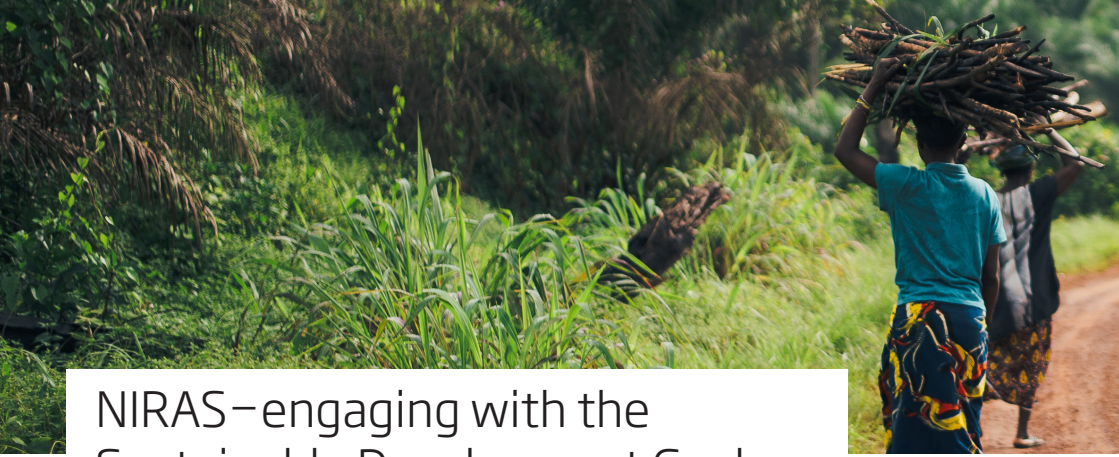




NIRAS supports SDG 8

8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH





NIRAS – engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals

Owned by a Foundation and its employees, the NIRAS Group 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' 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' continued efforts to ensure sustainable development are in line with the SDGs.





Today, we deliver technical assistance to over 100 countries annually - a project portfolio managed by 350 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.

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



Inclusive economic growth and job creation

A cross-cutting goal that aims to promote “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all”, SDG 8 is a fundamental goal for NIRAS. Our commitment to address SDG 8 targets is expressed through our projects, in particular initiatives and policy reforms that create an enabling environment for increased productivity, technological upgrading, innovation, and diversification of the economy. We support our clients in developing and implementing national employment policies that promote decent work, where international labour standards, social protection and workers’ rights go hand-in-hand with job creation.

Our holistic approach to SDG 8 is based on three interrelated pillars: skills development, labour market interventions and private sector development.

Being employed fosters social integration and mitigates conflict as well as necessity-driven rural–urban migration, which in turn generates massive human influx and pressure on the urban economy and labour market. Many countries witness a mismatch between job seekers’ skills and employers’ needs. This often leads to under- or unemployment, negatively affecting economic growth and increasing poverty.

Creating the right match between the skills offered and those needed is at the core of our labour market interventions and fundamental to achieving SDG 8. Consequently, we support the establishment of labour market information systems (LMIS) that are context-specific and tailored to our clients’ needs. LMIS should support local authorities in establishing effective technical and vocational education and training (TVET), which requires working with a large number of stakeholders to address complex cultural values and social behaviour and bridge institutional boundaries to realize synergies. Our projects often engage with the informal economy, which provides livelihood for millions of people but often lacks what most would regard as decent working conditions. We therefore apply a gender- and human-rights-based approach in our projects, be they in the informal or formal sector, to promote safe and sustainable jobs and labour rights for all.



Our work extends beyond cities into rural areas, where we support agribusiness development and stimulate income-generation for smallholder households in a variety of crops and value chains. We act locally while building regional and global market and knowledge linkages, and provide dialogue platforms for the public and private sector to meet and join forces for a more prosperous and inclusive economy.

NIRAS promotes green growth by supporting business development and investments that are circular in their economic nature and do no harm to the environment.

We are committed to fostering a vibrant private sector and investment climate that stimulates growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and unleashes the entrepreneurial and creative potential of citizens in transition and developing economies. We strive to create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and pay special attention to the innovative and creative industries, where the youth are active. Here we also work to improve access to finance by strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions and loan grantees. As such, a large part of our project portfolio is to provide fund management services that channel capital for targeted value chains, start-ups and business development programmes.

NIRAS supports more than 50 projects worldwide which directly contribute to SDG 8. In this booklet, we showcase six from: Serbia, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Ghana, Mozambique, and Mali to illustrate how our work promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth and directly contributes towards SDG 8 while also impacting other SDGs.

