdotal evidence from the survey and interviews (only one surveyed person confirmed alignment).

[8] They also stress the need for evidence-based policy to address the lack of informed decision-making in urbanisation and land administration, particularly regarding women's livelihoods, and emphasise the role of scientific research in integrating stakeholder knowledge to influence policy.

[9] The majority highlighted the project fully addresses gender sensitivity (9 out of 11); a concept of culturally open-minded knowledge (8 out of 11) and participatory approach and leave no one behind (both 7 out of 11).

[10] Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation (all survey respondents answered yes); alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies (5 out of 11); inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy (3 out of 11), the lowest)

[11] According to the project application, the entire project's focus is about gender mainstreaming, moreover the team consists of 14 male and 10 female colleagues (out of which two male experts on gender). There are also dedicated indicators to measure the change of attitudes towards gender.

[12] The report assessment notes that the online presentations and progress reports lacked clarity, making it hard to assess how gender, diversity, and intersectionality were addressed in the project.

Despite of the war, the project achieved some outputs and reached beneficiaires.[13] These are mostly directed towards the project team[14] and therefore strengthening the institutions' capacity, however the overall quality is mixed.[15] In addition, the project faced issues related to a) participating universities' capacities[16] and b) the APPEAR programme or the project's set-up.[17] The project team copes with difficulties by demonstrating resilience, flexibility, and strong communication, using regular meetings, collaborative problem-solving. Positive factors driving implementation include a monitoring visit and two-weeks staff exchange and efficient management: on a scale from 1 (poor) to 6 (excellent), all survey respondents ranked cooperation processes[18] between 4 and 6, distribution of responsibility ranked highest. The main target group – women living in informal settlements – has benefited from capacity-building and awareness raising (for example on understanding their rights and obligations, problem-solving and dissemination of knowledge and project results, sharing of experiential knowledge, advocacy for sustainable change).[19] The first project results have been published and disseminated in the scientific community or used to support the EU proposal on inclusive climate adaptation in urban settings. Although Ethiopian partners were not included as partners in the proposal, they will join as visiting scholars. Online materials need to be reviewed for better accessibility and navigation.

> "The transfer of knowledge on the transdisciplinary research method was an eye-opener, providing insights into how to approach contextually relevant issues in my community."
>
> Survey respondent (male, Ethiopian)

The main obstacle to implementation was the **armed conflict** in Tigray (11.2020 – 11.2022) which continues in Amhara (04.2023 to this day). One university was under siege and communication was cut off. The conflict shifted societal attitudes, making research projects a low priority for the studied communities, hindering the engagement needed for the transdisciplinary approach. The war also caused significant psychological trauma among researchers and staff. It brought about economic hardship including currency inflation, affecting budgets and living costs. In Mozambique, both infrastructure deficiencies such as frequent internet and electricity outages affected projects, as well as language barriers between project stakeholders and administrative university personal. Despite these difficulties, the project design was maintained[20], and project activities were performed at a later stage. Close coordination with the ADA local offices allowed to bridge the period. This project is exemplary for setting goals transcending conflict, uniting people across divides, and delivering results despite complex conditions.

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[13] The project directly or indirectly benefited 214 people, including 64 students, 50 teachers and researchers, and 120 members of the wider community. The absence of targets in the project document limits the comparison of current values with the original goals.

[14] Capacity building directed towards the project team(training sessions and manuals on transdisciplinary (Td) processes and guides for project conduct in settlements, staff and student exchanges; assessment on application of Td approach; knowledge generation across institutions); intermediary results towards the beneficiaries (mapping of settlements and review of existing settlement documentation, development of a narrative-based action research (NAR) questionnaire, mapping of women's perspectives in settlements; inter-regional and cross-national findings sharing; knowledge generation with beneficiaries).

[15] The report assessment mentions navigational issues of online materials, lack of explicit focus and working on the value of and approaches to transdisciplinary research in the context of gender-sensitive research on informal settlements; unpolished (or raw) publications, detracting from the quality of outputs being promoted on the website.

[16] Delays in audit report submissions, problems with accounting for staff costs, staff turnover, and administrative changes. These led to a lack of engagement from senior staff and slow processing of required documents. The universities also struggled with accounting due to limited experience with international funding schemes. Team members showed low commitment because of missing contracts, competing teaching and consultancy roles, and delayed payments.

[17] Unbudgeted organisation, financial and administrative tasks, staff costs do not cover expenses, auditing costs exceed the budget, interdependencies between work packages, inconsistent data collection methods between countries, poorly prepared auditing processes leading to financial delays.

[18] Distribution of responsibilities, quality of communication, task scheduling, time management, feedback mechanisms, monitoring, problem identification.

[19] As confirmed by 9 out of 11 project team members in the survey. The project documentation does not clearly state how many women exactly have been reached. There is only anecdotal evidence suggesting that certain planned and achieved results may be sustained over time, the documentation reports that attempts are being made to involve public institutions.

[20] No new risk assessment was made according to the available documentation.

3.2 Project 249 – ECSDevelop: Environmental Chemistry for Sustainable Development

Status: ongoing (original duration 1 January 2022 – June 2025, no-cost extension until December 2025)

Stakeholders and their role: Uganda: Makerere University (coordination); Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Kenya: Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST)

Data quality assessment: There were no survey respondents from Kenya and the project coordinator could not participate in the group interview in spite of mitigating measures, reasons remain unknown. Two annual reports, two half year reports as well as the proposal of the project available for the evaluation.

This project studies microplastics within the aquatic ecosystem of Lake Victoria and River Nile, which is of high relevance for the country and aligned with national strategies.[21] It contributes particularly to SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation). While other SDGs have been mentioned in the application and the SB report (SDG 5, 14, 4) the contributions to them appear limited. As such, the goal of fostering on gender equality shows a discrepancy between the proposal and the progress reports. The initial pursuit to involve 70% of female PhD and Master students has not been met[22] and only three out of five survey respondents indicate in that gender mainstreaming and gender awareness were considered in the project and two indicated that they "cannot say".[23] The ADA country representative stressed that STEM fields are still dominated by male research, hence a strong project contribution would be much needed.

Overall, the project shows a **high level of commitment to APPEAR added values**[24], which is also reflected in the survey responses.[25] The importance of the Guiding Principles in practice remains less pronounced. The evaluation finds the project relevant to institutional capacity building at the Makerere University and JOOUST. This involved the development and revision of curricula and **also training/support for concrete administrative processes**.[26] Moreover, is also focused on supporting individual capacity building of scholarship holders, students and teachers, which were described as knowledge ambassadors.[27]

> "Our graduates (including females) and indirect beneficiaries are our ambassadors and agents of change in their communities."
>
> Project team member (female, Uganda)

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[21] The application mentioned the alignment with Uganda's vision 2040 as articulated in the Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) 2020/21 – 2024/25.

[22] According to the 2nd year report: PhD (4m, 2f), MSc (2m, 1f)

[23] Examples mentioned in the survey illustrate that there is an awareness to gender related issues. As such they mentioned a regular gender analysis to understand the different needs, roles and impacts of the project on gender (men and woman), defining clear project objectives for promoting gender equity and equality, inclusion of female students and staff, involvement in decision making, budget allocation and participation in project activities, inclusion of female researchers, mentorship sessions tailored to girl-child education by project staff, with focus on female undergraduate university students and secondary schools, data collection disaggregating data.

[24] E.g. The coordination of the project is based in a partner country. Project partners in Kenya involved secondary school pupils with special needs in works and offered reading and writing materials in addition to motivational tasks. The project involves two Southern partners to strengthen their cooperation, for instance also through the standardisation of study credits making them transferable between programmes.

[25] "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (5 out of 5), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (5 out of 5), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (4 out of 5), "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (4 out of 5), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (3 out of 5), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (2 out of 5)

[26] E.g., The project also provided a training for the finance department at JOOUST on donor funding management practices.

[27] 70 students and 55 teachers/researchers/academic staff benefited directly from the project and 500 students and 95 teachers/researchers/academic staff indirectly. All survey respondents indicate that the scholarship holders enrich the project. The respondents describe them as actively involved in the fieldwork, laboratory tasks, community outreach activities, preparing conferences and workshops, and publishing results. And they are seen to contribute to future university collaborations. Also, the scholarship holder who answered the survey indicated that they have gained hand-on experience on instruments and presentation skills of their work.

The project has not received preparatory funding, but it builds on previous collaborations between BOKU and Makerere University. Two of the team members are also former OeAD scholarship holders. The coordinating university instituted a **steering committee with representatives from all partner universities**. The survey respondents characterise the distribution of responsibilities within the project as well functioning but consider task scheduling and time management as challenging.[28] While the second funding rate was delayed for unknown reasons, the project still made considerable progress to achieve the planned outputs and outcomes. There are **noteworthy efforts of making results available**[29] to HEI, as well as through outreach activities to local communities.[30] The intensive communication of projects and their results was seen as needed by the local ADA representatives to raise awareness about APPEAR. However, survey respondents also criticised constraints on further community outreach programmes, which did not have sufficient funds due to budget constraints, as well as the challenges of publishing articles in open access journals due to high publication fees. The evaluation finds that the collaboration between the partners is likely to continue beyond the project, as two additional international research grants were acquired and will be running until 2027.

There were no major challenges due to the changing political and social conditions. Much rather did the project encounter **administrative hurdles**, which are characterised by survey respondents only as minor challenges.[31] The risks of potential bureaucratic challenges were already outlined in the initial risk assessment and mitigation strategies were in place.[32] Yet the project still faced challenges and delays.[33] The project was granted an extension to realise the planned outputs, which have largely been realised so far. Furthermore, the progress report mentioned challenges and delays in gaining access to the petroleum fields in Uganda.

Source: Odongo Silver

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[28] On a scale from 1 to 6 the following dimensions were ranked on average: 5,75 (Distribution of responsibilities), 5,25 (Monitoring, Problem identification, Problem resolution, Quality of communication), 5 (Feedback mechanisms) 4,5, Task scheduling, Time management).

[29] The second annual report shows that there were 300+ education materials, 8 published articles, 12 manuscripts submitted for publication, a patent and trade mark registration, as well as news articles. The external assessment of the report highlighted the professionally looking website (https://ecsdevelop.com/) as a good basis for facilitating cooperation and outreach work.

[30] E.g. Sensitising campaigns on environmental pollution and mitigation strategies in schools and online, training formats for plastic waste managements, workshops with industrial actors, webinar series.

[31] "Yes, minor challenges" (4 out of 5), "No" (1 out of 5). As minor challenges were mentioned the budgetary constrains for data analysis software for scholarship holders, VISAs for Austria, the reluctance of Southern partner universities to have their employees conduct work in Austria, the willingness or requirement to publish even unsound papers, inconsistency in participation by non-academic staff especially from industries, NGOs and government sector during the curricula review process. Also, the enrolment of graduate students has also been challenging especially PhDs which lead to delays in accomplishment of our set targets.

[32] E.g., regular engagement with university management and timely submission of reports

[33] E.g., concrete challenges concern the inactive dollar account which slowed down transfer of funds, non-calculated administrative costs to JOOUST, which affected the student's stipend and tuition fees; and procurement challenges

3.3 Project 251 – VjoSusDev: Environmental assessment of the Vjosa riverscape as the basis for an integrated water management and sustainable catchment development

Status: ongoing (01 May 2022 – 30 April 2026)

Stakeholders: Albania: University of Tirana (coordination), Polytechnic University of Tirana, Agricultural University of Tirana; Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, University of Vienna, University of Innsbruck.

Data quality assessment: The data collection process for this project yielded a moderate amount of information, with only two project stakeholders responding to the survey (both project members, no scholarship holders or Austrian researcher). Nevertheless, findings from a document review, and three interviews (with the ADA local office in Tirana, with OeAD during the inception phase, and with the coordinator) allow for a satisfactory triangulation of findings and robustness of evidence.

This academic partnership aims to conduct a comprehensive, interdisciplinary assessment of the Vjosa river system to support integrated water management and sustainable river basin development in Albania. It aims to generate high quality data on hydrology, biodiversity and water quality and to establish long-term monitoring programmes, with a central objective of strengthening scientific capacity and cooperation between Albanian and Austrian institutions.

The VjoSusDev project is among the APPEAR projects that demonstrates the most its strong relevance at both national and institutional levels. It **aligns closely with both the ADC's strategy in Albania and with Albania's environmental policy priorities**, particularly through its contribution to the integrated management of the Vjosa River basin, which was recently declared a protected area. The active participation of ministries, agencies, and other governmental stakeholders in project events and planning discussions further reflects institutional support and policy alignment.[34] According to survey data and interviews, the project also plays a significant role in strengthening the science-policy interface by providing evidence-based input to decision-makers. Its relevance extends to the participating universities, where the project's applied research approach and field-based collaboration with six institutions enhance both scientific output and practical conservation management. The project included several guiding principles at application[35] which are still relevant and carried out at implementation as confirmed by survey respondents and the coordinating institution. Similarly added values flagged at project design are relevant and implemented according to survey respondents – except for the inclusion of people with disabilities and South-South cooperation. Gender mainstreaming is well integrated, with women making up 62% of the coordinating team and an overall balance sought across participating institutions.[36] However, a gender context analysis is missing and changes in attitudes towards gender are not yet measurable, partly due to the project's mid-implementation status and gaps in documentation and reporting structure.

The VjoSusDev project has made progress in its implementation with the caveat that limitations in target-setting constrain a comprehensive evaluative assessment. The project benefited a

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[34] The project's outreach activities have also included a diverse group of stakeholders from various sectors, including ministries, environmental agencies, inspectorates, and NGOs. These engagements reinforce the project's strategic positioning within Albania's environmental governance landscape.

[35] a participatory, as well as practically and empirically oriented approach, gender sensitivity, and open access publishing. However, it does not explicitly address the 'leave no one behind' principle, nor does it demonstrate a clear bottom-up, demand-driven design.

[36] At present, women constitute 37% of the project staff, and early-career researchers—both male and female—represent 34%, highlighting the project's investment in future academic capacity. Both survey respondents confirmed that gender awareness was considered throughout the project, with examples including the inclusion of female students in fieldwork, and participation rates showing efforts towards gender parity in scientific working groups. The implementation phase reflects strong attention to diversity and inclusion. In addition to its academic and institutional relevance, the project has facilitated knowledge transfer and awareness-raising among local and national stakeholders.

total of 98 people, including 23 students, 59 teachers and researchers, and 16 members of the wider community. Among its most notable achievements is the integration of young researchers, with ten master's theses and one PhD project embedded within the wider research programme. The project has produced a body of interdisciplinary research, addressing biodiversity, water chemistry, hydromorphology, and microbiology in the Vjosa River basin. More than ten academic contributions have been published or presented, and over ten outreach events have taken place across Albania and Austria, demonstrating strong knowledge dissemination and public engagement.[37] Coordination has been a key strength, with smooth implementation supported by a pre-existing network of experts across six institutions. Survey responses confirm the high quality of project management, with strong collaboration and integration among partners. **The project has also helped catalyse institutional collaboration, including a new agreement between BOKU and the University of Tirana, contributing to long-term academic impact.** Scholarship holders have enriched the project, with their academic background and engagement in the study programmes adding value. Four PhD students and over ten Master's students have contributed to research outputs, often in challenging field conditions. Planned dissemination workshops and data integration activities have been carried out annually, though delays in publication were noted due to lengthy review processes.

While survey data indicated generally positive impressions of coordination, **some difficulties were encountered in coordinating** such a large consortium of over 30 experts and four working groups. Bureaucratic procedures in Albania, particularly the requirement for funds to pass through the Albanian Central Bank, caused nearly a year-long delay in disbursements to universities. During this time, Austrian partners had to step in with pre-financing. Delayed communication, late reporting, and the absence of an interim report required on-site intervention. The local project coordination was reportedly hampered by institutional hierarchies and limited responsiveness, while low academic salaries in Albania led to researchers taking on multiple commitments, stretching their capacity. This fragmented focus, combined with systemic obstacles, impacted the consistency of project delivery. In addition, scientific challenges, such as the taxonomic classification of 287 newly recorded algal species, required specialised expertise and time, affecting timelines. Infrastructure gaps, particularly in laboratory equipment, were flagged as a constraint to long-term research capacity. Overall, while the project has demonstrated strong scientific and academic effectiveness, its implementation has been affected by bureaucratic delays, communication gaps, and insti... effort and adaptive management to overcome.

Source: Jahrbuch des Vereins zum Schutz der Bergwelt (München), 89./90. Jahrgang, 2024/2025

The VjoSusDev project is not considered at risk from geopolitical events in Albania; on the contrary, the country is currently politically stable, with favourable conditions and strong pro-European sentiment that have positively supported the project's visibility and public discourse.

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[37] Further dissemination has occurred through media channels, including podcasts and TV interviews, enhancing the visibility of the project's findings.

3.4 Project 252 –DEvision: Digitally Connecting Real and Virtual Environments

Status: finalised (1 March 2022 – 30 April 2025)

Stakeholders: Austria: University of Salzburg (coordination); Armenia: National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia, Yerevan State University; Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyz State University of Construction, Transport and Architecture

Data quality assessment: The data collection process for this project yielded a moderate amount of information, with seven individuals responding to the survey, including one scholarship holder who declined to be quoted, and one respondent represented the Austrian side (reasons remain unknown). While the coordinator participated in a group interview to provide qualitative information on project management, the final project report was not available at the time of review, meaning that output and outcome achievements could not be verified against up-to-date documentation. In addition, a gender and risk analysis was also missing. Finally, the local ADA office in Yerevan was not available for an interview to provide input on the relevance of the project for the partner university and the country's policies.

The academic partnership DEvision aims to integrate geospatial and digital competences into existing bachelor's and master's programmes at the partner universities in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The aim of the project is to develop a set of five interdisciplinary blended learning modules based on the Digital Earth concept and to support their implementation across academic disciplines. With the aim of promoting long-term curricular change, the project focuses on building teaching capacity through training, open educational resources and digital infrastructure.

The project is considered relevant due to its consistent implementation of the APPEAR guiding principles, its targeted gender mainstreaming efforts, and its perceived value for Austrian researchers.[38] From the proposal stage onward, the project committed to addressing all guiding principles[39], a claim supported by most survey respondents who confirmed their full consideration throughout implementation, while the added values of the APPEAR programme were only partially addressed.[40] Although evidence of relevance for Austrian stakeholders remains anecdotal (one response)—with only one survey respondent explicitly confirming its benefit—statements referring to the conceptual and applied usefulness of the project for teachers, students, and professionals suggest latent potential in this area.[41] Gender mainstreaming is a core element of the project's design, as reflected in both documentation and survey responses.[42] Women have played prominent roles as scholarship holders, coordinators, and workshop participants, with gender representation in activities approaching

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[38] There is limited availability of data on stakeholders' perception of the project's relevance for the partner universities, relevance for Austrian researchers and its alignment and progress on SDG targets, therefore evidence does not allow for a robust evaluative assessment of relevance.

[39] "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (5 out of 7), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (4 out of 7), "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (4 out of 7), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (4 out of 7), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (2 out of 7), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (1out of 6).

[40] The survey indicates that the added values have only been partially taken into account. In particular, the strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation received notably low emphasis. The inclusion of persons with disabilities also scored low—an area where many other projects face similar challenges.

[41] "The conceptual as well as applied parts of the project highly relevant for teachers, students, professionals."

