



Evaluation

Strategic Evaluation of the Human Rights-Based Approach
within Austrian Development Cooperation

Evaluation Report

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
European and International
Affairs

 Austrian
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Agency

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany) (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DGF	Democratic Governance Facility
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EGSIM	Environmental, Gender and Social Impact Management
EGSS	Environmental, Gender and Social Standards
ESAP	Ethiopian Social Accountability Program
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESCR	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GAP	Gender Action Plan (EU)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
HERAS	Higher Education Research and Applied Sciences
HRCU	Human Rights Centre Uganda
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
IWAS	Improving Water Supply Sustainability
KII	Key Informant Interview
KWN	Kosovo Women's Network
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bundesministerium für europäische und internationale Angelegenheiten)

MSC	Most Significant Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCU	Program Coordination Unit
PPT	PowerPoint
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Sweden's Government Agency for Development Cooperation
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WASH	Water Sanitation Hygiene
WCSOs	Women-led Civil Society Organisations
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Purpose, objective and scope

The purpose of this strategic evaluation is to evidence the timeliness and adequacy of Austrian Development Cooperation's (ADC) human rights-based approach (HRBA), and to identify needs for further guidance, in order for ADC to further develop the application of and advance its HRBA approach. It focuses on a five-year period 2016–2020, effectively the start of the preceding Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy (2016–2018) to approximately halfway through the current Three-Year Programme (2019–2021). Through the criteria of relevance and coherence, the evaluation examines the three levels of ADC's Human Rights Based Approach: human rights as a principle; promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area; and human rights as a component of political dialogue. The evaluation further provides insights into how ADC's HRBA and mainstreaming of gender equality are combined into a complementary framework; and how the HRBA is integrated in the planning and implementation of strategic evaluations.

Methodological approach

The evaluation used a mixed method, non-experimental approach. Over 130 individuals participated in the evaluation through (qualitative) semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions and through a (mixed qualitative and quantitative) survey. The participants included ADC stakeholders (Austrian Development Agency/ADA and Ministry of Foreign Affairs/MFA) and civil society organisations in Vienna, and ADC coordination offices and partners in ADC's priority countries. A slight majority of participants were women (some survey respondents did not specify their gender). A qualitative document review was carried out for key documents, and a (qualitative and quantitative) systematic content analysis was conducted on key documents for a sample of 32 projects in four of the priority countries, which were selected for in-depth inquiry in consultation with the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG): Ethiopia, Kosovo, Palestinian Territories, and Uganda. The evaluation took place between July 2020 and February 2021 exclusively using online methods to interact with stakeholders. The evaluators applied elements of a rights-based approach.

Key findings

Relevance

Clarity of ADC's HRBA policy and manual in providing guidance

ADC's policy and manual laid the important foundations which strongly embedded human rights normative principles and set the tone for Austria's commitment to human rights. The policy (2006) was clearly formulated in line with Austria's commitments under international and European human rights standards at the time it was published. The manual (2010) is relatively clear, but it lacks detailed guidance on HRBA implementation, and there is a demand and need among internal stakeholders for more applied knowledge and expertise for implementing human rights in programmes and projects. There are some links between ADC's projects and programmes where human rights-related lessons help inform bilateral political dialogue, but this is not systematically the case. In general, bilateral, multilateral and international political dialogue are more separate from the policy and manual, and there is less integration between dialogue and the other two levels (human rights as a principle; human rights as an intervention area) of HRBA in practice.

Continued relevance of ADC's HRBA

Despite concerns mentioned above, most stakeholders state that the policy and manual are relevant in that they respond to a need for a clear framework for HRBA, and they remain relevant from a human rights technical point of view. However, their practical relevance as resources to help design projects and programmes is not particularly high. Despite (or perhaps because of) the waxing and waning of human rights in development discourses, the need for a HRBA within ADC remains a high priority among all stakeholders. Somewhat outside the scope of the policy and manual, political dialogue is probably the most challenging area where external factors influence HRBA, and bringing in elements that go beyond those covered by ADC projects themselves (e.g. peace and security). While the policy and manual are not specifically designed to support human rights advocacy, several respondents have highlighted the need for Austria to be pro-active in addressing discourses that deny or seek to diminish the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

Alignment of current ADC practice

ADC practice is certainly aligned but there does seem to be a risk of dissipation because of the perception among partners and internal stakeholders that ADC has not championed human rights consistently and overtly. Adaptations in terms of focus have occurred as key issues have gained greater prominence (e.g. gender equality or disability), but in-country practice aligns strongly with the ADC country strategies which remain committed to human rights, some more comprehensively. Evolutions in addressing human rights at country level have been part of the natural growth and strengthening of long-term partners. There is a lack of clarity about what ADC wants to achieve (i.e. on a long-term basis) through all three levels of the HRBA, which contributes to a lack of shared direction and coherence across them.