8

Decent Work and Economic Growth

Presenting

Six projects

Six countries

Six ways towards a more
sustainable future



ork

Growth





Boosting the skills and employability of Serbian Youth

The program “From Education to Employment (E2E): Youth Skills Development and Public-Private Partnerships in Serbia” seeks to tackle the country’s alarming youth unemployment rate, which currently stands at 43% (52% with females) – among the highest in the EU candidate countries. In the five selected pilot municipalities in Central and South-West Serbia, youth unemployment ranges from 51-63%. One in four young people have been unemployed longer than five years and one third lack any job qualifications, either due to dropping out of school or having an obsolete education. At the same time, local government, educational institutions and the private sector struggle to induce positive change in the labour market.

E2E identifies models for improving job prospects and access to equal job opportunities for all young people regardless of their social, economic or physical conditions. A network of local partners in the five municipalities where the program is active will provide different services such as labour market information, training programmes, practical guidance and vocational counselling in school-to-work transition and mediation of work-based learning opportunities, such as internships. This will be the basis for the development of new curricula for vocational training, which is much needed in a transition country like Serbia where the labour market has been disrupted and is characterized by inadequate education and low employment rates, particularly among women and youth.

By increasing youth employability in a socially inclusive and sustainable way, E2E contributes to SDG 8 and in particular to target 8.6, which focuses on the proportional reduction of youth not in employment, education or training. By working with gender as a cross-cutting theme, E2E embraces SDGs 4 and 5 and promotes gender equality and inclusive and equitable quality education for all. “The vision of E2E is to create and identify decent job prospects for all young women and men within the targeted municipalities regardless of their social status. We achieve through the promotion of modern active labour market and skills development measures.” says Oliver Streit, E2E Project Manager.

E2E will also make a contribution towards the increased economic resilience of municipalities so they can manage their local labour market more effectively, attract more investors, and prevent brain-drain and emigration, which is an important issue in an increasingly ageing Serbian society.

CLIENT

Swiss Agency
for Development
and Cooperation

COUNTRY

Serbia

LOCATION

Novi Pazar, Knjaževac, Pirot,
Kruševac, Kragujevac

DURATION

2016–2019



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



Promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in Mali

CLIENT

DANIDA

COUNTRY

Mali

LOCATION

Regions of Mopti, Sikasso, Segou and Bamako District

DURATION

2014–2018



Mali is slowly recovering from the crisis that erupted in 2011. The political situation in the country is still fragile, but the government has broad international support in terms of political, military, and development aid and assistance. NIRAS' cooperation with Mali has been on-going since the end of the 1980s, and we have a long tradition of working closely with different actors such as government institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations.

The main components of the *Programme d'Appui à la Croissance Economique et Promotion de l'Emploi stimulées par le Secteur Privé* (PACEPEP – Economic Growth and Employment Creation in Mali) include solid business advice and training, cofinancing of investments, loan guarantees, and development of market access and improved infrastructure.

The beneficiaries of the PACEPEP are micro, small and medium-sized (MSMEs) private enterprises and professional organizations involved in value chains such as poultry, maize, livestock, meat, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, and handicrafts. PACEPEP's overall development objectives are to create sustainable economic growth and employment, with an expected creation of 12,000 jobs and support for around 700 entrepreneurs.

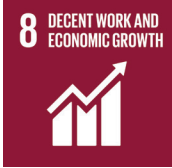


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The programme contributes mainly to SDG 8 and target 8.3, as it promotes productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship and the growth of MSMEs, and facilitates improved access to financial services. The project also contributes to SDG 2, SDG 7 and SDG 9 by achieving food security, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy – through the electricity and solar energy project component – and by building resilient infrastructure through the renovation or construction of crossroads and access-ways to markets and dairies.

Mali’s is heavily dependent on rainfed agricultural activities, which remains a structural challenge due to changing weather conditions and the effects of climate change. The project thus supports the implementation of irrigation-based “off-season” cultivation and the construction of rural roads to ease access to market for smallholder farmers. Renovation or building of new small infrastructure, like abattoirs and dairies, and modernization of marketplaces with better hygienic standards improves product quality and production capacity.

Another important component of PACEPAP is to advise, support and coach entrepreneurs – especially young people and women – in developing and implementing a business plan.