[42] Five out of seven survey respondents confirming that gender awareness was actively considered. Concrete examples include the strong participation and empowerment of women across various roles—such as scholarship holders, coordinators, and students—with women reportedly outnumbering men in workshops and among beneficiaries. According to the report assessment the project demonstrates a reasonable commitment to gender equality, achieving a near-target male-to-female ratio of 10:9 despite falling slightly short of the proposed 3:2 ratio. This is considered a positive outcome under the circumstances. The inclusion of PhD students offers further potential to strengthen both gender balance and diversity. However, there is currently no evidence of broader diversity and inclusion efforts, and the question of adapting learning modules for accessibility—though potentially resource-intensive— remains unaddressed. Challenges in project leadership and management at NUACA have likely contributed to these limitations, but corrective actions appear to be underway.

the intended targets. However, measurable changes in attitudes or broader inclusion efforts are not yet evident given reporting requirements and collected data.

The project demonstrates effective implementation, supported by efficient management, early signs of sustainable outcomes, and contributions to strengthening institutional capacities. While some results have already been achieved[43] and disseminated, gaps in documentation currently prevent a clear comparison of updated values against the original targets. The project has reached an

> "Such programmes promote not only the Austrian institutions to be in the leading positions but also place Austria as a supporter of gender sensitive sustainable development internationally."
>
> Survey respondent (male, Austrian)

estimated 60 students directly across the partner universities. Key outputs achieved so far include five peer-reviewed journal articles, two online videos, four online reports, five academic conference contributions (including presentations, posters, and papers), two revised curricula, and eight revised or newly delivered courses incorporating APPEAR content. These results have been actively disseminated through an open-access platform[44] developed for partner institutions, allowing teachers and students to access project modules and related software tools. The project has contributed to strengthening institutional capacities by improving access to academic resources, enhancing practical and conceptual skills, and supporting beneficiaries in gaining better job opportunities and certifications. One notable aspect is that survey respondents were able to articulate how sustainability is being ensured, rather than simply confirming if or when it would be addressed—suggesting a deeper understanding and a strong indication that the **project's outcomes may be sustained over time**.[45] Survey results show that it is unclear to project stakeholders whether scholarship holders are a benefit for the project.[46] Project implementation was largely smooth, driven by effective and efficient management across all key areas, as confirmed unanimously by all six survey respondents.[47] While minor challenges were reported, none of these significantly affected the project's design or outcomes.[48]

Both Armenia and Kyrgyzstan experienced significant geopolitical events during the implementation: military clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan and a shift in foreign policy towards Europe marked a period of uncertainty, while Kyrgyzstan faced border violence with Tajikistan and a turn toward more restrictive governance. However, there is no indication that the research cooperation project involving universities in Yerevan and Bishkek was negatively affected. The project only faced significant delays due to the use of a sanctioned intermediary bank in Moscow, which was resolved through new banking arrangements.

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[43] The project reached approximately 95 people, including 60 students, about 20 additional students indirectly, 10 academic staff directly, and 5 indirectly.

[44] https://geoinformatik.at/course/index.php?categoryid=13

[45] According to the group interview, ongoing updates to the platform are planned, including the correction of non-functional links, to ensure continued usability. Furthermore, the platform is envisioned as a foundation for future project applications and sustained cooperation among partners. Given budget constraints, much of the research and dissemination work has been carried out by young PhD students, offering valuable early-career opportunities while maintaining project momentum.

[46] The assessment of the scholarship holders' benefits for the project shows a split picture, with only half of the respondents indicating that they enrich the project (3 out of 6), and the other half either saying that they don't (2 out of 6) or that they don't know (1 out of 6). The three respondents who saw the scholarship holders as enriching the project said that they are expected to contribute to teaching and research in their home institutions and turn to multipliers. The scholarship holder who answered the question described how the project enriched them personally (problem-solving skills, teamwork, ability to navigate complex challenges) and scientifically (deepen expertise, innovative methodologies, capacity development).

[47] The majority of the participants did not report challenges in the achievement of outputs and outcomes: "Yes, major challenges" (1 out of 7), "Yes, minor challenges" (1 out of 7), "No" (5 out of 7). The survey respondent for the major challenges did not specify it in detail.

[48] Such as adapting to different educational frameworks and languages across the four partner universities, introducing English-medium instruction, and logistical issues linked to the war in Ukraine. Financial fluctuations related to travel and living costs were also noted, but these were managed internally by the project team without impacting implementation. Initial difficulties in the first project year, mainly due to unfamiliarity with APPEAR funding mechanisms, were successfully overcome, and coordination improved as the project progressed.

3.5 Project 256 – CPUg: Clean and Prosperous Uganda Faecal Sludge and Solid Waste Management for Improved Livelihoods

Status: Ongoing 1 March 2022 – 28 February 2026 (48 months)

Stakeholders: Austria: Vienna University of Technology (Coordination); Uganda: Makerere University, Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS), Mbarara University of Science and Technology

Data quality assessment: The assessment is based on a review of the second annual project report, the survey responses of seven beneficiaries (3 project coordinators, 2 project members, 2 scholarship holders), as well as an interview with a project coordinator.

The project focuses on knowledge gaps and practical challenges of faecal sludge management (FSM) and solid waste management (SWM) in refugee settlements in Uganda, with the clear focus of exploring and testing circularity concepts. The application characterises the relevance of the project on the one hand, by highlighting the **national needs** for an improved FSM and SWM, the **scientific knowledge gaps**, the potential to improve soil fertility, and support the hygiene situations in refugee settlements. Moreover, the project also links their activities to concrete policy goals expressed in national strategies.[49] A similar level of detail, linking the activities to goals, is expressed in the concrete contributions to targets for the SDGS 2, 6, and 12. The projects contributions to the programmes' guiding principles are rather vague, but the survey respondents indicated a high relevance of the guiding principles.[50] But the description of the added values describes the synergies with ongoing ADC funded projects, regional networks and South-South cooperation, the support of young female researchers and the practically oriented activities in much detail and their implementation is clearly evident throughout the project implementation.[51] This is also validated by the survey respondents.[52] All survey respondents indicated that they see **a clear benefit of the scholarship holders as enriching the project** and the scholarship holders themselves describe their contribution as enriching.[53] The project contributes to capacity building in all involved institutions.[54] The project also takes dimensions of gender and inclusivity into account.[55] 6 out of 7 survey respondents indicate in the survey that gender mainstreaming and gender awareness were considered in the project and 1 respondent couldn't say.[56] There is a male dominance in the project overall,

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[49] Uganda Vision 2040, National Development Plan III, Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy

[50] On a scale from 1(not at all) to 6 (fully) the following GP were ranked on average: 5,9 (Open Access – Open Data, 5,7 (Practically and empirically oriented approach, Bottom-up and demand-driven approach, A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge), 5,6 (Participatory approach), 5,4 (Leave no one behind, gender sensitivity)

[51] The project strengthens capacities of and the collaboration between the three Southern partners involved. The project has a young female coordinator, who mentioned in the interview that the project is also a great opportunity for her gain capacities in project management. On the senior level of the cooperation there are several woman involved. The activity report of the NGO clearly evidences the practical approach with real-world problems.

[52] "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (7 out of 7), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (7 out of 7), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (6 / 7), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (5 / 7), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (3 out of 7), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (1 / 7)

[53] The respondents indicate that the scholarship holders are well integrated into the project team, the collection of samples and data analysis. They are further seen to be key for communicating the results in the scientific domains as well as with stakeholders. Also, the survey respondents emphasise that the scholarship holders are a central link for the intersection between countries as well as between the schools and colleges and will remain relevant for future collaborations with the partners. The two scholarship holders, who answered the survey indicated that this project supported their skill development, networking and growth as researchers, supporting the team also in the project management and the dissemination of results.

[54] For the involved universities the capacity building focuses on the individual research capacities. Therefore, the focus of this project appears to be more of a research project, rather an focused on institutional capacity building. While individuals have been trained, it is difficult to assess the institutional learnings, besides some teaching. It is not easy to assess how much longer the project will be implemented after the time. For the involved NGO the practical application of knowledge were deemed central.

[55] Also the second annual report reported a number of gender related activities and diversity related activities are reported in team and student selection as well as in the survey design: 2 gender trainings (1x Kampala, 1x Vienna); 2 gender discussions (1x project gender leads, 1x socio-economic students); 1 field survey with gender desegregated data collection and considerations; 1 gender-oriented student presentation with feedback; Moreover was a training material of gender in higher education prepared.

[56] Examples mentioned in the survey are a gender-sensitive student selection for the scholarship, a gender-sensitive design of research methodologies, gender and diversity trainings , discussions of gender mainstreaming, analysis of data desegregated based on gender for socioeconomic survey.

yet at the senior level of staff the project is gender balanced. The annual report indicates, for instance that it is more difficult to find people working with FS in the refugee camps. There is a male dominance in the project overall, yet at the senior level of staff the project is gender balanced. The annual report indicates, for instance that it is more difficult to find people working with FS in the refugee camps.

The project did not request preparatory funding but could already build on previous collaboration in an Academic Partnership in APPEAR II and three joint research projects (one funded by the ADA, and one by the OeAD). Besides the long-term collaboration the project is also discussing the which **synergies between similar projects in the region** focusing on waste management in refugee settlements. The project has a clear, well-distributed structure with deliverables, activities, and expected results. During the first report the project consortium suggested to change selected

> "Uganda struggles with the management of solid waste, which poses social, environmental, and economic burdens, yet fertilizer use in the country is abysmally low. The project's goal to promote solid waste valorisation through biological approaches provides a reliable and sustainable solution for the country."
>
> Scholarship holder (male, Uganda)

project outputs to cut down to more realistic outputs. The majority of survey respondents report minor challenges.[57] The report evidences several delays, caused by the audit of the financial report of the URCS, an Ebola outbreak in a refugee camp, Visa issues, problems with shipments of faecal sludge samples by the Austrian Customs, staff changes, as well as administrative delays. Considering these delays the report assessment describes an adequate progress of the project: the project directly benefited 19 students, 8 teachers and researchers, and around 26 staff, volunteers, and workers, while indirectly reaching 245 students and the wider Imvepi community of roughly 70,000 people, as well as residents in Wakiso. The report further suggests increasing the high-level scientific staff to support the publication of scientific articles, justified the little amount of budget spent in relation to the overall project time. In the first annual report the project the consortium requested to reduce the overly ambitious outcomes "improved health and cleaner environment from reduced emissions and pollution" and "creation for opportunities for private sector" to more realistic goals. Overall the survey respondents were satisfied with the collaboration management, which Time management being singled out as most challenging element.[58] The assessment of the report mentions the **large engagement in Uganda**, by the Ugandan institutions and students as a core strength of the project. The project has **unused potential to disseminate its results** and could increase the dissemination is also necessary to reach the many relevant stakeholders that were mapped out in the proposal.[59] The dissemination of project results was also mentioned as a core request for APPEAR projects of the ADC representative in the interview. In terms of unexpected economic challenges the survey respondents described how some commodities got more expensive in the wake of the Ukrainian War, which altered the cost for energy use and transport.

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[57] "Yes, major challenges" (1 out of 7), "Yes, minor challenges" (4 out of 7), "No" (1 out of 1), "I cannot say" (1 out of 1). The minor challenges reported were a limited budget for some tasks, time delays of activities and reporting due to bureaucratic challenges, availability of team members (parental leaves, limited capacities), communication. Partner institution processes bureaucracy (delays in approval, signing, sending of documents), delays due to hierarchies, one poor season with inadequate rainfall and monkey vandalism for a field experiment. The major changes mentioned by one survey respondents were the limited funds for the implementation, and no funds for HR.

[58] On a scale from 1(not at all) to 6 (fully) the following dimensions were ranked on average: 5,4 (Distribution of responsibilities), 5,3 (Problem resolution, Problem identification, Feedback mechanisms), 5,2, (Monitoring), 5,1 (Task scheduling, Quality of Communication), 4,7 (Time management)

[59] In terms of scientific dissemination the project reported 1 finished MSc thesis and 2 MSc thesis drafts, one article in a peer reviewed journal and 5 manuscripts at different stages of development (3 Bioengineering; 1 socioenomic; 1 agronomy). The list of quantitative outputs mentions two self-organised public events, a Linked in page with 80 followers, and two courses/lectures given with APPEAR content as well as a contribution to the APPEAR radio show "Welt im Ohr".

3.6 Project 262 – AER-Phase II: Strengthening of Higher Education, Research and Science Communication in Agroecology in the Rwenzori Region in Western Uganda-Phase II

Status: ongoing (1 March 2022 – 30 August 2025)

Stakeholders and their role: Uganda: Mountains of the Moon University (coordination), Uganda Martyrs University (UMU), Sasakawa Africa Association (SSA); Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna

Data quality assessment: The survey was completed by 16 beneficiaries (12 project members, 2 project coordinators, one representative from the NGO, and one administrative staff involved in the project). The project evaluation cold use two annual reports, two half year reports and the assessment of an external reviewer. The project does not have dedicated work packages, which complicated the assessment of progress.

The project AER-Phase II is aimed at strengthening higher education, research and science communication of Agroecology in the Rwenzori Region. The project is an Advanced Academic Partnership continuing and extending the achievements of a previous project, focusing on the improvement of quality teaching for the Master programme, further participatory action research and increase farmers' capacity to develop and adopt agroecological research through Living Labs. The project's objectives are in line with national strategies[60] and contextualise their endeavour with a reference to **concrete SDG targets.**[61] Furthermore, the project demonstrates a clear focus on the programme's guiding principles and selected added values.[62] All survey respondents indicate in the survey that gender mainstreaming and gender awareness were considered in the project and all but one that the APPEAR guiding principle of gender sensitivity was taken into account.[63] Regarding the change in attitudes, survey respondents highlighted that the MMU promoted the female project coordinator to a rank of associate professor, making her the **first female professor at the university**.
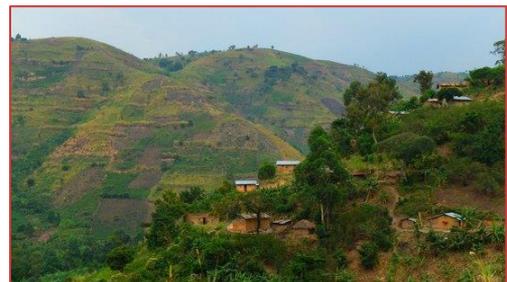
Source: Phillipp Dietrich

The project's objectives are relevant for the universities in Uganda.[64] As an advanced academic partnership AER-Phase II already builds on an collaboration between two of the project partners, which supports a trusting and efficient environment.[65] The project coordinator pointed to in the interview to the gradual process of

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[60] As such, the application refers for instance to the National Organic Agriculture Policy (NOAP) and its emphasis on co-creating knowledge; Uganda's National Development Plan III, the Rwenzori investment plan, the 2030 African Agenda.

[61] The application describes the contribution to the SDGs by referencing concretely the SDG targets 2.3, 12.2, 13.3. Whereas other projects refer in their application only to the broader pursuit AER narrows their contribution down to concrete targets.

[62] This is for instance visible in the inclusion of another Ugandan University for the second phase to further the South-South cooperation and regional collaboration, the coordination by a young female researcher in a partner country, or also beneficiaries survey responses that also demonstrate a comparably particular high value for the of inclusion of person with disabilities : "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (15 out of 16), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (14 out of 16), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (12 out of 16), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (12 out of 16), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (11 out of 16), " Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (10 out of 16).

[63] As examples were listed the gender balanced team, training formats for gender sensitivity, the encouragement of woman and you to participate in the project, especially also female farmers, the drafting of an inclusion policy for the university, gender awareness campaigns integrated across the work packages, coverage of gender topics in policy brief.

[64] In the scoping interviews, it was mentioned that the MMU is a young University and the development of institutional capacity had already benefited greatly during the first phase of the project. For the second phase the strengthening and stabilisation of individual and institutional capacities has become central. Including UMU in the second phase allowed to extend the capacity building and strengthen regional institutional collaboration.

[65] On a scale from 1 to 6 the following dimensions of cooperation management were ranked on average: 5,4 (Distribution of responsibilities), 5,3 (Monitoring, Problem identification), 5,2 (Problem resolution), 5,1 (Quality of communication), 5 (Task scheduling), 4,8 (Feedback mechanisms) 4,7 (Time management).

capacity building, where it was seen like a **"natural progression" to transfer the responsibility of coordination to the partner countries for the second phase**.[66] They also noted that coordinating the project is seen as a great opportunity opening future possibilities. For AER-Phase 2 present and past scholarship holders play an important role.[67] Overall, the survey suggests that the project is relevant for individual beneficiaries, who mention their enhancement of skills, extension of networking as well as thematical knowledge and practices about agroecology as key learnings.

The focus on the outputs is on the institutional capacity building.[68] Overall, the outcomes are likely to continue beyond the end of the project as deliverables and stakeholders demonstrate processes of ownership and sustainability. The majority of survey respondents reported that the project experienced only minor challenges to achieve the planned output(s) and outcome(s).[69] However, the second annual report points out that while the planned outcomes for higher education are mostly on track, **the development of farmer capacities were not convincingly addressed**: The project directly benefited 70 students and 40 academic staff, with an additional 250 students and

> "The project has established agro-ecological demonstration farms at host institutions and the surrounding communities. These are key interventions for teaching, research, and community engagement. The guiding principles for their management and operationalisation have embedded an element of revenue generation which is key for sustainability even beyond the project life."
>
> Survey respondent (male, Uganda)

150 staff reached indirectly; beyond academia, 30 other individuals, including members of marginalized communities, and two institutional demonstration farms were also engaged, though this fell short of the proposed 10 demonstration sites and broader transition to living labs. The project has been successful in producing communication materials and organising dissemination events.[70] The evaluation observed furthermore that the notion of "**living lab**", which was described as central element of extension during the application was not mentioned in the progress reports. The assessment report with the involved NGO (SSA) might need be further explored, as the capacity building had only made limited progress until the second-year report. In the survey, representatives from the NGO indicate that they are satisfied with the collaboration and the achievements. Also, the other beneficiaries highlighted in their survey responses the projects' contributions to **systematically support sustainable farming by promoting the education of future practitioners and the exchange with local communities and stakeholders**. Also, in the interview the project coordinator described how the project also contributed to demystifying academia for rural community through the interaction between staff, farmers and studies.

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[66] The project coordinator also mentioned that APPEAR's added value, and thus advantages during the selection process, were also considered in the choice of coordinators.

[67] No scholarship holders answered the survey but of the 11 survey respondents 16 answered that they see the scholarship holders as enriching the project and only 5 indicated that they cannot say.

[68] This includes the drafting of inclusion and disability policies, revision of two curricula and four courses as well as the thirteen modules within the Master curriculum given with the APPEAR content. Moreover it is also worth mentioning that the project is in contact with another APPEAR project in Armenia that focuses on a similar topic and additional Erasmus Mobility funding could be generated to explore the collaboration.

[69] "Yes, minor challenges" (10 out of 16), "No" (5 out of 1), "I cannot say" (1 out of 16). The minor challenges were characterised in the survey responses as the delays to get funds, inflation, budgeting issues (distribution between work packages, the amount dedicated to scholarship holders, underbudgeting the Rwenzori Regional Development Framework), synchronisation of agroecology curricula of the two southern partner institutions, Inexperience with online-teaching and the recording of presentations, overworked staff, mindset changes of neighbouring communities about agroecological practices, the rejection of the first PhD candidate, inadequate knowledge of farmers to use ICT gadgets for agriculture due to illiteracy.

[70] 4 audiovisual modules were uploaded on YouTube, a gender training overview was published on the MMU website, 4 posters were presented at conferences, 3 research seminar presentation, 3 dissemination events (non-academic conferences, 2 self-organised public events.

3.7 Project 267 – SOAA Strengthening Organic Agriculture in Armenia: Participatory Higher Education and Knowledge Exchange for Development

Status: finalised (01 March 2022 – 31 May 2025)

Stakeholders and their role: Armenia: Armenian National Agrarian University (coordination); Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences

Data quality assessment: The data collection process encountered several limitations that impact the comprehensiveness and representativeness of findings. Only one Armenian person responded to the survey and declined to be quoted directly, direct testimony from Austrian team members or scholarship holders is missing. Furthermore, the ADA local office did not respond to the interview invitation. Technical difficulties and limited digital literacy posed additional barriers to participation the group interview. Document such as a context-specific gender analysis are not mandatory and was not provided.