Resources for HRBA to ensure implementation

There is a strong sense among ADC staff that human and financial resources constrain the implementation of HRBA. There is already a wealth of knowledge and expertise, and a demand among internal and external stakeholders for increased dialogue and consultations on implementing human rights in practice. There is a demand from ADA staff for improving information dissemination processes, sharing good practices and strengthening dialogue and consultation with civil society partners.

Coherence

Shared understanding of HRBA

There is a common understanding between ADC and partners with regard to the conceptual structure of HRBA (i.e. that there are three distinct levels of intervention). However, there is slightly less confidence among both internal and external stakeholders about how ADC communicates its priorities and approaches regarding human rights. Respondents note that HRBA plays a lesser role in some areas (e.g. responsible business support with the private sector) and there is less clarity regarding expectations of human rights outcomes in broader projects (e.g. focused on poverty reduction) compared to programmes related to the rule of law and governance, for example. At country level, there are examples of complementarities between ADC and partner priorities and national and international commitments and goals. And within projects and across portfolios of projects there are good practice examples of complementarities with the objectives of other donors and with other partners, particularly where partners have strong human rights mandates and projects align with national development plans and one or more Sustainable Development Goals. While there is also a shared understanding of the relationship between human rights and political dialogue, this was

among a small subset of ADC stakeholders (rather than partners) as this aspect of work has narrow visibility.

Human rights as an ADC principle (Intervention level 1)

Normative principles were strongly embedded at the programming level, with all projects and programmes found to incorporate normative principles to some extent, with the exception of some private sector projects. Projects with a human rights focus (i.e. objectives) were more likely to comprehensively incorporate the normative principles, compared to ‘human rights mainstreamed’ projects which were more selective in incorporating normative principles. The factors that influenced integration positively included the expertise of partners and ADC’s prioritisation of normative principles. But not all partners may have the requisite expertise or be required to pay the same attention to incorporating human rights principles.

Promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area (Intervention level 2)

Projects and programmes that are human rights-focused interventions, had strong alignment with ADC’s HRBA. This was particularly evident in relation to using a dual strategy to engage both rights holders and duty bearers. Interventions addressed a broad range of human rights areas, and each targeted multiple categories of rights holders, particularly in relation to fulfilling the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.

Human rights as a component of political dialogue (Intervention level 3)

ADC’s political dialogue (and human rights within it) is the least visible component of its HRBA. Nevertheless, there seems to be effective coordination between MFA and ADA in supporting mutual understanding of all diplomatic considerations including human rights, but the latter is not necessarily part of a specific agenda with objectives. There is a diversity of engagement at bilateral and multilateral levels that are relatively undocumented but seemingly effective at maintaining dialogue. The effectiveness at achieving human rights outcomes through bilateral activities is less clear but certainly seems like an opportunity for further inquiry.

Coherence of HRBA with gender equality and via evaluation approaches

There is strong integration of gender equality into ADC, but there is a less strong integration of human rights and gender equality because the latter is prioritised structurally and politically, and in some cases seen as a substitute for the HRBA framework. There is a lack of shared agreement about whether gender equality is part of human rights or it is distinct. Strategic evaluations are currently not required as standard to use normative principles as part of their design and implementation, nor are human rights principles (for example in relation to the participation of rights-holders and duty-bearers) part of the decision-making process for prioritisation.

Conclusions

The wide-ranging evidence of the embeddedness and good practices of HRBA implementation within ADC was not always matched by perceptions, particularly among internal stakeholders. There are high expectations among many internal stakeholders that ADC’s HRBA should be more comprehensive, more consistent and more prominent.

