



NIRAS supports SDG 4

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION





NIRAS – engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals

Owned by a foundation and a portion its employees, NIRAS is an international multidisciplinary consultancy firm with Scandinavian roots and values. For more than 45 years, NIRAS International Consulting has been committed to the development of innovative and sustainable solutions for our clients and society. In the more than 300 projects we help implement in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America annually, the SDGs and their individual targets guide our activities in development cooperation.

Our values and continued focus on delivering sustainable solutions for people, the environment and society are embraced by the UN Global Compact. We consider the Compact's ten universal principles as a natural way of doing business. These principles steer our actions in respecting fundamental human and labour rights, showing responsibility towards the environment, and resisting all forms of corruption.

NIRAS's continued efforts to ensure sustainable development are in line with the SDGs and support Agenda 2030. In every sector we ask ourselves if we can introduce new services where we – together with our partners and clients – can contribute to this global development agenda.

NIRAS's solutions are addressing the major societal challenges of our time and are directly contributing to the UN's 17 SDGs.



Photo by Wolfgang Diedrich

Today, we deliver technical assistance to over 100 countries annually – a project portfolio managed by more than 400 permanent staff. Our network of external experts approaches 25,000 development professionals worldwide, and our 51 offices in 27 countries support long-term partnerships and build local capacity in the countries where we work.

In every sector we ask ourselves if we can introduce new services where, together with clients, we can contribute to the development goals.

Through our work we aim at visibly improving livelihoods and developing resilient future societies that are inclusive, stable, well governed and climate-smart.

The green growth and circular economy initiatives we work on with our partners address climate change through adaptation, mitigation and building of resilience. At the same time, they also promote job creation and generate wealth. We integrate human rights-based approaches and structured capacity-development and skills transfer into our projects and work closely with institutions to develop expertise within agricultural sector reform, private sector development, and peace, security and governance processes.

We incorporate the UN Sustainable Development Goals in all our activities and measure their impact on society and the environment. We believe that aligning our work with the SDGs enables us to identify and deliver solutions that contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world – a fundamental objective of NIRAS employees.



Inclusive and equitable learning, the core of our work in training and education

Education and training are well-recognised prerequisites for inclusive and equitable societies. At NIRAS, the achievement of SDG4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning, is at the heart of what we do in our education and skills development projects. As the focus has shifted away from access towards quality of education, and the emphasis has broadened beyond inputs to outcomes of learning, we are determined to ensure our work contributes to improving the quality of education and training and making learning more equitable.

We work to strengthen both primary and secondary but also post-secondary education. We implement a number of technical, vocational and educational training (TVET) initiatives and promote employability in multiple countries around the globe, including Azerbaijan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Serbia. We are helping clients, such as the EU, MFA Finland, NORAD, Sida, GIZ, KfW and SDC, to support partner countries in making education and training equitable while improving its quality.

Our services in education are wide-ranging. We work with governments in establishing conducive policy frameworks and support them in translating policies into education practices. We conduct needs assessments, develop curricula, provide capacity building and work to promote general and post-secondary education.

Through our work, we contribute to the achievement of the SDG 4 targets, which are:

- 4.1 Ensure that all girls and boys complete primary and secondary education
- 4.2 Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education
- 4.3 Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4 Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills
- 4.5 Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education
- 4.6 Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults achieve literacy and numeracy
- 4.7 Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development
 - 4.A Build and upgrade education facilities
 - 4.B Substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries
 - 4.C Substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers

In this booklet, we present six ongoing or recently concluded projects that showcase our capabilities in developing education and training concepts. The selected projects illustrate our wide range of geographical presence, multi-sectoral approach, and the deep experience we bring to the field of education and training.