The Advanced Academic Partnership focused on the improvement of the master's programme in organic agriculture at the Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU), including quality development and long-term institutional integration. It also aimed to strengthen the Armenian organic sector by linking academic training, applied research and outreach. The project's relevance is confirmed according to the APPEAR team[71] according to whom the SOAA project is highly relevant in strengthening Armenia's organic agriculture through targeted investments in education, research, and institutional capacity-building. These efforts align closely with the objectives of Austrian research cooperation and the APPEAR programme by fostering equitable academic partnerships and long-term sectoral development. However, as these educational and institutional structures are now increasingly consolidated, future phases of research cooperation should shift focus toward the sector's most critical constraint: limited market access for organic products. Advancing applied, transdisciplinary research on sustainable marketing strategies, value chain integration, and export facilitation would significantly enhance the economic viability of organic agriculture in Armenia and ensure that the scientific and institutional gains achieved thus far are translated into durable, systemic impact. The project application addressed all guiding principles and added values, though it lacked detail on the role of the partner-country institution—despite Armenian coordination. Implementation was marked by a strong participatory approach. The project promoted open knowledge exchange, challenged traditional mindsets in agricultural education, and actively integrated gender sensitivity which resulted in outcomes like partnerships and outreach to indirect target groups. However, the project's indicators are not formulated in such a way as to measure changes in attitudes towards gender.

> "The main problem of organic farming in Armenia is marketing. Very valuable and high-quality products are produced, which are then difficult to market. On the one hand, because a large part of the population simply cannot afford organic products, and on the other hand, because export to Europe is difficult. […] Urgent action is needed to stop the further decline of organic farms in Armenia. Certified organic farms need continued financial support to maintain organic certification. Meanwhile, outlets need to be sought urgently."
>
> Ekoconnect, Country Report Organic Armenia, 2021

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[71] given its alignment with the ADC's strategy in Armenia and complementarity with existing ADA projects, its inclusiveness for the development of the curriculum and reform efforts and systemic needs in Armenia. However, this information could not be triangulated for a robust assessment given the limited availability of data on stakeholders' perception of the project's relevance for the partner universities for the country of Armenia, for Austrian researchers and its alignment and progress on SDG targets.

The project has **achieved a range of outputs and outcomes**, including curriculum improvements, enhanced teaching capacities[72], student graduations, and the long-winded integration of a student research farm (incl. acquisition of land and certification process) into the curriculum, master theses and short courses for hands-on learning. Dissemination activities were also implemented, such as public events, media outreach (including a TV feature), and active use of social media channels. Additionally, the project enabled Erasmus mobility opportunities, positioning it as the only master's programme in Armenia offering such exchanges beyond the APPEAR framework. The project reached 59 beneficiaries to date with 17 students and teachers and researchers benefitted directly, 25 indirectly as well as 17 other beneficiaries however, it remains difficult to assess whether the achievements exceed, meet, or fall short of initial plans and **how they sustained in time**.[73] The **project results have been shared** through a joint publication with Ugandan partners, a dedicated Facebook page, and national TV features. They are used by students in practical farm activities like honey harvesting and organic chocolate production, and by organic producers and stakeholders to support training, demonstration, and promotion of organic agriculture. The effectiveness of the project was shaped by both supportive and constraining factors: efficient communication with ADA for rapid issue resolution, scholarship holders played a praised, supportive role in project activities, despite initial delays in starting scholarships, however, major staff changes and shifting university politics challenged the implementation.[74] The project **strengthened institutional capacity development** in teaching, research, quality, and organisational skills by transferring coordination to the Armenian partner in the second phase, fostering local ownership. This shift reflects significant capacity building, with Armenian staff demonstrating strong leadership, adaptability, and commitment to managing the project effectively.

Source: Areg Galstyan

Post-COVID enrolment decline, severe inflation, and regional instability—particularly due to the ongoing conflict in the region—had a notable impact on the implementation of the project and the achievement of its objectives compared to the initial project design. Inflation in Armenia reached over 30% and significantly reduced the real value of the project budget, resulting in cuts to team members' working hours and delays in implementation. These effects were partially offset by proactive risk management: the financial risk assessment was revised from low to medium, and the project team successfully negotiated a 15% budget increase—the first of its kind approved within the programme. Additionally, events had to be postponed due to regional security concerns, though such disruptions fell outside the support capacity of the programme. In response to these external pressures, the project introduced several adaptive measures, including a cost-neutral extension to ensure the completion of delayed activities within the overall programme timeframe. While delays related to staff turnover and scholarship administration posed further implementation challenges, these were largely managed without derailing the project trajectory. Overall, the project's flexible adaptation to economic and political shocks illustrates a strong degree of institutional resilience, and its **capacity to sustain momentum under adverse conditions** can be considered a positive outcome in itself.

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[72] The project introduced a practice-oriented teaching model, breaking with the Soviet-style emphasis on rote learning and lectures.
[73] Due to limited data, it is difficult to assess the sustainability of these results.
[74] The limited number of respondents and the lack of consistent data make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about overall management effectiveness (efficient coordination and fulfilment of expectations towards this role, monitoring, etc.)

3.8 Project 269 – LoCaBreed2.0: Advancing local capacities for livestock breeding practice and research in Burkina Faso

Status: ongoing (01 October 2022 – 30 September 2025)

Stakeholders and their role: Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (coordination), University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna; Burkina Faso: Norbert Zongo University; Nazi Boni University; Environmental Institute for Agricultural Research; African Institute for Economics and Social Development – Inades-Formation Burkina, National Center for Animal Genetics Improvement

Data quality assessment: Data could not be collected in group interviews for lack of participation by the project coordination, an interview with the ADA local office in Ouagadougou was not possible due to staff turnover. Six (male) persons took part in the survey out of which 2 scholarship holders. Austrian stakeholders have not answered the survey. Project documentation such as an annual report assessment or revised risk assessment were not provided. These many limitations have been hampering the evaluative assessment and flagged in more detail in footnotes.

The project builds on a predecessor programme and appears relevant[76] as confirmed by the six survey respondents, since a) its objectives[77] are **in line with national strategies** for livestock development and the new policy focus on the genetic improvement of local breeds; and b) it is **considering the APPEAR guiding principles and added values**, with a specific focus on the advancement of young and particularly female researchers as well as a practically oriented approach.[78] All survey respondents agree that current and past **scholarship holders have enriched the project** through field activities, data collection, scientific publications, and increased visibility. They also strengthened university collaborations, with past scholarship holders leading work packages and establishing connections with other institutions. One particularity about the project is its relevance towards gender mainstreaming: many measures[79] have been taken at the start, one is noteworthy: unlike many other APPEAR projects it planned a context-specific gender analysis to adapt its activities. However as per the latest progress report, **it is not possible to confirm changed attitudes towards gender** just yet, it is also unclear how these are planned to be measured and analysed.

> In Burkina Faso, most people live in rural areas and depend on subsistence crop production and livestock breeding for their livelihoods: 54% of goat breeding is practiced by women.[75]

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[75] Akounda, B., Ouédraogo, D., Burger, P. A., Rosen, B. D., Van Tassell, C. P., Sölkner, J., & Soudré, A. (2023). Characterization of goat production systems in two agro-ecological zones of Burkina Faso, West Africa. *International Journal of Livestock Production, 14*(1), 1-10. https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJLP/article-full-text-pdf/360321A71414.pdf

[76] There is limited availability of data on stakeholders' perception of the project's relevance for the partner universities, relevance for Austrian researchers and its alignment and progress on SDG targets, therefore evidence does not allow for a robust evaluative assessment.

[77] As worded in the project proposal "(i)contributing to the eradication of rural poverty through increasing the production and marketing potential of local cattle and goat breeding systems, (ii) enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment, (iii) leveraging digital breeding technologies for rural areas and (iv) strengthening local capacities for higher education and research".

[78] "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (5 out of 5), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (5 out of 5), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (4 out of 5), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (3 out of 5), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (3 out of 5), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (2 out of 5)

[79] The consortium includes female researchers but was unbalanced; the selection of scholarship holders is steered towards women; within the project content for example, priority is given to female applicants for grants; e) project design now integrates goat breeding (since it's a female activity in Burkina Faso) and dedicated training for female breeders and the developed MSc will consider employment possibilities of female graduates; data Is collected and analysed in a disaggregated way.

In terms of progress so far, the project has benefited the project team and **achieved limited outputs** concerning beneficiaries according to the first annual report (September 2023): 4 (3 PhD and 1 Master) students and 12 (6 Austrian and 6 Burkinabé) teachers/researchers have benefited directly from the project, as well as 182 goat farmers registered in the breeding programmes. It is therefore challenging to assess institutional capacity building at this stage. Survey respondents reported experiencing minor challenges during implementation, namely difficulties in finding a working, Burkinabè account number to **transfer project funds**, weak commitment of beneficiaries due to a harsh economic context and lack of monetary compensation, long-term

Source: https://oead.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/appear.at/projects/fact_sheets/WEB_269_OeAD_Appear_Factsheet_1.pdf

mobilisation of breeders and the establishment of their associations, as well as the effective involvement of technicians in the field. Factors driving implementation include **preparatory funding** and smooth-running management processes.[80] The preparatory funding was granted for the first phase of the project, which enabled networking, problem identification and submission of the concept note as well as supporting the project writing.

The political situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated significantly, especially in the southern region where the project is active. Although samples can still be taken and experiments conducted, travel within the country is highly discouraged due to the presence of militant Islamist groups and ongoing kidnappings of both European and local hostages. The team has made two visits, but it was deemed too risky for Europeans to travel into the field. The project can still proceed, albeit with a limited scope for Austrian participants. There are two scholarship recipients from the first phase, one of whom is involved in a research project under a separate programme. Despite delays in reporting and financial issues, the team feels confident the project can continue. While the situation remains uncertain due to the control of Islamist militants and the military-led government, the team is small, well-coordinated, and continues to collaborate effectively. The local team member who lives in the country remains calm, and overall, communication within the team is strong, with everyone staying engaged despite the challenges.

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[80] On a scale from 1 (poor) to 6 (excellent), four out of five survey respondents ranked cooperation processes at 5, these include distribution of responsibilities, quality of communication, task scheduling, time management, feedback mechanisms, monitoring, problem identification. There is limited availability of data to assess the effects of and expectations towards project coordination by the Austrian university how it was established and the added value of the project structure.

3.9 Project 277 – EcoServ: Ecosystem services assessment through a participatory approach for sustainable water resources management in Armenia

Status: ongoing (01 March 2023 – 28 February 2027)

Stakeholders: Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (coordination); Armenia: Yerevan State University; Scientific Center of Zoology and Hydroecology (SCZHE) of National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia

Data quality assessment: The assessment of this project is mostly based on the findings' triangulation of a document review, a scoping interview and two survey respondents (one of which came from an Austrian project team member—while input from scholarship holders was not captured) since primary data collection provided a modest amount of information. Qualitative insights were limited, as the project coordinator was unavailable on the day of the group interview and the local ADA office in Yerevan could not be reached for consultation. As observed in several other APPEAR projects, documentation gaps, including the absence of the excel template reporting on beneficiaries and outputs, clearly defined indicator targets, and an updated risk assessment limited the assessment.

The EcoServ project aims to build the capacity of Armenian partner institutions to assess and manage ecosystem services in support of sustainable water resource management. This is achieved through the development of a university teaching module on ecosystem services and the creation of a practical, participatory framework for wetland management, designed for use by both local communities and government ministries.

The **project demonstrates overall relevance**. Its alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is clearly articulated in the application and reporting documents,[81] however, like other APPEAR projects, the **lack of clearly defined sub-indicators, targets, or measurable contributions** limits the ability to assess its specific impact on these goals. The project shows clear relevance to the needs of Armenian institutions by addressing pressing challenges in biodiversity conservation and environmental pressures, although this is supported only by anecdotal survey evidence.[82] All seven APPEAR guiding principles are addressed in the application, and survey responses confirm agreement on their implementation.[83] The added values of the APPEAR programme were also comprehensively addressed,[84] though survey respondents indicated that two—namely, inclusion of persons with disabilities and the strengthening of South-South and regional cooperation—were not adequately reflected in practice. Due to a lack of responses from Austrian stakeholders, the project's relevance for Austrian research cannot be confirmed. The **EcoServ project places notable emphasis on gender mainstreaming**, both in design[85] and implementation.[86] Despite this extensive focus, only one out of two survey respondents explicitly confirmed the consideration of gender mainstreaming in the project. Nonetheless, survey comments noted that women were the primary beneficiaries of training, grants, and volunteer roles. In addition, as for other APPEAR

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[81] Goals 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and 15 (Life on Land)

[82] Its contribution to national efforts in integrating sustainable practices into education and policy is evident through activities that foster cross-sectoral collaboration and capacity-building among researchers, policymakers, and local communities. Participatory methods further enhance local ownership and social-ecological resilience. The project is also well aligned with EU methodologies, supporting Armenia's ambitions for regional cooperation.

[83] Though the principle of a "practical and empirically based approach" received slightly lower endorsement.

[84] Alignment with ADC country strategies, support for young and female researchers, and practical application of results were all recognised as strengths.

[85] The application outlines the socio-economic barriers faced by women in Armenia and proposes tailored interventions, including financial literacy training, entrepreneurial support, and small grants for women-led sustainable businesses. These efforts are supplemented by mentorship, cost-free consultations, and strong encouragement of female participation across all activities.

[86] According to the annual report, four of the seven team members are female, including the coordinator, and women are actively involved in research, teaching, and decision-making. The project also supports women's participation in science through scholarships, teacher engagement, and citizen science initiatives. Meetings with female teachers and displaced women have created opportunities for longer-term collaboration and inclusion. A female master's student has been selected to continue her education in Austria, further contributing to gender equity in research.

projects, changes in attitudes towards gender are not yet measurable, partly due to the project's mid-implementation status and gaps in documentation and reporting structure.

The EcoServ project has **demonstrated good effectiveness to date**, particularly in terms of educational, research, and community engagement outputs. It has delivered a broad range of tangible results, including the participation of over 100 teachers and students in training workshops and 40 educators in co-developing teaching materials. More than 20 students took part in a summer school focused on practical case studies. A renovated laboratory at the Scientific Center of Zoology and Hydroecology now facilitates participatory research and collaboration between science and society. Curriculum content on ecosystem services has been integrated into two Master's and one Bachelor's programme across three universities. The project also published the first Armenian-language handbook on ecosystem services, with teacher manuals currently in development. Two citizen science projects involving 32 students have been completed, and eight community volunteers remain engaged in ongoing local monitoring. Further achievements include stakeholder engagement through policy dialogues, the awarding of grants to local eco-entrepreneurs—particularly women—and the creation of a training room for environmental education. The development of an ecosystem services assessment framework is underway and expected to be a major outcome. Additionally, the project has produced peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, and other dissemination materials. While these outputs are substantial, the exact number and profile of beneficiaries remain unclear, limiting the ability to evaluate the reach and impact of project activities fully.

The contribution of scholarship holders to the project's success is difficult to assess, as both survey respondents reported that they "could not say" whether their involvement enriched the project. Nonetheless, the coordination of the project has been highly effective, as reflected in positive survey ratings across all aspects of management, including communication, task scheduling, and problem resolution. A former APPEAR scholarship holder played a key role in outreach, promoting the project through media channels and actively fostering synergies within the APPEAR community. This high level of engagement and communication has enhanced the project's visibility and collaborative spirit. Challenges reported were minor and primarily related to engaging diverse local stakeholders in ecosystem service activities and bridging communication between authorities and communities. One respondent noted no significant challenges at all. An issue raised in the scoping interview concerned the audit process, which was viewed as overly burdensome compared to EU-funded projects.

While Armenia experienced military clashes with Azerbaijan prior to the start of the project and, there is no indication that the research cooperation project was negatively affected.

Source: Tigran Vardanyan

3.10 Project 278 – ArmBioClimate: Strengthening Genetic Biocontrol Capacities under Climate Change in Armenia

Status: ongoing (01 April 2023 – 31 March 2027)

Stakeholders: Armenia: Yerevan State University, Scientific Center of Zoology and Hydroecology of National Academy of Science, Institute of Botany after A.L. Takhtajyan of National Academy of Science. Austria: University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Medical University of Vienna.

Data quality assessment: The data collection process for this project yielded a moderate amount of information, with five survey respondents including one Austrian project team member and one scholarship holder. Qualitative insights were supplemented by the participation of the project coordinator in a group interview. Similarly to other APPEAR projects, a gender analysis (non-mandatory), and a revised risk assessment were missing. Additionally, the local ADA office in Yerevan was unavailable for interview, limiting the assessment of the project's relevance from a national policy perspective.

The project aims to strengthen Armenia's resilience to climate change by enhancing its capacity for genetic biocontrol. ArmBioClimate supports the development of modern curricula and targeted training programmes, and the establishment of an early warning system to track climate-related shifts in species and diseases.

Since its inception, the **project has maintained a good level of relevance**, due to its alignment with capacities of participating institutions.[87] The initial project proposal was scaled up from improving existing courses to developing a full master's programme in bioparasitology, following strong faculty support. This shift demonstrates growing institutional ownership and recognition of the project's strategic value. A key element of its relevance lies in addressing a critical capacity gap in Armenia's research infrastructure, particularly in genome sequencing.[88] The project

Source: https://www.facebook.com/ArmBioClimate

application explicitly addressed all seven APPEAR guiding principles, a commitment largely confirmed by survey respondents, who rated their implementation between 5.2 and 5.8 out of 6.[89] In terms of APPEAR added values, the project scored well for practical application, regional cooperation, and support for young and female researchers. However, alignment with ADC country strategies and inclusion of persons with disabilities were perceived as weaker areas. Relevance for Austrian researchers was also noted, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that the partner country's diversity of vector-borne pathogens offers valuable insights for Austria, where such diseases may increase due to climate change. Gender mainstreaming is well integrated into the project's design, with four out of five survey respondents confirming attention to gender awareness. The consortium includes four women and three men in key roles, led by a female coordinator from the Armenian partner institution. Two PhD scholarships

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[87] Nonetheless, relevance at the national policy level could not be assessed due to limited data. Likewise, the project's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is not monitored beyond its brief mention in the application. This limits the ability to evaluate its alignment with broader development objectives.

[88] The procurement of equipment valued at €100,000, including a sequencing analysis device previously unavailable in the country, allows researchers to conduct analyses locally instead of sending samples abroad

[89] "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (5 out of 5), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (4 out of 5), "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (3 out of 5), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (3 out of 5), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (2 out of 5), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (2 out of 5)

have been awarded to women, and gender-sensitive research and training approaches have been reported. While no dedicated gender workshops were held, internal efforts supported the inclusion of female participants. However, measurable changes in attitudes or broader inclusion outcomes remain undocumented at this stage due to the project's mid-implementation status.

At the midterm stage, the ArmBioClimate project **demonstrates effectiveness across several key dimensions**, though limitations in target-setting constrain full evaluative assessment.