There are mixed messages about the importance and positioning of human rights. On the one hand, Austria’s commitment to human rights in development cooperation is enshrined in law and translates into the country strategies and ADC’s work. And on the other hand, the resources of ADC as a relatively small donor are thinly spread. The mainstreaming of HRBA also leaves ADC with human rights as everyone’s responsibility, which risks human rights becoming ‘no-one’s’ responsibility. ADC’s human rights agenda is perceived as static and

contained within the policy and manual, rather than dynamic and with a direction pushed forward by, for example, an individual or team or working group or senior leadership.

ADC's HRBA foundations have a unique context, building on the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna, and present an opportunity to reinvigorate the HRBA. There is a potential for this political and social capital to diminish without an obvious externally-visible stance on human rights – some stakeholders think this is already happening – and ADC needs to address this in practice as well as manage perceptions.

There are knowledge and resource gaps, and these are keenly felt due to the need for greater knowledge management. Knowledge management gaps seem to be caused by the pressures of compliance and overstretched human resources within ADC. Such knowledge gaps are not minor inconveniences but rather notable missed opportunities to promote learning and exchange of knowledge of practical responses at programmatic level within ADC. It is also a barrier to promoting the coherence of ADC's HRBA. There are also missed opportunities for ADC to promote and champion their partners' work both within Austria and at the international level.

The experiences of partners are mostly very positive about working with ADC in the promotion of normative principles. Key drivers of the relevance and coherence of ADC's HRBA are its partners. From where partners sit, working with ADC is an experience that prioritises human rights, and the compliance and risk management processes that they go through are important but not burdensome efforts. ADC builds long-term relationships with partners that share their human rights objectives and commitments.

There are some more challenging issues about HRBA prioritisation that ADC needs to bear in mind when working with partners, and a major issue is that the lack of space and time for meaningful dialogue on human rights that internal ADC stakeholders experience, is beginning to be felt by partner organisations as well.

The relationship between HRBA and gender equality is at risk of being seen as competitive rather than reinforcing. This is not universal, especially for those partners that work to realise the human rights of women, but when stakeholders (either internal or external) have small numbers of staff, the requirements of meeting gender equality targets (or other considerations) can force prioritisation of focus. This can result in human rights and gender equality being perceived as parallel rather than integrated concepts. Within the framework for strategic evaluations, there are expectations of integrating the HRBA normative principle of participation but there is room to expand on this concept and implementation by widening participation. This would provide a route to incorporating other normative principles more strongly, including accountability.

Recommendations

1. Increase understanding and knowledge among ADA and Coordination Office programme staff regarding how HRBA is implemented in practice by drawing on the existing wealth of knowledge and expertise both internally and through partners.
2. Strengthen and make more visible the alignment between policy dialogue and interventions (projects and programmes).
3. Increase generation and access to a diverse range and state-of-the art formats of tools, guidance and resources for ADA and Coordination Office programme staff to implement normative principles and technical human rights interventions.

4. Create a visible direction and focal point for human rights that both promotes and brings together the combined levels of ADC's HRBA: policy dialogue, normative principles and human rights interventions.
5. Promote greater access to technical advice and create space for programme managers and partners to engage with that technical advice to achieve a more systematic investment and commitment to integrating HRBA into all projects.
6. Use the opportunity of this evaluation to engage with a wider range of internal and external stakeholders regarding ADC's HRBA.

1. Introduction

1.1. About the HRBA within Austrian Development Cooperation

1. Austria holds a unique history among development partners, marked by its long record of relative neutrality during the Cold War and by its hosting of the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights.¹ Its long-standing commitment to human rights reaches back to its membership of the United Nations from 1955. Austria has engaged with the UN human rights architecture and mechanisms, often in leadership roles, up until and including the present,² holding the 2020 presidency of the Human Rights Council.³ Austria participates in the Universal Periodic Review process, through which its third cycle report was reviewed on 22 January 2021.⁴ Against this international backdrop, Austria has sought to embed a human rights-based approach throughout its development cooperation. The Austrian Development Cooperation Act defines the promotion of human rights as a fundamental objective of ADC.⁵ Austrian Development Cooperation refers specifically to the bilateral development cooperation that both the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) are responsible for in priority countries, territories, and regions. The primary goal of the Austrian Development Cooperation is to combat poverty, strengthen peace and preserve the environment.⁶ The human rights-based approach is one of the key guiding principles emphasised in the Austrian Development Policy Three-Year Programmes for 2016–2018 and 2019–2021.⁷
2. In this report, we are focusing on the way in which country strategies, development cooperation programmes and individual projects are designed and supported by ADC. It is important to note that the interventions and approaches discussed in this report do not represent the totality of Austria's input as a development partner. For example, this report

¹ Followed by the Vienna+20 and Vienna+25 high level expert conferences.