4

Inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities

Presenting

Six projects

Six countries

Six ways towards a more sustainable future





Enhancing equity and inclusion in general education in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has realised impressive development results in past years, for instance, rolling out an innovative social safety net to protect almost 8 million of the most vulnerable people or increasing the primary net enrolment ratio from 68% in 2005 to 82% in 2010. With the current Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), the Government of Ethiopia is aiming to reach middle-income status by 2020-2023. It has identified the education sector as 'one of the key focus areas' to achieve this goal.

Finnish cooperation with Ethiopia has a long-standing history in supporting special needs education and teacher training through bilateral support and multi-donor pooled funds. NIRAS works on behalf of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Finland to improve equitable and inclusive education and support the implementation of the General Education Quality Improvement Programme. We assist the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education (MOE) in scaling up lessons learned from previous projects and collaborate to strengthen democratic ownership in implementing the project.

We work to mainstream inclusion into various MOE's guidelines and documents and help ensure that existing inclusive education guidelines, toolkits and documents are utilised in schools. NIRAS's team of consultants supports the planning and monitoring of inclusive, equitable education at national, regional and local levels by providing capacity building to members of the MOE's information system. Creating an extensive and reliable database in regard to special education has laid the foundation for evidence-based policy formulation. Furthermore, Inclusive Education Resource Centres have received support to improve their organisational capacity to better provide outreach services to children with special needs, their parents and teachers.

This project to enhance equity and inclusion in Ethiopia's General Education Quality Programme significantly contributes to achieving SDG target 4.C by substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers who are trained in making education more inclusive and thereby increasing access to quality education among Ethiopia's children.

CLIENT
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

COUNTRIES
Ethiopia

LOCATION
Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, Afar, Benshangul-Gumuz, Gambella and Harari regions

DURATION
2018-2020



Framework agreement on services for Swedish development cooperation in skills development and education

CLIENT

Sida

LOCATION

Global

DURATION

2014-2018



NIRAS has successfully implemented the “Sida Framework Agreement on Services for Swedish Development Cooperation in Skills Development and Education (2014–2018)”. We have supported both Sida headquarters and representatives in Swedish embassies with specific technical assistance, analyses, programme design and recommendations in skills development, vocational training, and the education sector. Among others, the Framework covered assignments such as global and bilateral strategy development, appraisal of projects and advice on how to assess and promote quality issues in education initiatives. Specific assignments that we conducted include:

Project	Country	Start-End
Developing a higher education strategy for Rwanda	Rwanda	Dec 2014–Sept 2015
Overview of Sida’s previous support to the vocational education and training sector and entrepreneurship training	Tanzania	Dec 2014–Mar 2015
Brief on skills for employment	Global	Dec 2014–Mar 2015
Gender tool for sustainable gender equality in the education sector	Global	Feb–Apr 2017
Help desk function	Afghanistan	Nov 2017–Dec-2018
Assessment of higher education study	Ethiopia	Dec 2017–Apr 2018

While quality education remains the focus of these assignments, addressing all targets of SDG 4, individual assignments contributed positively to reducing gender inequalities (SDG 5), improving skills to enable decent employment (SDG 8), encouraging shared prosperity by reducing inequalities (SDG 10), and strengthening institutions (SDG 16). NIRAS has additionally been awarded the contract to implement the new Sida Framework on “Education, Skills Development and Lifelong Learning (2019–2021)” as a single-source supplier.



Revitalising vocational education for Rwandan job seekers

CLIENT

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

COUNTRIES

Rwanda

LOCATION

Country-wide

DURATION

2017–2019



EcoEmploi activities have included a training-needs assessment at 38 hotels in the Lake Kivu region and practical, competency-based training (CBT) sessions in housekeeping. Training-of-trainers CBT has been conducted in the wood/carpentry sector, not only for TVET institutions but with participants from the private sector for the first time.

Rwanda is one of the fastest-growing African countries in terms of its ICT sector. The EcoEmploi project is therefore focussed on facilitating collaboration between ICT companies and TVET providers. Meetings with stakeholders have provided insight into priorities for the sector, identifying skills gaps and laying the foundation for TVET and private sector partnerships.