A total of 68 beneficiaries had been reported by the time of the first annual report including 19 students and 16 researchers directly, and a further 9 students and 24 researchers indirectly. The project has achieved several substantial outputs[90] and **dissemination efforts are still largely within the scientific community**, but there are plans to broaden the impact through public-facing services focused on early disease detection. The project team anticipates that its research and educational results will contribute to both academic networks and national systems in the longer term. **Minor challenges** have been reported by all survey respondents, including delays caused by visa issues, prolonged data collection, and unfinished laboratory facilities. Logistical constraints, such as delays in sample deliveries and difficulties sourcing chemicals, also slightly hindered research progress. Nonetheless, all issues were addressed promptly, with the project team highlighting the valuable support received from the APPEAR office. The involvement of scholarship holders has significantly contributed to the project's success, with PhD students leading fieldwork, lab work, and data analysis, while also enriching their own professional development. **Preparatory funding was instrumental** in establishing effective cooperation between the six partner institutions, covering travel costs, facilitating joint work, and supporting the acquisition of essential lab equipment. Project coordination has been a key strength, with experienced leadership in Armenia and strong collaboration with related APPEAR projects enhancing synergy and continuity. Effective internal communication and quick adaptation to challenges have supported the smooth implementation of activities.[91] The early selection and active engagement of scholarship holders, who participated in conferences within months, has also contributed to project momentum. The project has built a focused and well-functioning research team, with clear dedication from both Armenian and Austrian partners. Collaborative ties with other initiatives and institutions have also strengthened the project's implementation environment.

> "Personally, participating in the project has broadened my cultural and professional perspectives, allowing me to collaborate with international experts and engage in meaningful fieldwork. Scientifically, it has deepened my understanding of vector-borne diseases and enhanced my skills in research, data analysis, and communication, contributing to my growth as a researcher."
>
> Survey respondent (female, Armenian)

Armenia experienced significant geopolitical events prior to the implementation: military clashes between with Azerbaijan and a shift in foreign policy towards Europe marked a period of uncertainty. However, there is no indication that the research cooperation project involving partner universities was negatively affected. The project only faced limited delays due to budgetary constraints linked with increased prices for equipment in Armenia which were resolved.

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[90] such as the development of a new master's course, curriculum updates, and the construction of research facilities at the Scientific Center of Zoology and Hydroecology (SCZH). Collaborative PhD projects with MEDUNI and VETMEDUNI, along with key research outputs like the golden jackal reference genome, reflect a high level of scientific productivity.

[91] Survey results confirm excellent project management, with particularly high ratings for problem resolution (5.2) and identification (5.0). Other areas such as task scheduling, responsibility sharing, and communication scored between 4.8 and 5.0, indicating a well-structured approach. Slightly lower ratings for feedback, monitoring, and time management (all 4.6) suggest minor areas for improvement.

3.11 Project 287 – HEESeB: Strengthening Capacity of Higher Engineering Education for Sustainable Buildings

Status: Ongoing (1 February 2023 – 31 January 2026)

Stakeholders and their role: Bhutan: Jigme Namgyel Engineering College (JNEC) - Royal University of Bhutan (coordination); Austria: University of Innsbruck (UIBK)

Data quality assessment: The assessment is based on detailed project reports, a review of the annual project report, survey results of four beneficiaries (2 project coordinators, 2 Project members,), as well as an interview with the project coordinator. As observed in several other APPEAR projects, documentation gaps, including the absence of the excel template reporting on beneficiaries and outputs, clearly defined indicator targets, and an updated risk assessment limited the assessment.

The project aims to develop and install a certificate programme for sustainable and resilient building with timber in Bhutan. Bhutan has rich and underused forest resources and there is a dedicated national strategy to make them available to the domestic market and thereby reduce the dependency of importing construction materials. Yet, the country lacks know-how and experience in teaching skills, which the HEESeB project centrally contributes to. The project **aligns with the ADC thematic areas** of energy, education and strengthening capacity of higher education. In the application the project describes how it aims to contribute to three SDGs.[92] Yet, it does not reference SDG targets and they are not considered a core reference frame throughout the reports. The JNEC in **Bhutan is a young university and for them the better qualification of their teachers is central.**[93] The Austrian researchers mention that they were inspired for new research ideas and that part of the developed teaching tools will be used for lectures in Austrian and other international training programmes. The seven guiding principles of the programme are not explicitly stated in the project application, but the section on them in the project application implicitly discusses most of them, except "leaving no one behind". Neither are the added values explicitly mentioned in the application, although most of them are discussed indirectly, while the inclusion of people with disabilities and the strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation is not mentioned.[94] The survey suggests that the beneficiaries see the APPEAR Guiding Principles[95] and APPEAR Added Values[96] considered in the project. There are no scholarship holders involved in the project but four Master students (2JNEC, 2 UIBK) are writing their thesis about it and visit the partner universities. **Short-term mobility is fostered not only for students but also technical staff and teachers, which supports the multilevel capacity building.** The project attributes a high value to gender equality and inclusivity. This is expressed, for instance in the clear focus of females in managerial positions or the

Source: https://www.heeseb.com/

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[92] SDG 4 – Quality education, SDG 5 - Gender equality, SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

[93] 30% of teachers only have a Bachelor's degree and many lack international experience.

[94] All four survey participants agreed that the added value of APPEAR is taken into account, with the exception of the alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, the inclusion of people with disabilities and the strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation, where one person did not agree.

[95] On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (fully) the following dimensions were ranked on average: 6 (Gender sensitivity), 5,75 (A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge, Practically and empirically oriented approach), 5,5, (Leave no one behind, Open Access – Open data, Participatory approach), 5 (Bottom-up and demand-driven approach)

[96] Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (4 out of 4), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (4 out of 4), "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (4 out of 4), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (3 out of 4), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (3 out of 4), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (2 out of 4)

inclusion of female lectures to act as role models for students. The dedicated training of trainers (ToT) on gender sensitive STEM teaching was developed and the participants came from ten Higher Secondary Schools in Bhutan and one college in Bhutan. All survey respondents indicate in the survey that gender mainstreaming and gender awareness were considered in the project.[97] Besides gender the project is also attentive to **other dimensions of inclusiveness in their stakeholder meetings** (e.g. inviting small sawmill owners, non-Bhutanese working in Bhutan) **involving representatives from different regions in Bhutan in the ToTs, as well as age**.[98]

The project is structured in clear work-packages and dedicated responsibilities. Each WP leader is supported by at least three people for their tasks. The survey respondents perceive the **collaboration as well-managed.**[99] Also the project monitoring and validation of respective indicators were developed. The collaboration benefits from previous experiences

> "The target groups are directly involved in implementing the project. Every outcome and activity of the project has been designed in consultation with the target groups."
>
> Survey respondent (male, Bhutan)

in an Erasmus+ project, but did not receive any APPEAR preparatory funding. The majority of survey respondents do not see any challenges to achieve the planned outputs and outcomes of the project.[100] Which is also validated by the reviewer of the progress report, who commended the quick achievement of outputs and outcomes.[101] The initiative for the collaboration came from JNEC, who was actively looking for support for their endeavours and also took up the coordination of the project. The high interest in the project is also reflected in **the high number of stakeholders from different backgrounds,** who engaged in the stakeholder consultation.[102] The high interest and needs, as well as the age of staff (majority below 40) will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the project. The project's progress was reported in newsletters, websites, FB, and one scientific article under review.

The situation in Bhutan is stable and the project did not report any major challenges due to political, social, or economic problems. The only challenge mentioned in the survey was related to procurement challenges for equipment.

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[97] Examples gender-balanced core team, courses on gender sensitive STEM teaching, course on gender equality, Females visiting Austria, 30% of the participants are female, distribution of tasks among genders,

[98] Woman engaged as project members (4), project management (3), leading project tasks (2), Number of woman directly benefiting from the project (5); % of staff from different regions (out of 15 3 from South, 3 from West and 9 from East);% of staff from different fields of sciences (5 Technical support, 2 science, 1 finance, and 7 engineering); % of staff from different age groups (2 nos 50+, 2 nos 40-50, rest of the team below 40 years of age – sustainability

[99] On a scale from 1(not at all) to 6 (fully) the following dimensions were ranked on average: 5,75 (Distribution of responsibilities; 5,5, (Time management, Quality of communication, Problem resolution, Problem identification, Monitoring); 5,25 (Task scheduling); 4,75 (Feedback mechanisms).

[100] "Yes, minor challenges" (1 out of 4), "No" (3 out of 4). The challenges mentioned by survey respondents concerned the revision of lectured to the local needs and boundary conditions of the partner countries.

[101] The progress report describes that six teachers and four support staff members have been trained to present the course developed, while several other training workshops reached a larger scope of staff and students. Forty eight staff members and students attended a workshop on timber engineering, 46 staff and students attended a course on building energy efficiency, and 39 teachers were trained in gender sensitive STEM teaching. In addition, two laboratory technicians and two carpenters were trained on operating the timber engineering laboratory and two technicians received training via a work attachment at a similar laboratory at UIBK. Additionally, the report illustrates that the number of short term courses is more than initially planned, the launch of the programme is half a year earlier than planned.

[102] One stakeholder meeting to discuss needs for new course – 31 participants in a stakeholder workshop; Survey and interviews – 61 wood based industries and 29 professionals; "Participants in the stakeholder meeting comprised of representatives from government, private, corporates, large timber industry, small sawmill owners, non-Bhutanese working in Bhutan. Participants included CEO, architects, engineers, sawmill owners, timber industry managers, technicians, professors, and university administrators. Participants in gender sensitive STEM teaching ToT comprised of teachers from 10 Higher Secondary Schools in Bhutan, and one college in Bhutan."

3.12 Project 288 – PHRE: Promotion of Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems Towards Electricity Access in Uganda

Status: ongoing (1 June 2023 – 31 May 2026 (36 months)

Stakeholders and their role: Austria: BOKU (Coordination), Uganda: Makerere University (MAK)

Partner Country: Uganda

Data quality assessment: There were no survey responses from Uganda and in total only 2 responses, from a project member and the coordinator. Furthermore, there is only one annual report available. As observed in several other APPEAR projects, documentation gaps, including the absence of the excel template reporting on beneficiaries and outputs, clearly defined indicator targets, and an updated risk assessment limited the assessment.

The project aims to contribute to promote hybrid renewable energy systems and access to electricity in Uganda. To do so a broad spectrum of activities are conducted: The development of modules for existing curricula at MAK, the development of makerspaces and instructional laboratories, establishing a training programme to support the practical skills of engineers working in local energy sector, gender relevant energy issues, and regional institutional networking. This **broad scope** is also evident in the wide range of SDGs the project aims to contribute to and references throughout the proposal as key points of orientation.[103] The project proposal also highlights the alignment with Uganda's National Development Plan (NDP III), which foresees Investments in the energy sector to achieve socio-economic growth and transformation, an increased access to and consumption of clean energy. The proposal highlights at several moments how gender relevant aspects will be considered in the projects[104]. Both survey respondents indicate in the survey that gender mainstreaming and gender awareness were considered in the project.[105] But, they also point out that in this first year the **gender related activities were slowed down due to an increased focus on the participation in the SEEP conference,** the finalisation of the makerspace lab and the organisation and implementation of the first training. The project describes for each guiding principle in detail how it is reflected in the project design. In terms of the added values three are singled out that it wants to contribute (Alignment with ADC priorities[106] , Strengthening of regional networks, Advancement of young and particularly female researchers). The two survey respondents agree that the Added values of supporting the advancement of young and particularly female researchers is taken into account and they also indicate that the strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperations and the project responsibility in the partner country are not

> "The project holds mutual importance for both partner universities. On our side, we have developed one of the courses at BOKU along with its development at Makerere University.
>
> Survey respondent (male, Austria)

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[103] SDG 1 – No Poverty, SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 5 – Gender equality, SDG7 – Affordable and clean energy, SG10 Reducing inequalities, SDG17 – Partnerships for the goals.

[104] Adopting a gender policy, clear quota, use literature by female authors, female researchers as teachers, courses about societal and gender aspects in energy, tutoring group for female students if needed as well as a special attention to gender dimensions of energy issues.

[105] Examples mention indicate the flexibility in the daily work, communication and trainings with teams in partner country on gender aspects, lecture on gender-energy nexus will be delivered to BSc and MSc students at the Makerere University.

[106] "The overall goal of ADC's strategy for Uganda is to "Contribute to the sustainable reduction of, poverty, vulnerability and inequality in Uganda, in particular Northern Uganda." Placing mainly, emphasis on "water and sanitation" and "access to justice". This is argued with the strong pressure on natural resources like water, forest and land that Uganda faces. Furthermore, ADC's engages in the strengthening of higher education, science and research through, the APPEAR program and promotes applied research."

taken into account.[107] The project was modelled along a similar project in Palestine, which had to be terminated due to the war. There are two PhD scholarship holders in the project who both have completed the first steps of their PhD and started the application process of residence permits and visa at the time of the reporting. In the survey both respondents indicate that the scholarship holders enrich the project.[108] The Austrian researchers indicate in the survey that the project inspired them with new ideas for research and teaching and that they benefit from a joint publication with the project partners.

The project team did not have preparatory funding, and the cooperation developed through a previous scholarship holder from Uganda, who was a PhD at BOKU. The project coordinator mentioned that the APPEAR Project builds the basis of developing a common approach and should support future cooperations. The is coordinated by BOKU, and the technical expertise and experience was mentioned as the root for deciding the coordinator. The project is still in an early stage and only one annual report was

Source: Hillary Kasedde

available for the evaluation. In the **first year the team focused on administrative procedures and planning**, extensive discussions during kick-off meeting, getting to know each other and the Ugandan case. The participants only report minor challenges in the achievement of outcomes and outputs of the project.[109] The project has **a clear structure for coordination**, with a comprising a steering committee, a project coordinator, coordinators at each university, and taskforces, which are balanced by partner universities and genders. There are clear rhythms of meetings virtually or physically. An assessment of the experience of the cooperation management is difficult, given that there were only two survey respondents, who both indicated that the feedback mechanisms were working comparably less well[110]. A periodic process monitoring and evaluation is described in the proposal.[111] Yet, the delivery of the first progress report was delayed and the list of quantitative outputs reported only one gender related activity and two courses/lectures given with APPEAR content.

The proposal describes how the project will be sustainable beyond the project, as there is academic, funding and administrative support at the Makerere University. The wider sustainability of the project will also depend on whether the multilevel dissemination activities, also on the policy level, of the project on the institutional and national level will be successfully. So far, the project has disseminated its results at a conference and an Ö1 contribution.

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[107] "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (2 out of 2), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (1 out of 2), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (1 out of 2) "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (1 out of 2), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (0 out of 2), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (0 out of 2),

[108] The survey respondents highlight the contribution of scholarship holders to the communication and insights into local structures, the social impact on the institute level. As such they mention that the scholarship holders are an inspiration for the teams, bring innovative ideas and resh perspectives. They are further also seen to contribute to the future university collaborations.

[109] "Yes, minor challenges" (1 out of 2), "No" (1 out of 2). The challenges mentioned was the different speed of activities in the countries. In partner countries structures are more formal and this is sometimes causing delays.

[110] On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (fully) the following dimensions were ranked on average: 6 (Monitoring), 5,5 (Distribution of responsibilities); 5 (Problem identification, Problem resolution, Quality of communication, Task scheduling, Time management), 4,5 (Feedback mechanisms)

[111] Monitoring data: 6 monthly team meetings, 1 physical meeting, monitoring plan and time plan revised in September 2023, one stakeholder meeting with Kasese village leaders (field site), New Indicators added: One lecture drafted and discussed for the development of a lecture for BSc and MSc students on gender-energy nexus. Website in place, registration to conference in September 2024, one article for APPEAR website, Report about existing infrastructure at MAK (submitted), Laboratory newly equipped

In terms of challenges of political and social conditions the project experienced problems with the procurement of materials for the mater spaces as well as the increase of travel ticket prices that have impacted the budget allocated to transportation.

3.13 Project 291 – AMUTI: Strengthening transformative capacity of Higher Education Institutions for equitable and resilient governance of natural resources in refugee-host community settings in West Nile, Uganda

Status: Ongoing (1 March 2023 – 28 February 2027)

Stakeholders and their role: Uganda: Muni University (coordination), PALM Corps (NGO), Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences

Data quality assessment: The coordinator was not available for the interview; hence the beneficiaries' perspectives are covered largely through the 6 survey responses, 3 of them indicated that they don't want their responses to be directly quoted. The project documentation contained one annual report as well as two half year reports and the proposal.

The AMUTI project aims to strengthen the transformative capacity of HEI for equitable and resilient governance of natural resources in the West Nile regions. This region is experiencing a high influx of refugees, resulting in tensions of the refugee-host communities. The project contributes to a number of strategic goals formulated in high level policy frameworks of Uganda (e.g. Uganda's Vision 2040, third National Development Plan (NDP III)) as well as concrete thematical policy agendas surrounding environmental and natural resources and the refuge situation.[112] Moreover, the project points to the ADC's strategy of focusing on Northern Uganda, particularly the West Nile region and refugee-host communities and it builds on previous ADC projects in refugee settings in Uganda. The project describes **a clear link of targeted project specific outcomes to contribute to selected SDGs**. Explicitly noting in their progress report that SDG 1 was missing in the proposal, indicates that the SDGs represent a relevant reference frame for the project. The survey respondents indicate that there is a strong alignment with the Guiding Principles[113] and the APPEAR Added values.[114] The ADA representative highlights that social science projects are particularly important, as the majority of projects focuses on STEM fields. For the project the attention to **marginalised groups and gender related challenges is at the core of its activities** and the implementation shows a reflexive perspective in the research approaches, concrete events and trainings, as well as when revising institutional policies. All survey respondents indicate in the survey that gender mainstreaming and gender awareness were considered in the project.[115]

> "It also presents the **rear opportunity** for **academia, NGO and community to co-create sustainable solutions to social phenomena**. Thereby [it contributes to] collective problem solving by employing every available resource in an area."
>
> Scholarship holder (male, Uganda)

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[112] National Climate Change Policy (2014), National Water Policy (2012), National Forestry Policy (2004), National Environment Management Policy (1994), and the National Energy Policy (2019); Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the Water and Environment Sector Response Plan for Refugee and Host Communities and the Country Refugee Response Programme

[113] On a scale from 1 to 6 the adherence to the Guiding Principles on average: 6 (A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge, Gender sensitivity, Open access- Open Data, Practically and empirically oriented approach), 5,8 (Bottom-up and demand-driven approach, Participatory approach) and 5,3 (Leave no one behind).

[114] "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (6 out of 6), "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (6 out of 6), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (6 out of 6), "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (6 out of 6), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (5 out of 6), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (3 out of 6)

[115] The survey respondents mention for example the deliberate steps to encourage gender-balanced participation, training session of Gender Action Learning (GAL) methodology in the participating institutions, awarding three out of four scholarships to woman, development of a community engagement policy and guidelines at the Muni University entailing gender mainstreaming, balanced number of men and woman participating, applying gender-transformative and intersectional approaches and methods throughout the project and seminary, collection of disaggregated data according to gender but also other social categories, (e.g., age, social status, ethnicity, marital status), to gain structural inequalities faced by different actors, a gender transformative and intersectional approach is integrated into lectures, seminars and publications.

There was no previous collaboration between all project partners, but they had the opportunity to get preparatory funding.[116] They survey respondents highlighted how **important the preparatory funding was to establish the necessary trust and co-design all aspects of the project and discuss/present the project to relevant local stakeholders**.[117] The project is still in an early phase, but has already reached a **considerable number of beneficiaries**: The progress reports that there were 4 PhD students recruited who are directly benefiting from the project. 115 students were benefitting indirectly from the from the Muni University through lectures offered by the two local PhD students, 28 academic staff has benefited directly from trainings conducted on transdisciplinary projects and gender and intersectionality, 56 academic staff benefitted indirectly from the project, 45 community local members participated in the community dialogues, and student engagement visits. The launch of the AMUTI project was broadcasted on a local radio, a YouTube Video was produced on "Woman's quest for customary land" and a presentation about the project was made at a symposium. The development of the MSc curriculum was initiated. Overall, there is an effective cooperation management through the **steering team**, with the Project coordinator and the WP leaders functioning as a decision-making body working on the principles of open discussion and consensus.[118] Yet, still the **staff changes** were mentioned as a major challenge by survey respondents. The survey respondents reported challenges to achieve the planned output(s) and outcome(s) of the project, with two thirds of them considering the challenges as minor and one third of them as major challenges.[119] Furthermore a delay of the enrolment of the PhD student into Boku also resulted in the postponement of the Summer school, indicating the central reference

Source: Stefanie Lemke

that the scholarship holders have for it. There are four scholarship holders involved in the project (two in Ugandan Universities and two APPEAR scholarship holders at BOKU). In the survey all project members indicated that they see **a clear benefit of the scholarship holders** for the implementation of the project and the long-term collaboration.[120] The two scholarship holders that answered the survey describe their participation as personally enriching.[121] The project is likely to continue beyond the project time.[122]

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[116] PALM Corps had previously collaborated with Muni University and had also previous experience of working on two ADA funded projects.