Facilitating growth of Vietnam's innovation potential and knowledge industries

CLIENT

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

COUNTRY

Vietnam

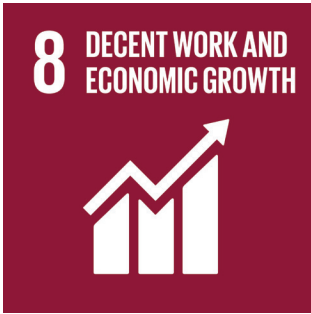
LOCATION

City regions of Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Danang and Can Tho

DURATION

2013–2018





Since 1990, Vietnam has experienced rapid economic growth and development, which has transformed the country from one of the poorest in the world to its current status as a lower middle-income country. Vietnam has developed its regional and global economic integration and is now in the midst of enhancing its business sector through structural reforms that promote human resources and skills development adequate for modern, creative and innovative industries.

Phase 2 of the Vietnam-Finland Innovation Partnership Programme (IPP) primarily contributes to SDG 8 as it taps into Vietnam’s growing economy and emerging business opportunities and supports Vietnam’s overall goal of becoming an industrialized middle-income knowledge-based economy by 2020. IPP is an initiator, facilitator and connector with the objective to strengthen the Vietnamese innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem and boost sustainable economic growth through increased production and export of innovative products, knowledge and services. The second phase of the IPP’s main focus is capacity development and financial support to the development of innovative high-growth Vietnamese startups and startup ecosystem developers; including eight universities and educational institutions based in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Danang, Da Lat, Hue, and Nha Trang.

“In a healthy, economically sustainable startup ecosystem, the provision of growth resources is a professional’s business, not just someone’s job,” explains Marko Seppä, himself a private growth-funding professional who currently serves IPP in Hanoi as Entrepreneur in Residence. An example of a high-growth Vietnamese startup created with IPP support and grant funding, the big data analytics company Abivin developed its first commercial product – a logistical route optimizer that saves money and reduces air pollution by cutting the number of delivery bikes needed in the streets of Hanoi – for a leading international consumer goods company.

IPP also addresses SDG 9 by implementing activities to expand connections and networks internationally to support the growth and dynamics of the Vietnamese startup ecosystem. For example, IPP has supported the HATCH! VENTURES consortium in two funding stages, helping the organization to develop internationally benchmarked startup support services and grow their HATCH! FAIR event into the leading annual startup exhibition in Vietnam. The group partnered with SLUSH, the annual world startup event hosted in Helsinki to host a SLUSH impact event as a focal point for socially and ecologically oriented startups and tech talent to meet with top-tier international investors and media.

Boosting the local economy, markets, and job creation in rural areas

CLIENT

Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Mozambique

COUNTRY

Mozambique

LOCATION

Maputo and the provinces of Gaza, Sofala, and Inhambane

DURATION

2012–2019



The overall objective of *Programa de Desenvolvimento Economico Local* (ProDEL – Local Economic Development Programme) is to contribute to poverty reduction through income-generation and increased employment opportunities. The purpose is to promote economic development in the rural areas of Gaza, Inhambane and Sofala Provinces by strengthening the productive base and competitiveness of local MSMEs. ProDEL takes a value-chain approach, promoting vertical and horizontal links between the various economic stakeholders and targeting associations of small farmers and MSMEs linked to the agricultural sector and agro-processing.

Mozambique's recent rapid economic expansion and the high and sustained GDP growth rate over the last couple of years has so far had only a moderate impact on poverty reduction. The geographical distribution of poverty remains largely unchanged, with an uneven poverty reduction performance across the country. About 70% of the population of Mozambique live in rural areas, where the majority depend on subsistence farming.

The three provinces in which ProDEL is active are all characterized by their large economic potential and small economic clusters. However, these areas lack basic infrastructure such as access to markets, a good transportation network, water management systems or energy networks to maximize their regional economic potential. To address these issues, the district



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and municipal authorities submit project proposals to ProDEL, based on their development plans and priorities, which are in line with government planning and budgeting mechanisms.

ProDEL promotes development-oriented initiatives that support local economic and productive activities and thus contributes mainly to SDG 8 targets 8.2, 8.3 and 8.8 regarding productivity, decent job creation and protection of labour rights.

By building resilient infrastructure, the programme also addresses SDG 9 when supporting construction of small-scale public infrastructure. For instance small markets will be built as part of the programme in Savala. Promotion of product commercialization includes improved conservation and introduction of cattle disinfection tanks, slaughter houses and hygiene facilities. ProDEL also offers local authorities support in procurement procedures and encourages the formalization and growth of MSMEs, which will have a direct impact on improving local competitiveness, reducing business costs and attracting economic investments.

The programme is implemented as a partnership between the EU, Sweden, the National Directorate for the Promotion of Rural Development, the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development and provincial local authorities, municipalities and districts.