² Austria was elected as a member of the Human Rights Council by the UN General Assembly (for three-and-a-half years from June 2011 to December 2014), and has chaired the Human Security Network twice in 2013–2014 and 2002–2003. From 2004–2010 Austrian representative, Manfred Nowak, was appointed as UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and Austrian Helga Konrad was appointed as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Special Representative on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings from 2004–2006. Since 1979 Austria has been home to 17 UN agencies and programmes promoting international cooperation, including on human rights priorities, at the Vienna International Centre. Austria also continues to host the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, founded in 2007.

³ Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations Office at Geneva is the President of the Human Rights Council, 14th Cycle (2020).

⁴ The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. Source:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx>

⁵ Federal Act on Development Cooperation (2002), including its Amendment (2003).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ BMEIA (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs),

https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/3_JP/Englisch/3JP_2019-2021_EN.pdf

does not address the involvement of Austria in development cooperation carried out by multilateral institutions such as UN agencies and development banks, nor does it address Austria's input in European Union (EU) development cooperation.

3. This report also does not touch upon international or regional human rights mechanisms such as UN treaty bodies, international courts, regional institutions such as the African Union or the Organisation of American States, even though these play a major role in monitoring human rights around the world. It also leaves aside the question of each country's implementation of its international commitments and the mechanisms that may be in place to that effect – ranging from the justice sector to national human rights institutions and other relevant government agencies. This is because Austria's HRBA is not in and of itself a human rights mechanism, it is (more modestly and more realistically) a process whereby the part of bilateral development cooperation that is managed by ADC is seeking to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in partner countries.
4. Two key guiding documents set out the human rights-based approach: the ADC Human Rights Policy document (2006);⁸ and ADA's Human Rights Manual (2010).⁹ The policy document places human rights within its holistic understanding of development, and infers from international and regional instruments and goals the three levels of intervention that comprise ADC's human rights-based approach:
 - **Human rights as an ADC principle (integration of a human rights perspective)** – as a normative principle, as a programming principle and as an instrument for evaluating interventions;
 - **Promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area** – to support programmes or projects focusing on human rights whose main aim is to promote one or more human rights or disadvantaged groups; and
 - **Human rights as a component of political dialogue** – as part of the programme process and in a multilateral context.
5. The Human Rights Manual provides greater conceptual and technical detail and is accompanied by in-depth focus papers for a range of topics. Several of these have been updated in 2020 or are in the process of being revised.¹⁰

⁸ Human rights policy document, 2006.

⁹ Human Rights Manual, ADA, 2010.

¹⁰ ADA Strategies for Implementation and Focus Papers can be found here:

<https://www.entwicklung.at/en/media-centre/publications/strategies-for-implementing-focus-papers>

1.2. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

1.2.1. Evaluation purpose and objective

6. The evaluation's two purposes were both forward-looking and concerned with furthering and advancing ADC's HRBA. As described in the Terms of Reference the purposes of the evaluation were:
 - (1) To obtain evidence about the timeliness and adequacy of ADC's human rights-based approach and in doing so, to identify ways to further develop its application;
 - (2) To identify needs for further guidance and consequently to either inform a review of existing conceptual documents or the development of alternative guiding documents aimed at advancing ADC's HRBA.
7. A further task for the evaluation was to provide some insights into the integration of the HRBA in the planning and implementation of strategic evaluations.
8. The evaluation applied a human rights-based approach, in particular by incorporating principles and methodologies developed since the 2003 UN Common Understanding on HRBA to Development Cooperation, taking into account the guidance on human rights indicators developed in 2012 by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). Annex 4 provides further details of the HRBA of the evaluation.
9. The Terms of Reference identified three main objectives of the evaluation as follows:
 - To assess the characteristics of ADC's human rights-based approach and its different facets, its relevance and coherence in ADC's strategic approaches, in the manner situations are analytically screened and in ADC's programming and implementation;
 - To assess the understanding and viewpoints around HRBA within ADC and its implementing partners and how it is integrated into thematic approaches; and
 - To identify good practice, lessons learnt and potential areas for improvement from ADC's experience with implementing the HRBA to date.