[117] The BOKU Team hat the possibility to visit the project sited and interact with local communities and governments in the project target areas and gave the opportunity to the Austrian team to share their experiences in facilitating participatory, transdisciplinary and gender-transformative approaches and methods. The AMUTI team visited the Office of the Prime Minister and the Refugee Leadership to seek approval for their project. It got the full backing to conduct this project. Besides, also the focus groups were conducted differentiated by gender and age (men, women and youth). They provided central information on the use of and tensions around natural resources and more insights into power dynamics and social dynamics.

[118] There was a change in the project staff composition at BOKU and Palm Corp, but the OEAD reports the collaboration with the project them as well functioning. This also points to the importance of establishing redundancies in the project team.

[119] "Yes, major challenges" (2 out of 6), "Yes, minor challenges" (4 out of 6). The minor challenges mentioned were the delayed admission profess for the PhD scholars at BOKU, lengthy visa processes, as well as the long-term illness of critical staff, and the delay of purchase of equipment due to procurement processes and as major challenges the survey respondents mentioned the staff changes.

[120] The respondents highlight the scholarship holders' significant contributions to work packages, close contact with the refugee communities, communication of the project results (e.g., Welt im Ohr, Conferences, workshops, broader public). They describe a high likelihood of the PhD candidates to stay in academia and advance the collaboration in the future.

[121] The scholarship holders highlight that the project allowed them to be in contact with "authorities in various academic disciplines to learn from, be mentored by and work with" and broaden their knowledge on migration, natural resource management and climate change adaption.

[122] A document described in detail the demand for a Master's Program in Food System and Natural Resource governance at Muni University. It outlined the increasing need for expertise in this critical area and demonstrating also the market demand for professionals with these specialisations. They further highlight the financial and operational strategies that should ensure long-term viability.

The major challenges mentioned were related to economic challenges as the procurement of equipment is expensive in Uganda, the solution was to ensure the procurement through Austrian researchers. Moreover, was the enrolment of a PhD student at Boku delayed, which also caused a postponement of the summer school.

3.14 Project 303 – CAST Mozambique: Capacity Building for Sustainable Rural Tourism in Mozambique

Status: ongoing (01 April 2023 – 30 March 2027)

Stakeholders: Austria: IMC Krems (coordination); Mozambique: Universidade Eduardo Mondlane

Data quality assessment: The data collection process faced several limitations that affect the depth and representativeness of the findings for this specific project. Only three individuals responded to the survey, with one declining to be directly quoted. Notably, there is an absence of direct input from Austrian team members and scholarship holders, the reasons for this low response rate in spite of mitigating measures is unknown. Additionally, the participant representing the project coordinators in the group interview had to leave early, limiting their ability to contribute meaningful insights. Similarly to the other evaluated projects, some documentation such as an updated risk assessment and gender-based analysis are not mandatory and were not provided in this case.

This project aims to develop and implement Mozambique's first master's programme in sustainable rural tourism. The project has a strong legal foundation, plays a pioneering role, and is of social importance. However, concerns of external stakeholders remain about the viability of sustainable rural tourism due to its niche appeal and the limited accessibility of remote areas for tourists. Academically, the project is well-grounded, featuring a newly developed curriculum based on a mixed methods needs assessment conducted with local universities.[124]

While the project application formally addressed all guiding principles, survey responses suggest only partial implementation of participatory, bottom-up, and inclusive approaches. Some added values, such as disability inclusion and partner-country project responsibility, were perceived less fully addressed by survey respondents.[125] One external stakeholder highlighted the expected added value for Austrian researchers as increased open-mindedness, greater awareness of things often taken for

> More than 60% of the Mozambican population lives in rural regions, where the poverty rate is estimated at 37.4%, (…) revealing significant regional imbalances, especially considering that the majority of the rural population is composed of women.[123]

granted, and enhanced opportunities for student exchanges. The project shows a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming, demonstrated through efforts to promote female participation and integrate gender-related topics into the Master's curriculum. However, challenges in recruiting female staff at the partner university point to persistent structural barriers, and the absence of gender-disaggregated indicators limits the ability to monitor progress effectively. While the intent is evident, measurable shifts in attitudes toward gender equality have yet to be observed. In the first part of the project, the assessment of **relevance is partly confirmed** but challenged due to limited availability of data on i) stakeholders' perception of the project's relevance for the partner universities and for Austrian researchers and ii) alignment with and progress on SDG targets.

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[123] Tambe, T. A. F., Costa, C. S., & De Lima, J. R. R. (2024). University student retention in Mozambique and its challenges: Meanings of individual trajectories. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 29(12, Series 3), 61–73. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2912036173

[124] This ensures the programme is contextually relevant, inclusive of diverse perspectives, and informed by key stakeholders. While the tourism sector holds potential from an external viewpoint, structural challenges—such as poor infrastructure and underlying instability—pose serious obstacles to scaling and long-term sustainability.

[125] "Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use, and research uptake" (3 out of 3), "Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation" (2 out of 3), "Advancement of young and particularly female researchers" (2 out of 3), "Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects" (2 out of 3), "Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country" (1 out of 3), "Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy" (1 out of 3)

Project implementation was shaped by a combination of enabling and constraining factors. Preparatory funding played a crucial role in laying the groundwork, enabling early engagement with local communities, stakeholder workshops, and relationship-building based on trust and respect. It also helped partners familiarise themselves with budgeting rules and accountability requirements, with some noting that the project may not have been feasible without this initial support. On the other hand,

Source: Claudia Dolezal

communication delays—such as unanswered emails—were attributed more to institutional culture and capacity differences than to a lack of interest. Language barriers and bureaucratic procedures at the partner university, located 400 km from the capital, added further complexity. A significant obstacle arose in identifying an affordable and accredited audit firm within budget.[126] Despite these difficulties, the project team is perceived by the APPEAR team to have maintained effective communication and demonstrated transparent problem-solving, adapting their expectations and approach with patience and flexibility. The project has directly reached 7 academic staff members and indirectly benefited 100 students and 9 additional academic staff members at the time of analysis. It is challenging to further assess effectiveness, specifically effectiveness of scholarship holders[127] and of the project management due to limited data.[128]

The project has delivered several tangible outputs that have been actively used and disseminated. Mutual visits between project partners have fostered collaboration, while three courses or lectures have incorporated APPEAR-related content. Academic engagement included one conference presentation and the production of posters and papers. Additionally, three online reports have been published, and a dedicated website was created to share project results. Capacity-building activities

"Massification of access and diversification of offer was not sufficient to increase the gross participation in higher education to the level of other countries in the region and has additionally raised important questions about the quality of training provided in these recently created institutions [...] as well as about the low research outputs of these institutions."[129]

included training of trainers and workshops held in Inhambane and Maputo to support the design of the master's degree curriculum.[130] The exact impact of the CAST project is yet to be measured in 2027, however it may contribute to it has the potential to counteract act low research output that characterises Mozambique's expanding higher education sector.

External factors did affect the achievement of project objectives, though stakeholders differed in their perceptions of their severity and impact. Localised post-election demonstrations reduced participation in some activities, such as workshops for the Master's programme proposal. In contrast, broader regional instability—particularly in the northern provinces affected by terrorist insurgency and displacement—posed more serious challenges for other

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[126] One provider quoted €25,000, prompting extended negotiations and coordination

[127] Out of the three survey respondents two answered that they "cannot say" whether the scholarship holders enrich the project an only one person indicated that they see a benefit. The one respondent who indicated that they contribute "mainly through research and improving workplace performance".

[128] Given that the project isn't finalised, there is yet few data to assess the sustainability of deliverables.

[129] Videira, P., & Teixeira, P. (2020). Higher education systems and institutions, Mozambique. In P. Teixeira & J. C. Shin (Eds.), Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions (pp. 1–9). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9553-1_463-1

[130] As the project is still underway, a robust assessment of its sustainability or strengthening of institutional capacities teaching/ research quality/ organisational skills cannot yet be made.

development actors, including security incidents, looted facilities, and blocked transport routes however, the CAST project region and capital were not directly impacted by these events. Challenges such as internet and electricity outages, language barriers, and bureaucratic complexity were also present, though the inclusion of local leadership in administrative processes helped improve flexibility. Despite these difficulties, the project design remained largely intact[131], and implementation continued, albeit with some delays.

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[131] It remains unclear whether a formal adjustment of risk assessments or organisational adaptations was undertaken in response to these evolving external conditions.

3.15 Project 310 – Edu4GEO2: Implementation of Academic Geomatics Education in Ethiopia for Supporting Sustainable Development

Status: ongoing (01 March 2023 – 30 Juni 2027)

Stakeholders and their role: Austria: University of Natural Resources and Life Science (coordination), Technische Universität Wien, BOKU; Ethiopia: Debre Markos University; Bahir Dar University

Data quality assessment: This is one of the few projects where more stakeholders completed the survey compared to others, and none of the respondents requested that their answers not be quoted. However, findings are influenced by the fact that scholarship holders have not answered the survey, the reason for which remains unknown. Project documentation such as an annual report assessment (postponed due to the war in Ethiopia), revised risk assessment or gender-based analysis were non-mandatory and not provided in this case. Limitations hampering evaluative assessment have been flagged along the text in footnotes.

The evaluation finds the project globally relevant for project implementers and institutional partners. **Project objectives**[132] **align with the development needs of Ethiopia**, which include i) a lack of technical capacities and staff qualification due to a sharply growing university sector; ii) in land management and information system needs[133] and iii) the low number of female land administration and geomatics experts (in both countries). Austrian researchers associate the relevance of the project with the opportunity of learning on collaborative development of teaching and learning material. A majority of stakeholders indicates that APPEAR **added values are not considered during implementation**, particularly the inclusion of people with disabilities, however, APPEAR **guiding principles are considered** as planned in the initial project design. One principle, gender sensitivity, was implemented through a series of gender-mainstreaming activities[134], resulting in trained female landholders sharing knowledge with other female farmers outside the project and the creation of a dedicated master's course on Gender and Land Rights.

Although **attitudes towards gender may not have changed**, **awareness of the representativity issue has grown**, particularly as the project sought a female PhD scholarship holder. Enrolling female candidates in technical master's programmes has been difficult as they are already underrepresented in bachelor

> "Ethiopia needs at least 50,000 new land administration professionals over the next ten years, yet fewer than 600 professionals are currently available in the country."[135]

programmes or do not have access to university education in Ethiopia. The situation is similar in Austria.

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[132] Edu4GEO2 aims to create a practice-oriented master's program in Geomatics in Ethiopia, enhancing academic and institutional capacity through joint curriculum development and team teaching with Austrian partners. It also promotes long-term sustainability and practical impact through curriculum integration and professional training in land administration. More effective land management is critical for Ethiopia to address soil erosion, food insecurity, climate change impacts, and rapid urbanisation. Land administration is essential for identifying and documenting a country's resources and supporting land governance processes such as land management and planning.

[133] There is limited availability of data to assess the project's alignment with and contribution to SDGs 4, 5 and 17 since progress towards SDG targets is not reflected on in implementation reports.

[134] Such as emphasis on female master candidates, dedicated lectures on gender and land rights, study on land certification effects to balance gender land rights, training, female quotas for participation of beneficiary organisations. However, the project did not entail a gender-specific analysis at the beginning, nor are information available on gender balance in the consortium.

[135] Navratil, G., & Mansberger, R. (2017). Land administration to decrease the poverty? In Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on Virtual Reality and Human-Computer Interfaces, retrieved from https://corp.at/archive/CORP2017_74.pdf

The project **achieved outputs in spite of the war**, which **strengthened institutional capacities.**[136] The project has directly benefited 5 students and 17 academic staff members, reaching a total of 22 individuals through its activities. A Master's of Science in Geomatics was developed and is being run in one university with delivered classes, workshops for the teaching team of the project on digital teaching formats and learning management platforms, hybrid learning and teaching materials, communication and dissemination outputs (website, rollups, PR materials), and one PhD studying in Austria, which is confirmed by seven out of 10 survey respondents to enrich the project. These outputs have been shared, disseminated and used: there are nine publications in cited journals, various attended conferences including one at the World Bank, an article drafted by ADA and published in the Austrian Airlines magazine. While it is early in the project, **positive sustainability impulses** are noted: community services committed to continue giving training for land administration experts and the rural population at large, five PhD candidates will stay at BOKU for the next 5 years; and project coordination tasks are gradually handed over to younger team members.

> "When university management from a partner country comes to Austria, we get access to and attention from our own rectors, which we wouldn't normally."
>
> Project team member (male, Austrian)

Benefits for beneficiaries cannot yet be assessed due to lack of data[137], external factors affecting effectiveness and timing of the evaluation: so far eight students are enrolled (one female) and 17 teachers have directly benefited from the project.[138] The project faced **major challenges to achieve the planned outputs**, namely issues linked to the armed conflict (detailed further below). Other such as a) university capacities (high staff turnover); b) country factors (power outages during zoom conference or lectures, cultural norms of women not accessing land ownership status) and c) contextual international factors such as high inflation. Several positive factors are driving implementation namely, **preparatory funding**[139], staff mobility and visits in Austria and Ethiopia ultimately leading up to **professional and private friendships that sustain in time**; support from APPEAR and ADA offices; efficient management (particularly communication)[140]; flexibility to grant project extensions; and **project coordination arrangements**. This aspect was highlighted several times: the administrative coordination and thus funds were retained in Austria to the latest moment possible to counter inflation effects in partner countries, while scientific coordination was shared with Ethiopian universities and implemented on an eye-to-eye level. This resulted in a strong sense of shared ownership and purpose in time of crisis.

The main obstacle to implementation is the ongoing **armed conflict** in Amhara (which started in April 2023). According to the local ADA office, one Ethiopian university was under siege, some students were taken hostages. It is confirmed that for this project in particular, communication between project partners was temporarily interrupted. This resulted in delivery delays for example for the teaching and learning equipment (particularly Unmanned Aerial Vehicles), but also training for land administration experts, the local community and female farmers, delivery of classes or student enrolment, security problems around the project area,

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[136] However, there is limited data available to assess whether these will sustain in time.

[137] Scholarship holders have not answered the survey, and survey responses offer limited information on the relevance so far for marginalised groups, including (female and elder) landholders.

[138] As per the latest annual report. Indirect beneficiaries were not documented.

[139] The preparatory funding was described as instrumental in understanding the institutional environments of the partner institution, preparing sound and problem-solving project proposal, creating and strengthening networking between the partners, strengthening the mutual understanding and recognising also problems on site.

[140] On a scale from 1 (poor) to 6 (excellent), eight out of 10 survey respondents ranked cooperation processes at 6, these include distribution of responsibilities, quality of communication, task scheduling, time management, feedback mechanisms, monitoring, problem identification.

planned trips became impossible, and these will result in higher project costs. This situation pushed towards creative and resilient solutions such as hybrid mode of teaching for lectures foreseen between Ethiopian and Austrian teachers,) or compensation for students' lost semesters. The war also caused significant psychological trauma for researchers and staff. In addition, the war brought about economic hardship including currency inflation affecting budgets and living costs. Despite these difficulties, the project activities were performed at a later stage and project design was maintained[141], thanks to strong coordination with the APPEAR office ADA local presence.

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[141] There is no data on a revision of the risk assessment made at project application stage.

4   Transversal observations across the projects

Our initial mandate foresaw the evaluation of 15 individual projects, in order to avoid overlapping with the scope of the forthcoming APPEAR programme evaluation. Nevertheless, we believe it would be valuable for the APPEAR team at OeAD to share the insights gained through our triangulation process—namely, recurring patterns, clusters or discrepancies identified during the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. These observations arose sporadically rather than systematically across each evaluation criterion.

The insights reflect key themes and patterns identified through detailed observations of each project, quantitative results from the survey data across all projects offer a broader perspective on shared outcomes and trends. By blending these two sources of information, we provide a well-rounded understanding of the factors influencing the projects and subsequently formulate recommendations and results. Furthermore, presenting across projects also enables us to address sensitive issues raised by several participants who cautioned that they did not want their responses to be identified. A conclusive summary of the analysis and observations per evaluation questions will be provided in the next section (Conclusions and Recommendations).

4.1   APPEAR's ambition and approach

APPEAR's ambition is centred on bridging the gap between research and international development in ADC (Austrian Development Cooperation) partner countries, offering an approach that goes beyond "traditional" research or "classical" development projects. This special combination requires a broad set of skills in academic and research fields as well as the ability to support multi-level capacity building and the establishment of long-term partnerships. Given this ambition, it is crucial that APPEAR avoids a "fund and forget" mentality of research funding, and instead accompanies the projects, as much as is needed and requested by the parties involved. Providing ongoing support and stepping in at critical moments to address challenges has been mentioned as central for the projects' success. This active involvement strengthens the long-term impact and success of the initiatives.

APPEAR's high ambitions have been translated into practice through the application of its guiding principles within the projects. The survey revealed that beneficiaries generally felt that the projects took most of these values into account (see Figure 2). However, two values emerged as being particularly challenging to implement: "*Leave no one behind*" and "*Open access - open data.*" These principles, though highly regarded, present practical hurdles, particularly in contexts where infrastructure, data-sharing policies, or local capacity may limit their full realisation. Responses from the survey and group interviews also highlighted these challenges. Participants noted that, while the ambition to leave no one behind is central to the APPEAR model, ensuring the inclusion of marginalised groups in the process is complex. Similarly, the commitment to open access and open data faces barriers.

A key feature of APPEAR projects is the strong trust placed in partners from Southern countries, which empowers them to assume significant responsibilities in both the execution and strategic direction of the projects.[142] This trust-based approach promotes ownership and fosters a collaborative environment, where Austrian and Southern partners engage in mutually beneficial cooperation.

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[142] Regarding the project coordination, there is a balance between Austria (8) and the partner countries (9), which points to the implementation on equal footing. This also holds with respect to the coordination of larger projects with more partner institutions or institutions coordinating Advanced Academic Partnerships.

While the roles and relationships between core partners are generally well-defined, the interaction with other stakeholders – particularly the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) – tends to be more fragmented. ADA's local offices in partner countries typically respond positively to occasional invitations to project events. However, the depth and intensity of communication and involvement depends on each office's staffing and available resources. While some staff of these offices express a desire for closer involvement, others are constrained by limited capacity, given their broad portfolios and the relatively small scale of the APPEAR programme. As a result, ongoing monitoring of projects' alignment with ADC priorities is limited. This alignment is therefore largely ensured through the initial application process, nonetheless it appears to be maintained effectively: As illustrated in Figure 3, two-thirds of survey respondents affirm that their projects align with ADC priorities.