Green growth and rural development in Ghana

Ghana has witnessed impressive economic growth in the last decade and transitioned to a lower middle-income country. Commercial agriculture is, however, still in a nascent state, especially in the northern parts of the country. For small agricultural commodity businesses, access to affordable finance is almost non-existent, threatening food security and growth in the sector. Around 47% of the population in Ghana live in rural areas, 38% of whom live in poverty. The Rural Development Fund (RDF) was established as a revolving wholesale fund to about 80 partner financial institutions, which on-lend to MSMEs, e.g., universal banks, finance houses, saving and loan companies, credit cooperative unions, rural and community banks, financial NGOs and microfinance institutions. RDF is the backbone of the comprehensive thematic programme Support to Private Sector Development Phase III (SPSD III) under DANIDA. The goal is to institutionalise the fund to sustain operations beyond 2021 for the benefit of approximately 8,000 rural MSMEs.

The overall objective of the RDF is to promote inclusive and greener economic growth by providing financing mechanisms for private sector companies and entrepreneurs in all ten regions in rural Ghana. The programme contributes significantly to SDG 8 and targets 8.3 and 8.10 with regards to support for productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, strengthening the capacity of domestic financial institutions and expanded access to financial services for all. With respect to the latter, the RDF seeks to ease the liquidity and capital constraints of financial institutions with operations in rural areas and stimulate the growth of MSMEs within agriculture, agribusiness and renewable energy sectors through increased access to finance. It is expected that RDF support will benefit all primary, secondary and tertiary production activities within a range of agricultural value chains in crop production, livestock husbandry, and aquaculture.

The RDF also contributes to the SDG 7 as the programme undertakes investments in sustainable energy, e.g. solar lanterns, solar water pumps for irrigations systems, and solar battery charging systems. These investments will establish the basis for higher energy efficiency and improved cooking technologies both in businesses and at household level.

CLIENT
DANIDA

COUNTRY
Ghana

LOCATION
In 10 regions

DURATION
2016–2021



**8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH**



Farmers' Field Schools and the development of Tajik agro-food products

CLIENT

World Bank

COUNTRY

Tajikistan

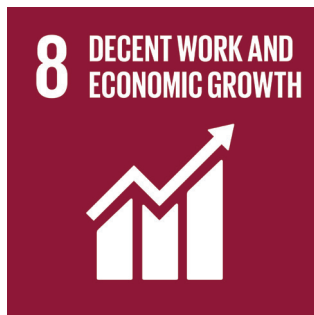
LOCATION

Regions of Sughd, Khatlon and Region of Republican Subordination (RRS) - Gissar Valley

DURATION

2016–2021





Capacity development through training and advisory services is one of the key components in the Agricultural Commercialization Project (ACP) in Tajikistan. The project unfolds in three traditionally cotton-producing areas that have diversified into orchards (apricots, pears and apples) and small-scale dairy production. Tajikistan remains the poorest of the 15 post-Soviet nations, with 47% of the population living below the poverty line. Many of these people reside in rural areas where the ACP is being implemented and where most farmers own maximum 3-4 hectares of land. The project develops the capacity of smallholder farmers by providing advisory services to agro-processors, traders, etc. on matters related to technical improvements, new products, access to markets and strengthening of value chains.

Apricot and dairy are the first two value chains targeted for improvement. For apricots, this includes improved harvesting techniques, establishing “pre-cooling” chambers for cooling of fresh apricots that will later be sold as a premium high-quality product, and setting up trays for natural sun-drying of the fruit as a more organic preservation method. For dairy, it involves improved feeding of dairy cows, enhanced grazing through better pasture management, and establishment of milk collection centres. Efforts will be made to promote good agricultural practices and handle the preparation and storage of post-harvest food to ensure good quality and safe food through “training-of-trainers” initiatives and introduction of a Farmers’ Field School approach based on participatory and interactive learning.

Another important component of the ACP is the design and implementation of an ambitious commercial grants scheme that will identify new potential areas for support within the selected value chains. A key task during the project timeline will be to assess the potential of Tajik agro-food products and bring all value chain actors closer together in order to strengthen the market, improve the quality of value-added products, and access new markets in and outside of Tajikistan.

While the ACP contributes to SDG 8 and promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, it also contributes to SDG 1’s aim of ending poverty, SDG 2’s strive for better quality products and improved nutrition, and SDG 15 as it works to improve pasture management, decrease over-grazing and thus halt land degradation. As a cross-cutting theme, the project also addresses SDG 5 with regards to gender equality.

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NIRAS offices around the world

Our decentralized 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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