1.2.2. Evaluation audience

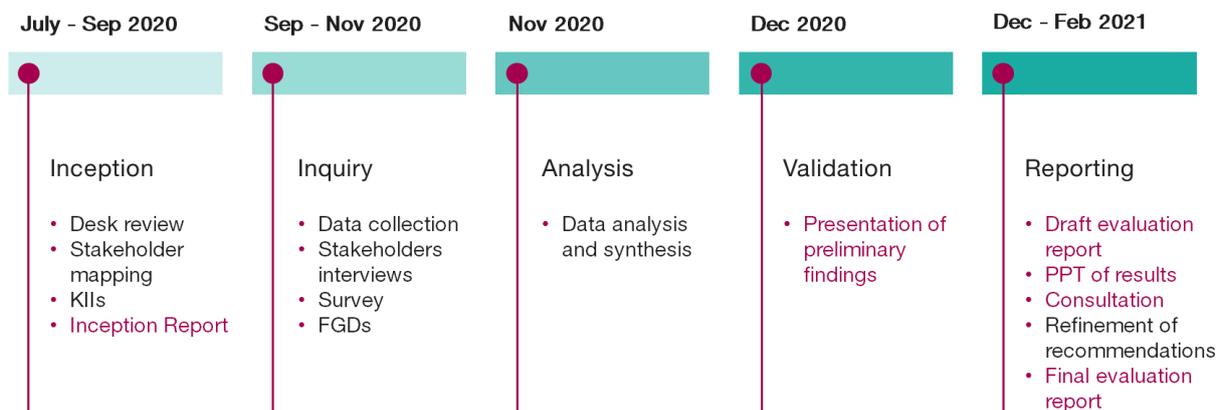
10. The audience of the evaluation, namely the primary users, are senior management at ADA and MFA, in particular the Development Cooperation Directorate, departments within ADA responsible for themes and quality, civil society, business, countries and regions, and both MFA and ADA representatives for the 11 priority countries that ADC engages with. Secondary audiences are civil society in Austria and both civil society and government partners in the 11 priority countries.

1.2.3. Scope

11. The temporal scope is 2016–2020, effectively a five-year period from the start of the prior Three-Year Programme 2016–2018¹¹ to the present, approximately halfway through the current Three-Year Programme 2019–2021.¹² In practice, the evaluation asked participants to reflect back further to when the 2006 Human Rights Policy and 2010 Human Rights Manual were introduced in order to help place the prior five years in context.
12. ADC’s three strategic levels of intervention are within the evaluation scope: human rights as a principle; promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area; and human rights as a component of political dialogue. The criteria narrowed the scope to focus on the relevance and coherence of HRBA within ADC. Effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability were not included.
13. The evaluation reflected on ADC’s gender approach in certain areas (as reflected in the evaluation questions), although an in-depth analysis of ADC’s approach to gender equality was outside the remit of the ToR.

1.2.4. Evaluation timeline

Figure 1: Evaluation timeline according to phases and deliverables



1.2.5. Evaluation questions

14. Nine key evaluation questions were articulated in the Terms of Reference aligned to the two evaluation criteria of relevance and coherence. The evaluation questions are addressed individually in the findings section.

¹¹ ADC, Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2016–2018, published in 2015 and updated in 2017.

¹² ADC, Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2019–2021, published in 2018.