EcoEmploi contributes to SDG 4 specifically through targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, and 4b related to vocational education and training that indicate the need to increase the number of youth and adults with relevant skills, access to training, and support.

In Rwanda, approximately 120,000 young people enter the labour market every year. But despite economic growth, unemployment and underemployment remains a significant challenge. Like many African countries, Rwanda has an economy that consists primarily of micro- to small- and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs). For job seekers, there is little information about the labour market and how to access support. In addition, Rwanda's TVET system lacks needed infrastructure and suffers from inadequate training of teachers.

The Promotion of Economy and Employment (EcoEmploi) project addresses the lack of systematic skills development by improving, on one hand, the capacities of local teachers and other actors and, on the other hand, by offering hands-on short term courses developed jointly with the private sector to improve employment prospects for young people. In alignment with government strategies adopted to enhance vocational education and private sector development, the project targets the approximately 4 million young women and men aged 15–39 who need access to relevant trainings and quality job opportunities.

The implementation of a national training-of-trainers system and trades training in selected sectors boosts competitiveness and strengthens the private sector, a key to job creation. The selected focus areas are tourism and hospitality, wood technology/carpentry, and Information & communications technology (ICT).

The tourism and hospitality industry has been identified by the government as a priority area, and is expected to become one of the main drivers of Rwanda's economy. It has grown rapidly in recent years but to be competitive on an international level, workers must be trained to increase knowledge, skills, and attitudes.





Reforming vocational education for the economic diversification of Azerbaijan

Spelled out in its strategy “Azerbaijan – 2020: Look into the Future”, the Government of Azerbaijan plans to minimise the country’s current dependence on the export of fossil fuels and ensure a rapid development of the non-oil sector, increasing the effectiveness and competitiveness of the economy. This economic vision requires a commitment to diversification. Although the overall unemployment level in Azerbaijan is relatively low, the level of youth unemployment is significantly higher. To equip young people with the skills needed for the envisioned economic transformation and to lower the unemployment rate, the government has committed to a systemic reform of the vocational education and training system (VET system).

With the support of the EU, Azerbaijan has embarked on reforming VET policy and regulatory framework, strengthening its VET management system, developing educational standards and curricula, and improving monitoring of the overall VET system. The EU project supports this effort by providing expert advice in developing policies and operationalising them through the national VET Agency.

CLIENT
European Union

COUNTRY
Azerbaijan

LOCATION
National

DURATION
2017–2019



The project has so far supported the Azerbaijani VET agency in implementing the first phase of its Strategic Roadmap for VET (2016–2020) by providing technical input to the drafting of VET law. It furthermore supported the Agency in developing guidelines and methods for costing of school-based VET and mapped the capacity of the agency to plan strategic capacity building of its staff. In the area of monitoring, the project provided support in the development of indicators for school-based monitoring and tools for the monitoring of donor activities in the country.

The project is an excellent example of the way NIRAS, on behalf of the EU, is working hand in hand with a national government to implement reforms to make education and training more relevant to the realities of learners in Azerbaijan. It is a project that contributes to the achievement of SDG 4 by working with the Government of Azerbaijan to increase the number of youth and adults who have access to VET and who can gain relevant skills and improve their employability (target 4.4).



Fostering dual technical education in Egypt

Youth represent a very large share of the Egyptian population. At the same time, youth employability is one of the biggest socioeconomic challenges facing Egypt. To improve the quality and relevance of advanced vocational education and help young people enter the labour market, the Education Development Fund established an Integrated Technical Education Cluster (ITEC) on the premises of the Technical Secondary School of Assiut City. The project is jointly funded by the Egyptian government and the German-Egyptian Debt Swap Programme for Development.

The key element of the ITEC's pioneering model is building competences rather than accumulating knowledge. The cluster aims to provide high-quality technical education, recognised nationally and internationally, serving different industrial engineering sectors and fulfilling neighbouring and regional industry and society labour market needs.