Figure 2 Survey responses regarding Guiding Principles and Added Values
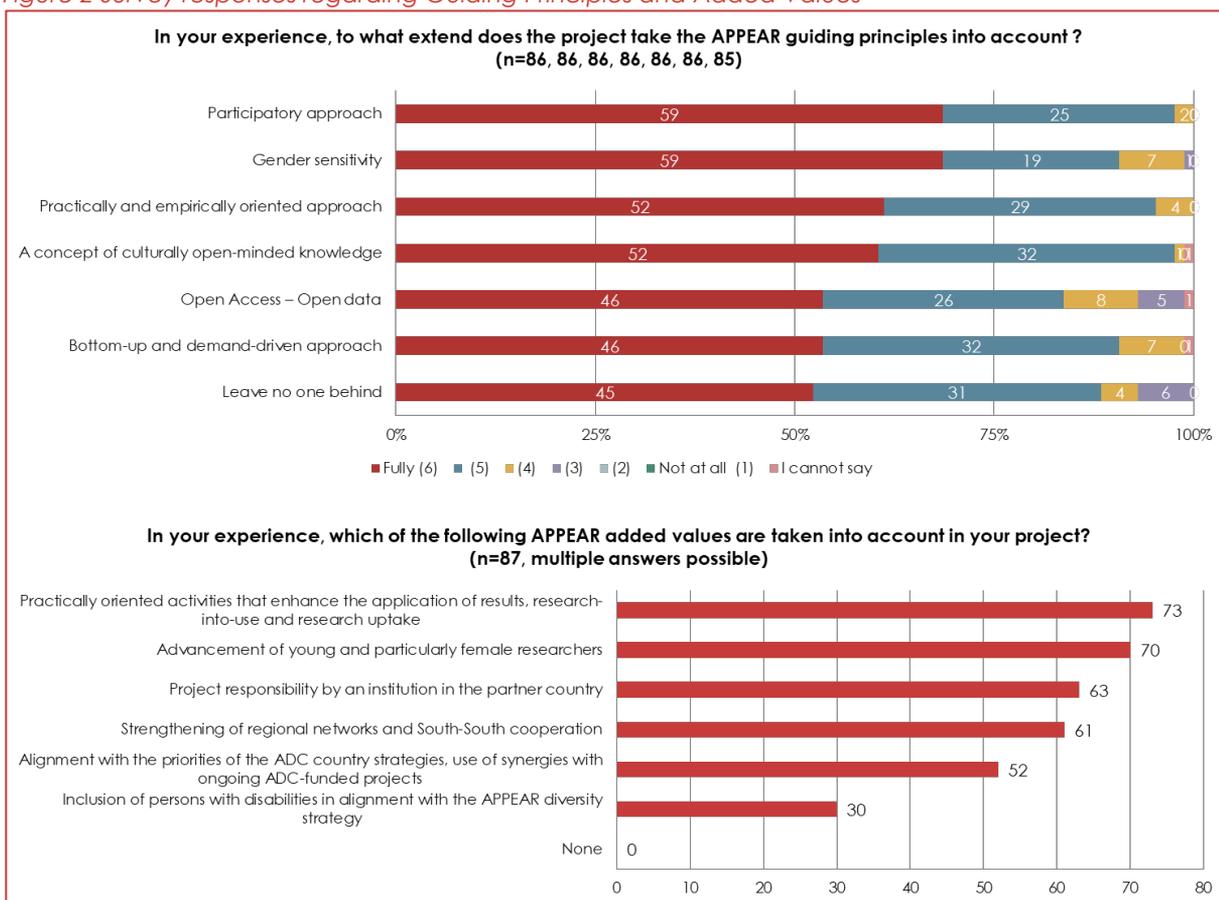
Source: Technopolis

4.2   The relevance of projects

The transversal analysis of the relevance of the projects highlights a number of observations across the projects regarding the fit between the project design and activities given the goals of the programme and the context the project is implemented in.

We can distinguish between two types of projects: One is focusing on developing of curricula and building institutional capacity, while the other centres on research activities. Projects with a strong research focus tend to be seen as more relevant by Austrian partners who also coordinate them more frequently. These projects often prioritise individual capacity building,

showcasing higher number of PhD and master's students, as well as a higher focus on classical scientific outputs (papers, conference presentations…). Their long-term impact on institutional development and sustainability remains less tangible. These projects better fit into the "classical" research project logic typically rewarded by universities.

From the Austrian perspective, APPEAR projects stand out due to their interdisciplinary nature, engagement with new methodologies, and global networking opportunities. They typically involve higher administrative, and coordination demands and do not focus solely on traditional academic outputs. Some Austrian researchers explicitly describe how challenging it is within their home institutions to justify the intensive work commitment to these projects, and that development projects count less than "classical" research projects. Yet, some project coordinators also mentioned that the international dimension can increase visibility within Austrian universities, for example when high-level university representatives from partner countries visit Austria, they can attract the attention of local leadership. Overall, these observations raise the broader question of whether and how APPEAR's profile and unique contribution should be more clearly positioned within the Austrian academic landscape. These observations also echo discussions within the selection board working group, where evolving assessment criteria—particularly around gender, sustainability, and long-term impact—have led to more complex and nuanced decision-making. Board members often engage in in-depth dialogue, especially in cases where expert reviews diverge, underlining the programme's commitment to a holistic, context-sensitive evaluation process.

Projects also differ in terms of their expectations towards scholarship-holders. Scholarship holders play a central role in many of the evaluated projects, often acting as key contributors and multipliers by navigating and connecting both academic contexts, in Austrian as well as in the partner countries. In some projects, these students occupy prominent roles, taking responsibility for critical tasks such as data collection and analysis. Their dual positioning – being embedded in both partner institutions – enables them to bridge different national knowledge systems and facilitate mutual understanding. Many project participants emphasised that the contributions of these individuals were crucial both to the success of the project and to its long-term sustainability. Former scholarship holders often continue to engage in the academic partnerships, sometimes taking on leadership roles in work packages of Advanced Academic Partnerships. The survey responses suggest that current and past scholarship holders often act as long-lasting links between institutions, maintaining collaboration and communication even after the project period has formally ended. On the other hand, there are a number of projects where the role of the scholarship holders is somewhat unclear to the project team. In some cases, that might be due to the early stage of the project. One of the challenges frequently mentioned was the cumbersome admission process for scholarship holders at Austrian universities delayed projects that heavily relied on them. The survey respondents asked for more support from the OeAD in this respect. They also wish to receive more information about how one dealt in the past with challenges at Austrian Universities to prepare accordingly.

Figure 3 Survey responses regarding scholarship holders

In your experience, do the scholarship holders in your project enrich the project? (n=77)

- I cannot say: 24
- No: 4
- Yes: 49
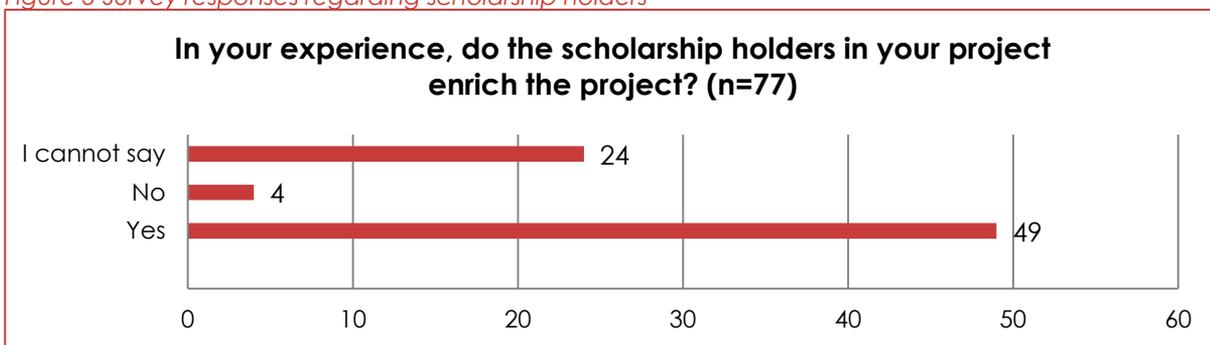
Source: Technopolis

The contribution of the projects to the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) is difficult to assess. The SDGs were often used as initial reference points during project design but served as a guiding framework throughout the project only in a few cases and were rarely referred to during implementation or reporting. As a result, their practical relevance within many projects remains limited. Existing sub-indicators and targets for systematically assessing contributions to the SDGs could offer more detailed insights and would be worth exploring in the context of a future programme-level evaluation of APPEAR. In this context, the ADA representative on the selection board emphasised the importance of aligning APPEAR-funded projects with broader development priorities in Austria's partner countries. Projects are expected to demonstrate coherence with national development programming and contribute to long-term systemic change, reinforcing APPEAR's role in fostering strategic partnerships rather than isolated interventions.

Figure 4 Survey responses regarding gender main streaming and gender awareness

Are gender mainstreaming and gender awareness considered in the project? (n=84)

- Yes: 88%
- No: 1%
- I cannot say: 11%
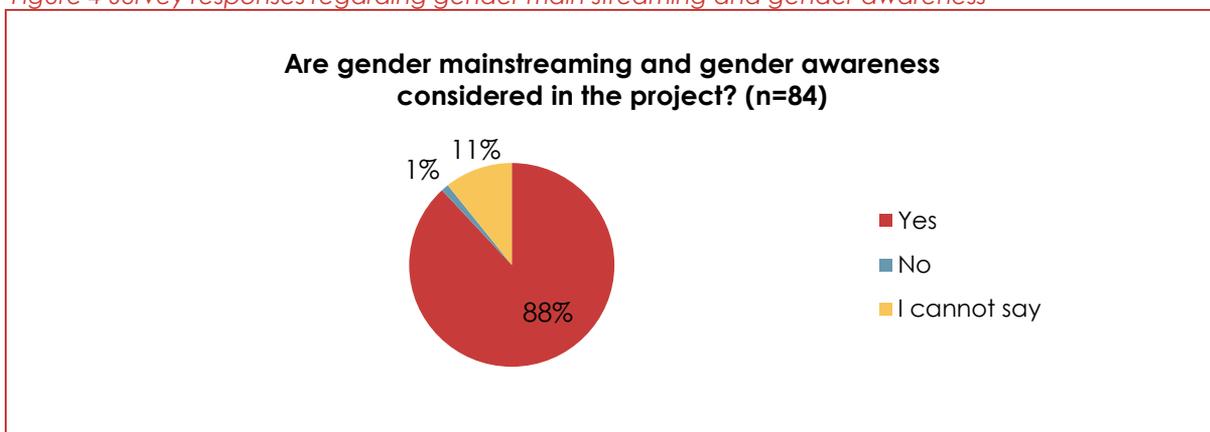
Source: Technopolis

Gender mainstreaming and gender awareness are strong priorities of the APPEAR programme, as for instance expressed in the Guiding Principles and Added values. This focus is clearly reflected in projects. Projects differ in their implementation: some implemented gender as an analytical category in their research design/curricula development, in others, the gender dimensions are addressed through trainings for the team. Overall, survey responses indicate that many project teams actively consider gender dimensions in their work, demonstrating a broad awareness of the issue. However, the long-term impact on attitudes and institutional culture remains limited because it is difficult to evaluate. At this stage, the indicators of many projects do not allow changes in attitude towards to be measured at output (disaggregation),

outcome or impact level (as explained in the individual project assessment under chapter 3). Also the interviewees highlighted the influence of societal norms on individual research projects: not only is it difficult to find women to lead such a project (professorship remains a male-dominated position), it is even difficult to find enough female students to fully complete the curricula set up as part of the projects since they are they are drawn back into their gender-standard roles as mothers and caretakers. Since sustainable change in gender-related norms and practices is inherently a long-term process, and many projects are still in early phases, it is too soon to draw firm conclusions about lasting transformation.

4.3   The effectiveness of projects

The transversal analysis of the effectiveness of the projects illustrates observations throughout the projects regarding the extent to which the intended outcomes have been achieved, and the factors that have supported or hindered progress towards these results.

APPEAR project teams often build on already established partnerships, drawing on existing trust and collaboration between institutions. In cases where such relationships did not previously exist, many teams made use of the preparatory funding schemes offered by APPEAR, which was widely regarded as a valuable support mechanism. This funding allowed partners to get to know each other, build trust, define shared goals, and develop a joint project structure— laying the groundwork for successful and more balanced cooperation during the implementation phase.

In the APPEAR III programme phase, for the first time, NGOs as project partners could be formally involved in the projects, four projects took up this option. First observations suggest that these collaborations significantly strengthened the involvement of local stakeholders. By partnering with NGOs, the projects were able to deepen their engagement with communities, better align research activities with local needs, and enhance the practical relevance of their outcomes. The inclusion of NGOs has thus contributed to building broader networks beyond academic institutions and fostering more inclusive, participatory project environments.
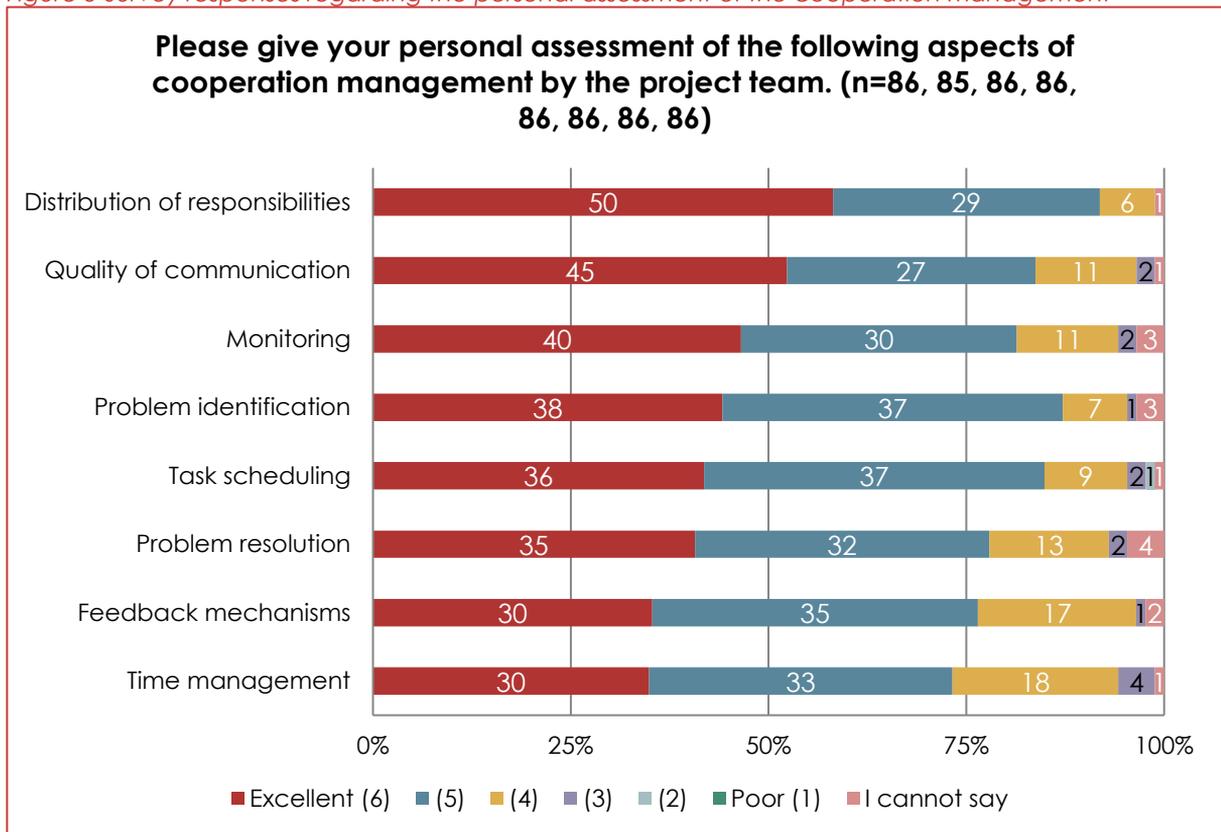
Across the projects, coordination roles take on different forms and functions. There are projects with coordination teams, some also distinguish administrative from scientific coordination. Many projects faced unanticipated challenges, leading to new organisational, financial, and administrative tasks beyond the original scope of planning and budgeting. These include issues such as insufficient coverage of personnel costs, audit expenses exceeding budgeted amounts, and poorly prepared audit processes causing financial delays. Given the central role of coordinators, the evaluation team recommends creating redundancies in the system in case of turnover which proved challenging for the projects. Especially so, because APPEAR incentivises the coordination by young (and particularly) female researchers, who are more likely to change positions or go on maternity leave. Researchers taking over the coordination role from colleagues describe it as exhausting and causing delays, if they were not previously involved in the project management. In the survey they explicitly asked for more support from OeAD during the transition periods.

Projects initiated and coordinated by institutions in partner countries tend to be more effective and more relevant for these institutions. Local ownership strengthens institutional engagement, increases the visibility of the project within the partner country, and ensures that project activities are more closely aligned with local priorities. In this context, having a strong online presence and actively promoting the project within the partner country is seen as particularly important for enhancing impact and recognition.

Given the focus on capacity building and the high level of support also in the longer term from the APPEAR team (no fund and forget mentality), project coordinators we talked to also

highlighted that APPEAR offers opportunities for junior staff in Austria and partner countries to take over responsibilities, which is an important and much-needed aspect of capacity building.

The survey results indicate a generally high level of satisfaction with the overall cooperation management provided by the project teams (see Figure 5). Participants particularly appreciated the clear distribution of responsibilities and the quality of communication within the teams. These elements were seen as important strengths that helped to make collaboration effective. Other aspects such as time management and the establishment of consistent feedback mechanisms were rated less positively, suggesting areas where project coordination could be further improved.

Figure 5 Survey responses regarding the personal assessment of the cooperation management

Please give your personal assessment of the following aspects of cooperation management by the project team. (n=86, 85, 86, 86, 86, 86, 86, 86)

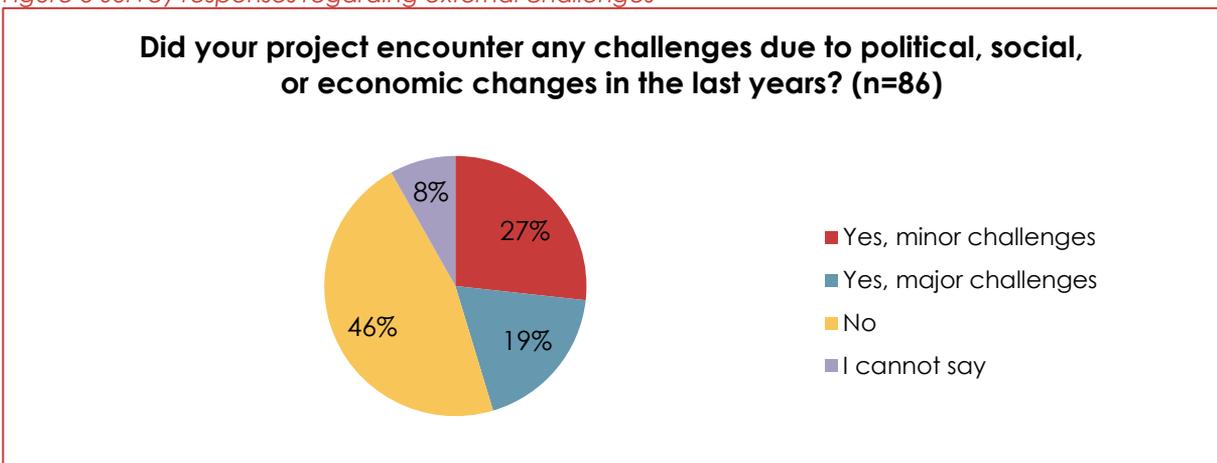| Aspect	Excellent (6)	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	Poor (1)	I cannot say
Distribution of responsibilities	50	29	6				1
Quality of communication	45	27	11	2			1
Monitoring	40	30	11	2			3
Problem identification	38	37	7	1			3
Task scheduling	36	37	9	2	1		1
Problem resolution	35	32	13	2			4
Feedback mechanisms	30	35	17	1			2
Time management	30	33	18	4			1

Source: Technopolis

The effectiveness of projects can be hampered by the administrative capacities of universities in partner countries. Bureaucratic hurdles were frequently mentioned as a major challenge— often to a degree that was unexpected for Austrian project team members. Delays in submitting audit reports, difficulties in processing personnel costs, staff turnover, and ongoing administrative restructuring led to limited engagement from senior university staff from partner countries and slow handling of required documentation. Many partner country universities also struggled with financial management due to limited prior experience with international funding programmes. Project team members were often less committed when faced with missing contracts (reference is made to chapter 3), competing teaching and consulting duties, or delayed payments. These issues highlight the need to explore how the development of administrative capacity in partner institutions can be more effectively supported in future project designs.