2. Methodology

2.1. Evaluation design and approach

2.1.1. Methodological approach

15. This strategic evaluation followed a mixed-methods, non-experimental approach. The evaluation matrix (Annex 1) shows the key methods that were applied to each of the evaluation questions and are summarised in the next section. The key methods and data sources were informed by an analysis of each of the questions.
16. The evaluation applied a human rights-based approach, in particular by incorporating principles and methodologies developed since the 2003 UN Common Understanding on HRBA to Development Cooperation, taking into account the guidance on human rights indicators developed in 2012 by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR). Annex 4 provides further details of the HRBA of the evaluation.
17. All 11 of ADC’s priority countries were included in the evaluation through key informant interviews with ADA coordination office representatives and ambassadors. External stakeholders, such as partner organisations and governments, were invited to participate in the survey and/or interviews and focus group discussions.
18. Among the priority countries, four were selected for in-depth inquiry in consultation with the ERG: Ethiopia, Kosovo, Palestine, and Uganda. The purpose of selecting four of the priority countries was to support the analysis of how the three HRBA intervention areas interact, and inquire deeper into the projects and each country strategy. For each country, a sample of projects were selected, and their project documentation was analysed using thematic qualitative comparative analysis (see section 2.1.4 Sampling approach). Table 2 below shows the different emphases on the three levels of HRBA in relation to all 11 priority countries and the four selected for in-depth analysis.
19. Ethiopia and Uganda were selected since their country strategies have a clear set of human rights objectives, allowing the evaluation to inquire across all three ADC levels of HRBA intervention, and with particular focus on HRBA-specific projects and programmes. Kosovo was included because there are HRBA-focused elements to the country strategy but there are broader areas of focus as well, allowing the evaluation to again inquire across all three levels of HRBA intervention. Palestine was included because it presents a unique example of ADC’s cooperation in a febrile and rapidly changing context. This approach also helped to retrieve and conduct in-depth analysis information with regard to projects/programmes with focus on promotion/protection of human rights, as otherwise it is difficult to determine these projects from the system.

Table 1: Austrian Development Cooperation, HRBA components according to countries

ADC – HRBA	All 11 countries	4 in-depth countries
Human rights as an ADC principle	Ongoing initiatives, programming, agreements, partnerships, strategic evaluations	Ongoing initiatives, programming, agreements, partnerships, strategic evaluations, country strategies

		Projects and programmes that are <u>not</u> human rights-focused (x4 per country)
Promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area		Projects and programmes that <u>are</u> human rights-focused (x4 per country)
Human rights as a component of political dialogue	Formal and informal processes, partnerships and activities	Formal and informal processes, partnerships and activities

2.1.2. Data collection and analysis tools

20. The qualitative data collection was conducted through document analysis, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative data was collected through a perception-based survey.

Document review

21. The document review consisted of a structured analysis of the relevant documentation received from ADC and other stakeholders (Annex 6 – Bibliography), including in-depth review of project documents from the sample of 32 projects, which formed the basis for thematic content analysis using MAXDQA. The qualitative content analysis mapped in much more depth the extent to which HRBA concepts were present in the key documents (i.e. the project concept note, project logframe, and final report and evaluations, where available). See the section on sampling (2.1.4) and paragraphs 33-36 below which explain the data analysis.

Key informant interviews

22. These consisted of semi-structured interviews with 56 (33 female and 23 male) respondents representing a range of stakeholders, including ADC staff and managers (including coordination offices), partners and others. The interviews took into account each stakeholder's particular area of work, level of knowledge and/or experience of HRBA, and other specificities. The evaluators also ensured that interviewees were given opportunities to raise issues of their choice, even if not covered in the interview guide.

Focus group discussions

23. Two focus group discussions were facilitated with five ADC partners in Austria and four ADC partners in Ethiopia, where participants shared their experience related to HRBA as implemented by ADC. ADC partners from Kosovo, Palestine and Uganda were also invited to participate in group discussions, but due to challenges in being available at the same time, they were instead invited to participate in individual interviews, and in the survey. The discussions sought to understand participants' perspectives of ADC's HRBA across all intervention levels, and participants' individual accounts of any change influenced by ADC's approach using the simplified Most Significant Change (MSC) approach to focus group discussions.

Perception-based survey

24. A perception-based survey with both closed questions (for quantitative analysis) and open questions (for qualitative analysis) was administered among 134 respondents. An exact response rate is not available because the invitations to participate were sent via ADA staff members, for example, the Civil Society Unit forwarded the invitation to Austria-based

organisations, while ADA Coordination Offices forwarded invitations to in-country partners. The survey was not representative but rather an opportunity to garner views from a wider range of participants than could be interviewed. Information provided was not verifiable, and hence is based on perceptions. The added value of the proposed survey was to obtain the views of various sets of stakeholders who might not otherwise be heard through interviews or focus group meetings. Steps were taken to avoid double counting of opinions through how questions were posed. For example, some survey questions mirrored interview questions, but qualitative responses were gained through the latter and multiple choice/Likert scales were used in the former. This allowed corroboration between qualitative and quantitative responses.