The ITEC offers formal courses on three levels, modelled on the German dual system and officially recognised by the Egyptian government. German authorities accredit the highest level of education. The structure enables students to join the labour market after passing each educational level but also to return to the ITEC for progression to higher levels of education. The programmes are run in direct cooperation with local companies. This ensures that the curriculum is tailored to market needs and that students have meaningful internships and future job opportunities.

The first batch of technical teachers was hired and started service in January 2017. All newly hired teachers go through a special teacher training programme jointly conducted by German teacher training experts from the German region of Baden-Württemberg and two Egyptian training institutes. The project also comprises planning, construction and equipment of the teaching facilities for the new ITEC compound, which was designed to accommodate up to 1000 students.

CLIENT

Education Development Fund (EDF), funded by German-Egyptian Debt Swap Programme, supervised by KfW

COUNTRY

Egypt

LOCATION

Assiut

DURATION

2014–2020



The ITEC in Assiut officially opened in September 2017, starting with a first intake of 64 students for training in two sectors, namely mechanical and electrical engineering. Comprehensive courses for plumbers, telecommunication electricians and IT specialists are expected soon.

Thus, the ITEC will offer a broad range of engineering subjects and train highly qualified technicians, contributing to the SDGs 4 and 8 through improved education and skills for employment. In particular, it will increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (target 4.4).



Boosting skills and employability of Serbian youth

CLIENT

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

COUNTRIES

Serbia

LOCATION

Novi Pazar, Knjazevac, Pirot, Krusevac, Kragujevac

DURATION

2016-2023



The programme “From Education to Employment (E2E): Youth Skills Development and Public-Private Partnership in Serbia” seeks to break the country’s alarming youth unemployment rate, which stood at 44% in 2016, one of the highest among EU candidate countries. In the five municipalities in South-West Serbia selected as pilot areas for E2E, one in four young people have been unemployed for more than five years, and one in three young people are lacking any job qualifications, either due to school dropout or obsolete education.

The E2E programme is a partnership between the governments of Serbia and Switzerland that builds alliances between public, civil and private sector involved in youth employment promotion. E2E identifies models on how to improve job prospects and equal access to job opportunities for all young people regardless of their social, economic or physical conditions. E2E’s vision is to create new and identify existing decent job prospects for all young women and men within the targeted municipalities. This goal will be achieved by promoting modern active labour market and skills development measures.

A network of local partners provides different services, such as updated labour market information, identification of training programmes, hands-on practical guidance and vocational counselling in school-to-work transition, as well as mediation of work-based learning opportunities, including internships for youth. As of end of 2019, E2E’s Opportunity Fund has supported 72 projects within the five pilot regions, with the participation of more than 125 companies and 30 public and civil society partners. Through these projects, E2E will provide training for more than 1000 young people within the work-based learning fund and provide additional support for individual training programmes for at least 110 vulnerable hard-to-place youth (HPY) as part of the HPY Fund. In order to guarantee high-quality short term courses, more than 130 in-company trainers and instructors have been trained to guide the participants through the practical trainings to reduce dropout rates.

By promoting inclusive and equitable quality education for all, E2E contributes to SDG 4, in particular target 4.4, which aims to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. By working with gender as a cross-cutting theme and increasing youth employability, E2E also embraces SDGs 5 and 8, promoting gender equality and better job opportunities for all.

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NIRAS offices around the world

Our decentralised structure ensures we're always close to our projects. With 51 offices in 27 countries, we maintain strong local ties to clients, experts and organizations in all of our key markets. Building on our motto "we listen, we learn, we deliver", NIRAS is proud to be a long-term partner in the pursuit of growth and prosperity for the countries in which we work and is committed to building partnerships and local capacity, beyond the lifespan of individual projects, to achieve sustainable and equitable future societies.



The next generation consultancy

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