4.4 Effects of political, social, or economic challenges

The following paragraphs highlight observations across the projects regarding how external contextual factors have influenced the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the projects.

While most of evaluated projects were carried out in relatively stable conditions, four projects encountered significant challenges due to political, social, or economic instability, such as armed conflict or wider regional insecurity. These circumstances significantly affected project implementation, often causing delays, limiting access to project sites, or required adaptive strategies to maintain continuity. Other projects encountered only minor disruptions, such as temporary administrative hurdles or modest shifts in local policy environments. Despite the varying degrees of causes and impacts, most projects demonstrated a notable level of resilience and flexibility when in navigating these contextual difficulties.

Figure 6 Survey responses regarding external challenges

Did your project encounter any challenges due to political, social, or economic changes in the last years? (n=86)

- Yes, minor challenges
- Yes, major challenges
- No
- I cannot say

27% / 19% / 46% / 8%

Source: Technopolis

Despite the serious political and social challenges faced by some projects, none of them had to be discontinued. All managed to achieve initial outputs, and crucially, the livelihoods of those involved were preserved. A key factor in maintaining project effectiveness under such difficult conditions was the high degree of flexibility of both the local and the international partners, enabling projects to adjust their strategies and continue delivering meaningful results despite external pressures.

Communication between the projects, the local offices of ADA, and the APPEAR team proved to be highly valuable, fostering a constructive exchange of information and support. Although much of this communication was informal and not systematically documented, it was generally sufficient for effective implementation. However, the limited written records posed challenges for the evaluation process, making it more difficult to trace decision-making processes and assess certain aspects of project coordination in detail.

Economic challenges affected nearly all projects to some extent. Inflation led to budget shortfalls that caused delays, periods of unpaid work, and considerable strain on project teams. During group discussions, several coordinators mentioned that, in the light of these difficulties, they would consider placing administrative project coordination in Austria for future initiatives. This points to a broader reflection on the structure of project coordination, raising important questions about how administrative and scientific responsibilities are distributed and where they are best situated in contexts of economic instability.

Another economic challenge widely reported by projects was the unexpectedly high cost of procuring equipment in partner countries. These cost increases often exceeded the original budget estimates, putting pressure on the project's finances. The evaluation team believes such kind of experiences points to a need for targeted support during the proposal phase to end up with more realistic cost calculations. This includes up-to-date local market information and possibly guidance or tools from funding institutions to better anticipate and plan for procurement-related expenses in diverse country contexts.

In addition to inflation and procurement issues, infrastructural challenges affected the implementation of many projects. A common example was unstable electricity supply, which disrupted activities such as online teaching and virtual collaboration. These kinds of disruptions emphasise the importance of taking local infrastructural conditions into account during project design and planning. While project teams often found creative ways to adapt, such constraints underscore the need for greater flexibility in implementation plans and possibly additional resources to mitigate such risks.

As APPEAR places significant responsibility on partner countries, it is crucial to ensure that the funding allocated is properly managed and spent. It is OeAD's position that this responsibility necessitates comprehensive **auditing** of all projects to maintain financial transparency and accountability. While the APPEAR team has put in place support mechanisms, such as webinars and guidelines, to assist in the auditing process, challenges still persist. These difficulties primarily stem from the projects' incorrect assessment how extensive an audit is, the late initiation of projects, and occasional issues in securing auditors, all of which have impacted the efficiency of the financial audits.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The Austrian APPEAR programme demonstrates a high level of thoughtfulness and a particular focus on the long-term impact of implementation. The ambition is to combine research with development and to promote cooperation between experts from Austria and in the partner countries on a problem-oriented basis and on an equal footing. This makes it an outstanding programme.

APPEAR is a counterexample to the "fund and forget" mentality often seen in research funding. The projects benefit from substantial support, the flexibility of the OeAD team in the face of unforeseeable contextual changes is emphasised as a central factor in their success. This approach ensures that the programme facilitates successful project outcomes and fosters a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation, reinforcing its overall effectiveness. The following conclusions draw upon the in-depth analysis of 15 projects and the analysis of transversal findings, based on written documentation, an online survey, interviews and group interviews. In line with the ToR of this evaluation it transversally addresses relevance and effectiveness of the projects and proposes a set of recommendations.

The relevance of the projects is confirmed following the analysis of the 15 projects for most participating partner countries and institutions, with many initiatives integrated into national development strategies. They address critical developmental needs across countries and regions, broadly aligning with areas such as sustainable resource management, climate adaptation in agriculture and livestock, societal challenges, and targeted technical development.

Despite their commitment to the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) in the project applications, the extent to which projects operationalise and monitor their contributions to the SDGs varies considerably. In general, SDG alignment is more strongly articulated at the application stage, often serving as a formal justification rather than a consistently measured outcome throughout project implementation.

The **APPEAR Guiding Principles**[143] and **Added Values**[144] reflect the programme's high aspirations on itself – to foster inclusive, participatory, and demand-driven academic cooperation that empowers partner countries through culturally sensitive, practically oriented, and gender-responsive research aligned with sustainable development goals – and project proposals typically articulate clearly how these principles will be addressed. Many projects continue to engage with these principles meaningfully and recognise their value in guiding implementation, particularly the principles of "participatory approach" and "culturally open-minded knowledge" and the values of "advancement of young and female researchers", and "practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake". Nonetheless, not all principles and values are equally emphasised or easily operationalised. For instance, "inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy", and "leave no-one behind" are less frequently implemented, despite being recognised as important. During the validation workshop, the OeAD made a distinction between Open Access/Open Data and Open Science, emphasising that the former remains a key guiding principle, while the latter should be an optional commitment. However, where project teams do choose to engage with Open Science, they should also be prepared to take responsibility for its implementation.

Gender mainstreaming is acknowledged and operationalised to differing extents across the projects. While many project teams begin with gender-balanced compositions, maintaining this balance throughout implementation remains a challenge and highlights the ongoing need for sustained effort. In certain cases, it constitutes a central theme of the cooperation. However, while gender-related efforts are present, measuring the programme's broader impact on attitudinal change remains unfeasible. The projects are not designed with indicators capable of capturing such long-term societal transformations – this would fall more appropriately within the remit of a broader programme-level evaluation.

Austrian researchers report academic benefits from participation, including publications, conference presentations, and, for younger scholars, opportunities to develop theses and expand academic networks. Importantly, international collaboration is also cited as a valuable outcome, with researchers gaining experience in diverse working environments, engaging with different development contexts, and building mutual understanding across university cultures.

In many projects, **scholarship holders** play a particularly influential role, often serving as linchpins in strengthening collaboration between national contexts and supporting the continuity of long-term partnerships. While a comprehensive assessment of their contributions is not always possible due to gaps in data collection, available evidence suggests that scholarship holders are often central to project success.

Most projects are on track to achieve **outputs** and outcomes. Given that all projects have, in one form or another, delivered concrete outputs, it can reasonably be concluded that they

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[143] Participatory approach, culturally open-minded knowledge, practically and empirically oriented approach, gender sensitivity, bottom-up and demand-driven approach, leave no one behind, open access – open data.

[144] Alignment with the priorities of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) country strategies and use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects, inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy, strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation, advancement of young and particularly female researchers, practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake, project responsibility by an institution in the partner country.

are likely to meet their broader objectives. However, a more precise assessment of effectiveness is constrained by the lack of clearly defined targets, such as intended beneficiary reach or dissemination scope. The available documentation does not permit a straightforward comparison to determine where individual projects may have exceeded or fallen short of expectations. In one notable case, the review of progress reports highlighted significant overachievement of outputs, yet such examples remain the exception rather than the rule.

The project's ability to engage **beneficiaries** beyond the immediate project teams varies. The majority of projects are still in relatively early stages of implementation, but there are indications that the involvement of NGOs in the project strengthens local ties, also beyond the APPEAR activities in the narrow sense.

Several **key factors** contribute to the successful achievement or potential shortfall of project outcomes. These include preparatory funding, which supports the development of trust-based working relationships and facilitates early needs assessments; strong coordination and collaborative practices; the proactive involvement of partner country universities, who see APPEAR as a means of operationalising their priorities rather than as a way of securing funding for staff; and the administrative capacity of partner institutions, particularly with regard to financial reporting and audits. Conversely, rigid administrative procedures, bureaucratic hurdles, the complexity of international banking and fund transfer systems, and the size and diversity of project consortia can inhibit progress.

In terms of **cooperation management**, discrepancies have emerged between survey responses and qualitative data. While survey respondents overwhelmingly reported positive experiences of collaboration, insights drawn from scoping interviews and project documentation reveal a more complex picture, including the presence of cooperation challenges. Project coordination appears to be established through open dialogue among partners, with roles allocated based on mutually agreed criteria such as relevant expertise and managerial capacity. This organic approach to coordination was reported positively by project coordinators, though it necessarily reflects their subjective perspectives. Several coordinators noted the added value of involving young and female academics in leadership roles. Indeed, there are several young female researchers currently leading projects, who describe the experience as both empowering and enriching. Compared to other funding bodies, OeAD is recognised for its supportive approach to nurturing such learning opportunities.

Dissemination of results is one of the strongest elements across all projects. Every project has made its outputs publicly accessible through a diverse array of communication channels. These include academic presentations, lectures, newsletters, radio broadcasts, online platforms, and public engagement activities. This breadth of dissemination demonstrates a commendable commitment to knowledge sharing, both within academic contexts and the wider society.

External factors beyond the control of project teams have, to varying degrees, influenced the implementation and achievement of project objectives. While the evaluation reveals that geopolitical events had a significant impact in only one country – Ethiopia – the consequences in this context were considerable. These included restricted communication, limitations on field research, project delays, rising costs, and the interruption or downsizing of planned activities. In the case of Ethiopia, while decision-making procedures were not formally recorded, interview triangulation supports the view that responses were handled with sound judgement, solidarity, and a strong sense of humanity. Remarkably, the project in Ethiopia served as a symbol of constructive engagement by researchers operating in regions where opposing armed forces were present, offering a rare example of academic collaboration amidst a highly unstable context.

In other partner countries, direct violence was fortunately less prominent; instead, long-term social and economic instability posed the greater challenge. Given the persistent nature of these economic pressures, they do not necessarily result in revised risk assessments. Interviewed project coordinators highlighted that, in the light of extreme inflation and financial volatility in some regions, there is growing reluctance to base future (administrative and financial) project coordination in partner countries. In several instances, coordinators indicated a preference for shifting coordination responsibilities to Austrian institutions for upcoming project phases. Despite these challenges, the evaluation found that project teams consistently maintained contact with ADA local offices, which were perceived as accessible and supportive. In cases of need, ADA representatives were willing and able to allocate resources to mitigate difficulties on the ground.

Numerous project-level adjustments were identified, reflecting the programme's flexible and responsive management approach. These included budget reallocations, additional funding from APPEAR, revisions to work package schedules, and requests for project extensions of up to one year. Although formal written documentation of these decisions was not available to the evaluation team, interviews with ADA, OeAD, and project coordinators indicate that decision-making processes were conducted with care, fairness, and transparency. These adaptations appear to have been effective in sustaining project progress and avoiding adverse impacts on stakeholders.

5.2   Recommendations

Building on the insights gained during the evaluation, we formulate the following recommendations (structured according to the evaluation questions) towards the APPEAR team of the OeAD. These are formulated with appreciation for the team's widely recognised dedication, the programme's strong and well-calibrated structure, and its positive reception among stakeholders—while also acknowledging the constraints posed by limited staffing and high programme demands. Some recommendations may be seen as enhancements or longer-term ambitions that would require additional human, financial, or time resources.

1. Continue support for timely completion of ongoing projects:
   a. Ongoing projects should be supported to reach full implementation and deliver their planned outputs and outcomes within the remaining timeframe. Ensuring their timely completion will help maximise the impact of the funding already invested and contribute to the overall objectives of the APPEAR programme.

2. Strengthen commitment to SDG reporting:
   a. To strengthen commitment to SDG reporting, it is recommended to enhance the application and reporting process with simple, practical measures. The application guidelines for university cooperation projects should include a short, step-by-step guide—or refer applicants to existing resources—that supports them in identifying the most relevant SDGs for their project, selecting one or two related indicators (which can also be used as project indicators), and defining realistic targets. To ensure follow-through, the project reporting template should be updated to include a brief section for both quantitative and qualitative reporting on contributions to the selected SDGs. This approach keeps the process light for project teams while ensuring consistency and visibility of SDG-related results.

3. Strengthen Gender Mainstreaming through Context-Sensitive Approaches and Improved Monitoring
   a. To further advance gender mainstreaming across the projects, greater emphasis should be placed on understanding and addressing the contextual barriers that

affect gender equality, particularly in partner countries where structural constraints limit the participation of women in higher education. Gender analyses should be systematically encouraged and shared – particularly if they have not been done thoroughly at application stage and challenges have risen during implementation. Gender analyses offer essential insights into local dynamics, such as restrictions on women's access to certain degree levels or social expectations that divert women from academic careers.

b. Additionally, efforts to monitor gender-related outcomes should be reinforced through the use of methods collecting effects expost or the development of more meaningful and context-appropriate indicators, including those that aim to capture shifts in attitudes or perceptions. While acknowledging the limits of short-term project cycles, such improvements would help embed gender considerations more deeply and effectively across all stages of project planning and implementation.

4. Enhance the Operationalisation of All Guiding Principles and Added Values:

a. To ensure a more balanced and consistent application of the APPEAR Guiding Principles and Added Values, consider providing practical examples for principles that are currently less emphasised or more challenging to implement—such as the inclusion of persons with disabilities in line with the APPEAR diversity strategy, and the commitment to "leave no-one behind." Strengthening support for applicants during the proposal phase, for instance through good practices could help translate these aspirations into actionable elements. This would enable projects to engage more confidently and concretely with the full range of principles, thereby reinforcing the programme's inclusive and equity-driven objectives.

b. For projects that choose to commit to Open Science, ensure that this commitment is supported by clear, field-specific guidelines, ideally aligned with the OeAD's Open Science Austria framework. This will help research teams understand what is expected and enable consistent and meaningful implementation. Particular attention should be paid to ethical considerations in qualitative research, especially where data disclosure could pose risks to participants. Furthermore, the associated costs of Open Science activities should be strategically planned and optimised to maximise the long-term visibility, accessibility, and impact of project outcomes.

5. Explore Flexible Coordination Models to Reflect Operational Realities and Strengthen Partnerships:

a. To better align with the practical realities of implementation and foster more balanced cooperation, it is recommended to explore flexible coordination models within project structures. In particular, financial management could remain with Austrian universities especially in cases of high inflation. At the same time, content-related coordination could, where feasible, be led by partner institutions in the Global South, thereby supporting local ownership and capacity-building. Additionally, eye-level collaboration may be strengthened if the OeAD assumes certain administrative responsibilities, such as the direct disbursement of funds, rather than delegating these tasks to academic institutions without clear operational benefit.

b. To strengthen the resilience and continuity of project leadership, it is recommended to encourage the establishment of coordination committees within project teams. Such committees can support shared responsibility, distribute leadership roles more evenly across institutions, and help preserve institutional memory—particularly in contexts where staff turnover or capacity constraints may affect long-term project

implementation. This approach can contribute to more stable, inclusive, and collaborative project management structures.

6. Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Administrative Preparedness through Early Engagement:

   a. To support institutional capacity building and ensure smoother implementation, greater engagement with university management structures at partner institutions is recommended. This should include more proactive and accessible communication around APPEAR funding regulations—particularly concerning staffing and contract arrangements, which often do not align with existing university systems. Exchanges between administrative staff at Austrian and partner universities, could further enhance understanding and capacity. Consideration should also be given to offering an open information session as on lessons learned from past administrative, financial, and audit challenges during the application process to clarify administrative expectations early on.

   b. In addition, to improve audit readiness and compliance, key administrative requirements should be integrated at the proposal stage. This includes asking applicants to pre-identify eligible auditors and encouraging the inclusion of a dedicated financial administration post in the project budget.

7. Reduce Administrative Burdens through Early Planning and Practical Support

   a. In light of the administrative challenges faced by partner institutions—particularly regarding complex processes such as visa applications, enrolment, and procurement—it may be helpful to encourage more structured peer exchange between projects to share practical experiences and good practices. This could serve as a low-threshold support mechanism, while remaining mindful of the existing workload of the APPEAR team at OeAD.

8. Improve Reporting Practices for Stronger Monitoring and Evaluation

   a. To enhance the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation, project reporting should more clearly link achieved outputs to the original targets set in the proposal. Encouraging structured and consistent reporting against planned objectives would not only improve transparency and accountability but also enable a more robust assessment of project performance and impact. This could be supported through updated reporting templates and clearer guidance on output-target alignment.

9. Enhance Context-Sensitive Engagement with ADA Offices

   a. To avoid misunderstandings and strengthen clarity around roles, it is recommended that the OeAD inform project teams at the outset that the level and form of engagement with local ADA offices (KoBüs) is determined by the offices themselves. Given the varying degrees of interest and capacity across countries, project teams could be encouraged to reach out early—e.g., to briefly present their activities and offer invitations to public events where appropriate—while recognising that any further involvement is at the discretion of the respective ADA office. This would help manage expectations on both sides and reduce confusion about why or when engagement happens, particularly in contexts such as public visibility, visa processes, or crisis response.

10. Improve Sustainability Planning and Documentation for Stronger Long-Term Impact

    a. To better assess and support the long-term sustainability of project outcomes, it is important to ensure that comprehensive and up-to-date documentation is available throughout and after implementation – particularly for renewed

cooperation between two universities. In several finalised projects, documentation gaps limited the ability to evaluate sustained impact. For ongoing and future projects, it is recommended to clearly define an exit strategy from the outset, outlining how key outputs and capacities will be maintained over time. While sustainability is evident in some cases, in others it remains unclear; therefore, encouraging projects to explicitly articulate how results will continue beyond the funding period would provide a more accurate understanding of their long-term contribution and support more robust impact assessments.

Appendix A   Evaluation matrix

A.1   Relevance

Relevance		
To what extent is the project aligned and contributing to the gradual achievement of the SDGs?	• The mapped project objectives are consistent with the SDGs overall and with specific targets, throughout the project period.	• Project document review using the project proposal, progress reports, contract amendments, monitoring plan, etc. • Scoping interview with OeAD • Group Interview with project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries)
To what extent are the objectives of the project relevant for the participating institutions?	• The mapped project objectives are aligned with the objectives of the participating institutions.	• Project document review using the project proposal • Scoping interview with OeAD • Interviews with 8 rectors/deans (one per country)
To what extent are the objectives of the project relevant for the development of the participating countries/regions and for the beneficiaries?	• Participating country representatives perceive the objectives of the project as consistent with the development of their countries/ regions. • Beneficiaries perceive the objectives of the project as consistent with the development of their countries/ regions.	• Project document review using the project proposal • Interviews with ADC local representatives (one per country) • Interviews with 8 rectors/deans (one per country) • Survey with project staff and scholarship holders from participating countries.
To what extent does the project take the programme's guiding principles into account during its implementation and if not, what are the reasons?	• The project design is aligned with the programmes guiding principles.	• Project document review using the guiding principles, project proposal, progress reports, Theory of Change, monitoring plan, etc. • Scoping interview with OeAD
In which way is the project relevant to Austrian researchers?	• Austrian researchers can provide a well-founded justification for the project and detail the degree of relevance to their work.	• Project document review using midterm evaluations, activity reports, publications, progress reports, etc. • Group interview with Austrian researchers
How do project-bound scholarships enrich their holders personally and scientifically, how do the scholarship holders enrich the project and will they contribute to future university collaborations?	• Scholarship holders can provide evidence of personal and academic benefits or results after their scholarship period. • Project coordinators can provide evidence of added value from scholarship holders for the project and potential for future university collaborations.	• Survey with scholarship holders and project coordinators from participating countries and Austria.
To what extent is gender mainstreaming included in the project, gender awareness raised and attitudes towards gender changed?	• The project design fully includes gender mainstreaming. • Project stakeholders evidence more gender awareness and attitude changes towards gender.	• Project document review using the project proposal • Survey with project coordinators, project staff and scholarship holders from participating countries and Austria.

A.2   Effectiveness

Effectiveness		
Who (target groups) has benefited from the project so far and how?	• Target groups can evidence different types of benefits.	• Survey with project coordinators, project staff and scholarship holders from participating countries and Austria.
To what extent has the project already achieved its output(s) and outcome(s) or will be likely to achieve them?	• The planned outputs and outcomes indicators are reached or close to be reached. • Project stakeholders acknowledge the (soon to be) achievement of outputs and outcomes	• Project document review using the monitoring system data, progress reports, midterm evaluation • Scoping interview with OeAD and • Interviews the project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries)
What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the outputs and outcomes?	• Parameters contributing or hampering the achievement of outputs and outcomes are mapped out	• Project document review using progress reports and midterm evaluation • Interviews with OeAD and the project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries)
To what extent are the outcomes likely to continue beyond the end of the project?	• Project deliverables and stakeholders demonstrate processes of ownership and sustainability.	• Project document review using the progress reports, final reports, midterm evaluation • Interviews with OeAD and the project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries) and 8 rectos/ deans
To what extent are the added values considered and why?	• Projects' designs show the use of fitting "added values" and justification for their selection.	• Project document review using the project proposal • Interview with project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries) provided there are the drafters
How effectively is the cooperation managed by the project team? Are the tasks and responsibilities equally distributed, are the monitoring systems adequate and how does the project team cope with difficulties?	• Project staff can demonstrate sound management processes, including regular meetings, monitoring habits and smooth communication channels, balanced distribution of tasks and responsibilities, risks and mitigation strategies.	• Project document review using the project proposal including project organigramme, internal meeting minutes, monitoring plan, progress reports, midterm evaluation, internal guidelines, operational tools, etc. • Survey with project coordinators, project staff
On what basis was project coordination assigned to institutions in Austria or the partner country and what effects can be expected from the respective responsibilities? What is the added value of project coordination in the partner country?	• Relevant selection criteria and sound decision-making processes can be evidenced for the assignment of institutions for project coordination • Expectations towards the coordination by a partner country are mapped, benefits of this coordination can be evidenced.	• Project document review using the project proposal specifically the methodology for coordinator selection, meeting minutes, progress reports, etc. • Interviews with OeAD, • Survey with project partners who do not coordinate projects
To what extent have the project results been made available to / and shared with the scientific community, the stakeholders, the public and/or the beneficiaries? Are they being used so far?	• Evidence of dissemination of project results with the scientific community, the stakeholders, the public and/or the beneficiaries.	• Project document review: publications, data from dissemination tools (including reach), presentation materials, collaboration agreements, meeting notes, etc.

	• Evidence of project results usage: publication citations, project presentations to non-stakeholders, collaborations and synergies.	• Interview with project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries).
If applicable, how has previous Preparatory Funding supported the cooperative and effective functioning of the project consortium?	• Operational processes at consortium level established through Preparatory Funding can be evidenced prior to project start.	• Project document review: publications, dissemination tools data, presentations materials, collaboration agreements, etc. • Survey with project coordinators and project partners who do not coordinate projects, project staff
In which way and to which extent does the project strengthen institutional capacity development in terms of deepening teaching, research and organisational skills and quality?	• Participating institutions can evidence how the projects contributed to institutional capacity developments with regards to teaching, research, quality and organisational skills	• Interview with rectors/ deans

A.3 Influence of the changed political, social cultural, economic framework conditions

Political and Social Conditions		
What impact do the political, social and economic changes have - since the application was submitted - on the implementation of the project and the achievement of the proposed objectives?	• Relevant political, social and economic changes can be documented, and effects can be mapped against the project's design and the project's progress.	• Project document review: project proposal, specifically the Theory of Change, progress reports, contract amendments, monitoring system data • Interview with OeAD and with project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries).
In what way has the assessment of risks - as formulated in the proposal - changed?	• Project risk assessments have evolved, and significant modifications are categorised.	• Project document review using the projects' risk assessment as per project proposal and updated versions. • Interview with project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries) provided they are risk assessment drafters
What adaptations and modifications of project design and implementation organisation were made in response to the political, social and economic changes and what proved/has the potential to be effective?	• Project design and organisational processes adaptations due to political, social and economic changes can be documented. • Potential and achievements following modifications can be evidenced.	• Project document review: project proposal, specifically the Theory of Change, progress reports, contract amendments, monitoring system data. • Interview with OeAD and with project coordinators (whether from AT or participating countries).

Appendix B   Survey Questionnaire

APPEAR III Project Evaluation Survey

Dear APPEAR stakeholders!

As you may know, Technopolis has been commissioned by the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalization (OeAD) to conduct an independent evaluation of individual APPEAR III projects.

We would like to gather your experiences and insights through a survey:

- None of the questions are mandatory, some are open-ended. There are 26 questions, it should take you no more than 15 minutes to complete.
- Your input is processed on European servers. The survey answers will be aggregated and anonymised to ensure confidentiality. You can read more about our privacy policy here

We will consider every answer submitted until 12th January 2025 (included).

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please contact Elke Stinnig (elke.stinnig@oead.at) at the APPEAR Office at the OeAD.

For technical questions regarding the survey, please contact Paul Butschbacher at Technopolis Group (paul.butschbacher@technopolis-group.com).

Thank you for your participation! There are 26 questions in this survey.

Information about the Respondents

1. *Country*
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Albania

○ Armenia

○ Austria

○ Bhutan

○ Burkina Faso

○ Ethiopia

○ Kenya

○ Kyrgyzstan

○ Mozambique

○ Uganda

○ Other _____

2. *Gender*
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Female

○ Male

○ Prefer not to say

○ Other _____

3. *Which APPEAR project are you participating in?*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ GIRT - 242 - Strengthening Research and Educational Competences of HEIs for Gender sensitive Urban (InfoRmal Settlement) Transformation

○ ECSDevelop - 249 - Environmental Chemistry for Sustainable Development

○ VjoSusDev - 251 - Environmental assessment of the Vjosa riverscape as the basis for an integrated water management and sustainable catchment development

○ DEvision - 252 - Digitally Connecting Real and Virtual Environments

○ CPUg - 256 - Clean and Prosperous Uganda – Fecal Sludge and Solid Waste Management for Improved Livelihoods

○ AER-Phase II - 262 - Strengthening of Higher Education, Research and Science Communication in Agroecology in the Rwenzori Region in Western Uganda-Phase II

○ SOAA - 267 - Strengthening Organic Agriculture in Armenia: Participatory Higher Education and Knowledge Exchange for Development

○ LoCaBreed2.0 - 269 - Advancing local capacities for livestock breeding practice and research in Burkina Faso

○ EcoServ - 277 - Ecosystem services assessment through a participatory approach for sustainable water resource management in Armenia

○ ArmBioClimate - 278 - Strengthening Genetic Biocontrol Capacities under Climate Change in Armeni HEESeB - 287 - Strengthening Capacity of Higher Engineering Education for Sustainable Buildings PHRE - 288 - Promotion of Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems Towards Electricity Access in Uganda

○ AMUTI - 291 - Strengthening transformative capacity of Higher Education Institutions for equitable and resilient governance of natural resources in refugee-host community settings in West Nile, Uganda

○ CAST Mozambique - 303 - Capacity Building for Sustainable Rural Tourism in Mozambique

○ Edu4GEO2 - 310 - Implementation of Academic Geomatics Education in Ethiopia for Supporting Sustainable Development

○ Other _____

4. *Role in the project*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Project coordinator

○ Project member

○ Scholarship holder

○ Other _____

APPEAR Project

5. *In your experience, to what extend does the project take the APPEAR guiding principles into account?*

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Fully (6)	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	Not at all (1)	I cannot say
Participatory approach	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Practically and empirically oriented approach	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bottom-up and demand-driven approach	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gender sensitivity	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Leave no one behind	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Open Access – Open data	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. *In your experience, which of the following APPEAR added values are taken into account in your project?*

Select all that apply
Please choose **all** that apply:

☐ Alignment with the priorities of the ADC country strategies, use of synergies with ongoing ADC-funded projects
☐ Inclusion of persons with disabilities in alignment with the APPEAR diversity strategy
☐ Strengthening of regional networks and South-South cooperation
☐ Advancement of young and particularly female researchers
☐ Practically oriented activities that enhance the application of results, research-into-use and research uptake
☐ Project responsibility by an institution in the partner country
☐ None

7. *Which outcomes and outputs did the project achieve so far? Are they likely to continue beyond the end of the project?*

Please write your answer here: _____

8. *Did you experience any challenge to achieve the planned output(s) and outcome(s) of the project?*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes, minor challenges
○ Yes, major challenges

○ No

○ I cannot say

9. *What are the main challenges you experienced?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes, minor challenges' or 'Yes, major challenges' at question ' [G02Q15]' (Did you experience any challenge to achieve the planned output(s) and outcome(s) of the project?)

Please write your answer here: _____

10. *Did your project encounter any challenges due to political, social, or economic changes in the last years?*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes, minor challenges

○ Yes, major challenges

○ No

○ I cannot say

11. *How did they impact the implementation of the project and the achievement of the proposed objectives?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes, minor challenges' or 'Yes, major challenges' at question ' [G02Q17]' (Did your project encounter any challenges due to political, social, or economic changes in the last years?)

Please write your answer here: _____

12. *Which adaption and modification of project design and implementation were made in response? What proved to be effective?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes, minor challenges' at question ' [G02Q17]' (Did your project encounter any challenges due to political, social, or economic changes in the last years?)

Please write your answer here: _____

13. *How do you assess the relevance of the project for your country?*

Please write your answer here: _____

14. *How are the target groups benefitting from the project?*

Please write your answer here: _____

15. *Please give your personal assessment of the following aspects of cooperation management by the project team.*

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Excellent (6)	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	Poor (1)	I cannot say
Distribution of responsibilities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Quality of communication	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Task scheduling	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Time management	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Feedback mechanisms	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Monitoring	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Problem identification	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Problem resolution	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

16. *How does the project team cope with difficulties?*

Please write your answer here: _____

17. *Has your project proposal been supported by APPEAR Preparatory Funding?*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes

○ No

○ I cannot say

18. *How did Preparatory Funding support the cooperative and operational processes of the project consortium? (Please name three aspects)*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q11a]' (Has your project proposal been supported by APPEAR Preparatory Funding?)

Please write your answer here: _____

19. *In your experience, do the scholarship holders in your project enrich the project?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Project coordinator' or 'Project member' or 'Other' at question ' [G01Q02]' (Role in the project)
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes

○ No

○ I cannot say

20. *How do the scholarship holders in your project enrich the project? Will they contribute to future university collaborations?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q12a]' (In your experience, do the scholarship holders in your project enrich the project?)

Please write your answer here: _____

21. *How does your participation in the project enrich you personally and scientifically?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: ((G01Q02.NAOK == "AO03"))

Please write your answer here: _____

22. *Are gender mainstreaming and gender awareness considered in the project?*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ Yes

○ No

○ I cannot say

23. *Please give three examples how gender mainstreaming and gender awareness are raised in the project?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:
Answer was 'Yes' at question ' [G02Q14a]' (Are gender mainstreaming and gender awareness considered in the project?)

Please write your answer(s) here: _____
                                  _____
                                  _____

24. *What are your personal learnings and recommendations regarding the project?*

Please write your answer here: _____

Survey Completion

25. *Thank you for completing the survey so far. All questions related to the APPEAR III project have been covered. Before we close, we would like to ask you about how we may use your responses in our evaluation report. Due to the limited number of respondents, we may not be able to maintain respondent anonymity when quoting directly from the responses. Please indicate below how you would like us to use your information:*

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

○ <u>I agree that all</u> responses provided in the survey can be directly quoted in the evaluation report

○ <u>I agree that some</u> of the responses provided in the survey can be directly quoted in the evaluation report

○ <u>I do not agree</u> that the responses provided in the survey can be directly quoted in the evaluation report

26. *Please indicate, which responses we should handle with particular care and not quote in our report:*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'I agree that some of the responses provided in the survey can be directly quoted in the evaluation report' at question ' [G03Q21]' (Thank you for completing the survey so far. All questions related to the APPEAR III project have been covered. Before we close, we would like to ask you about how we may use your responses in our evaluation report. Due to the limited number of respondents, we may not be able to maintain respondent anonymity when quoting directly from the responses. Please indicate below how you would like us to use your information:)

Please write your answer here: _____

Thank you very much for your participation!

Appendix C   Heatmap

Project	Relevance							
	SDGs	Objectives aligned with participating institutions	Relevance for participating country	Most of / relevant Guiding Principles flagged at application level or implemented?	Most of / relevant added values flagged at application level or implemented?	Relevance for Austrian researchers	Inclusion of gender mainstreaming	Scholarship holders
Project 252 DEvision								
Project 310 Edu4GEO2								
Project 242 GIRT								
Project 303 CAST Mozambique								
Project 269 LoCaBreed2.0								
Project 267 SOAA								
Project 249 ECSDevelop								
Project 288 PHRE								
Project 287 HEESeB								
Project 256 CPUg								
Project 291 AMUTI								
Project 262 AER-Phase II								
Project 277 EcoServ								
Project 251 VjoSusDev								
Project 278 ArmBioClimate								

Scale	SDGs	Objectives aligned with participating institutions	Relevance for participating country:	Most of / relevant Guiding Principles flagged at application level or implemented?	Most of / relevant added values flagged at application level or implemented?	Relevance for Austrian researchers:	Inclusion of gender mainstreaming:	Scholarship holders
Exceptional	SDGs are reference points throughout the project - e.g. linking outputs directly to the SDGs	Central to the development and regional positioning of the institution	Clear linked to national strategy/priorities - Not just at application level	Yes, their are implemented and the ones flagged at application are still uphold during implementation as confirmed in survey	Yes, their are implemented and the ones flagged at application are still uphold during implementation as confirmed in survey	They confirmed in survey and or group interviewed and identified aspects that were not thought of (for example: "understanding in housing in Africa, intercultural communication, learning on impact of bureaucratic processes at partner uni or local level governance)	Attitudes of towards gender are measured and/or have changed, gender mainstreaming is the topic of the research and beyond the project (University Policies, stakeholder groups)	Key actors (Data gathering, translation…), have been part of predecessor project, carry responsibility
Standard	Mentioned in the application, but no follow-up on targets or clear reporting on contribution	Confirmed by ADA, in group interviews or mentioned in survey	Needs of the country issues, cross-referenced with a quick perplexity search	Some are implemented (more emphasis), and / or there have been changes between application and implementation	Some are implemented (more emphasis), and / or there have been changes between application and implementation	an eye-to-eye principle and mutually beneficial approach is mentioned, or other aspects that are not out of the ordinary (for example "learning opportunity")	Project Team is balanced, Workshops, gender sensitive research, there is a gender analysis, attitudes towards changed cannot yet be measured	Add ons, confirmed they enrich project but without further details, just doing the job they are hired for
Below expectation	Not mentioned	Not aligned	Not relevant	Not considered	Not considered	Perception of a North-South transfer		Not adding any value
	Not sufficient information (not mentioned in application)	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information

Project	Effectiveness							
	Have beneficiaries (defined as students benefiting directly* from project, civil society, local community, rural population) already benefited	Achievement of outputs and outcomes	Continuation beyond the end of the project	Effective cooperation management	Project coordination assignment + expectation and added value	Dissemination and usage of project results	Preparatory funding	Institutional Capacity building
Project 252 DEvision								
Project 310 Edu4GEO2								
Project 242 GIRT								
Project 303 CAST Mozambique								
Project 269 LoCaBreed2.0								
Project 267 SOAA								
Project 249 ECSDevelop								
Project 288 PHRE								
Project 287 HEESeB								
Project 256 CPUg								
Project 291 AMUTI								
Project 262 AER-Phase II								
Project 277 EcoServ								
Project 251 VjoSusDev								
Project 278 ArmBioClimate								

Scale	Have beneficiaries (defined as students benefiting directly* from project, civil society, local community, rural population) already benefited	Achievement of outputs and outcomes	Continuation beyond the end of the project	Effective cooperation management	Project coordination assignment + expectation and added value	Dissemination and usage of project results	Preparatory funding	Institutional Capacity building
Exceptional	Yes, there has been measured and reported change in their lives (outcome level), there has been a very high level of people involved (see excel sheet on quantitative outputs in each yearly project report)	Noteworthy delivery (exceeding planned outputs, delivery in spite of very harsh conditions, compared to other "more chilled" projects)	Yes, there are already documented processes of ownership	Intensive communication efforts, flexibility and hard work have led to universities not being left out during the war	The project's coordination is based on sound and transparent decision-making processes and fair selection criteria, exceptional job, goes beyond role?	extensive dissemination and stories of usage (see group interviews and excel sheet on quantitative outputs in each yearly project report) went being what was planned	Preparatory funding was central for establishing the collaboration	Finished projects
Standard	Few have been taking part in activities, but it's not going great (for example single digit of persons reached although project runs since quite some time but it is understandable because of a context of crisis)	Perception that there is a reasonable amount of outputs done considering time and challenges	There is anecdotal evidence of attempts to make results sustainable by getting funding elsewhere, reaching out to authorities, etc.	Survey grade between 4 and 6, there are issues but all in all, internal processes have not stopped operations	coordination was decided on organically, not much to decide on and the coordinating institution provided added value (keeps money value when inflation, etc.)	Average, as planned	Preparation was funded through other funding sources	Outputs have improved institutional capacities
Below expectation	Too early/ not possible due to war/ or simply not sufficient because no context of war	Too early/ not possible due to war	Too early/ no evidence	several aspects were problematic	Coordinating institution is not doing a great job, is contested.	no outputs in this regard	No preparatory funding was needed	Outputs have not focused on institutional capacities of universities
	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information

Project	Political, social cultural, economic conditions		
	Effects of relevant political, social and economic changes	**Evolvement and modifications of project risk assessments and organisational processes adaptations**	**Potential and achievements following modifications**
Project 252 DEvision			
Project 310 Edu4GEO2			
Project 242 GIRT			
Project 303 CAST Mozambique			
Project 269 LoCaBreed2.0			
Project 267 SOAA			
Project 249 ECSDevelop			
Project 288 PHRE			
Project 287 HEESeB			
Project 256 CPUg			
Project 291 AMUTI			
Project 262 AER-Phase II			
Project 277 EcoServ			
Project 251 VjoSusDev			
Project 278 ArmBioClimate			

Exceptional	No challenges		Project has overcome grave difficulties
Standard	Minor challenges		
Below expectation	The project experienced major challenges due to relevant political, social economic changes		Project is interrupted, needs to be stopped.
	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information	Not sufficient information/ not applicable

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