Data analysis

25. The analysis process for document review, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions included a mix of manual pattern identification and verification, and thematic analysis using an evidence matrix. This matrix allowed the evaluation team to map the data against the evaluation questions to identify the strength of the evidence (i.e. the number and different types of sources) as well as the content of the evidence which is analysed qualitatively. Compiling the evidence for each evaluation question allowed us to analyse the extent to which there are strong convergences or divergences in stakeholder perspectives, and (whether from interviews or FGDs) if these align with documentary evidence.
26. As mentioned above, the document review included a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a sample of ADC projects and programmes, undertaken using analysis software MAXQDA. The key documents that were processed in the content analysis included project concept notes, project proposals, project logframes, theory of change, environmental, gender and social impact management (EGSIM) assessments, final and/or progress reports and evaluation reports where available. The quantitative analysis consisted of a key word search across all available documents for each project to rapidly identify the extent to which specific HRBA concepts were explicitly cited. This qualitative analysis identified where HRBA principles or interventions were addressed, whether the typical key words for normative principles were cited. Thematic categorisation and key word categorisation for quantitative comparisons was applied across sources to identify HRBA in the planning, design and implementation phase. The next level included analysis of the findings against projects' sectorial attribution within each country and country context. Based on these various levels of analysis, projects were categorised across four categories: HRBA fully mainstreamed, HRBA implicit or partly mainstreamed, HRBA implicit but not mainstreamed and HRBA not mainstreamed.
27. Quantitative data from the perception-based survey was analysed through survey-monkey and subsequently in Excel by filtering survey results' descriptive analysis and cross-tabulation.

Triangulation and verification

28. Triangulation across the data sources and methods supported analysis of findings for each of the evaluation questions. For example, the survey (method) was designed to provide triangulation for a selection of the evaluation question and, where appropriate, questions used for the semi-structured interviews were mirrored in the survey. The qualitative content analysis was used to corroborate understandings gained from the key informant interviews and the review of key documents such as the human rights policy and manual, country strategies and wider materials generated by ADC.
29. The sequencing of data collection and analysis of the data collection methods allowed the evaluation process to take an iterative approach and incorporate feedback loops for cross-

checking, clarifying, triangulating and validating findings. For example, this approach permitted greater specificity in formulating the survey questions to test whether qualitative findings could be corroborated or expanded on by a different group of respondents. Similarly, direct follow-up questions and inquiries were made to stakeholders to seek clarifications for unclear findings.

2.1.3. Evaluation participants

30. A total of 136 individuals (internal and external to ADA and MFA) participated in the evaluation. The Evaluation Unit provided an initial list of potential evaluation participants that was added to over the course of the evaluation through recommendations by participants or at the suggestion of the evaluation team.

Table 2: Evaluation participants, disaggregated by data collection method

Method	F	M	Undisclosed	Subtotal
Semi-structured interviews	34	23		57
Written submission	1			1
Focus Group Discussions (x2)	6	3		9
Survey	37	30	2	69
Subtotal	78	56	2	136
Total	136			

31. Participants who took part in the interviews and focus group discussions included 32 ADA staff (24 staff from the headquarters in Vienna, 9 from ADA Coordination Offices), as well as 3 former ADA staff. 16 participants were from MFA, of which 12 were MFA ambassadors, appointed to ADC's priority countries or Austrian permanent representations to the EU and the UN. The sample included one participant from the Ministry of Defence.
32. Interviews and focus group discussion were carried out with implementing partners; this included representatives from six implementing partners in Ethiopia, six partners in Kosovo, and one implementing government partner in Palestine. Five evaluation participants were representatives of Austrian CSOs, and two participants were representatives of the Austrian private sector.

2.1.4. Sampling approach

33. The more in-depth data collection in Ethiopia, Kosovo, Palestine and Uganda included targeting partners for interviews or focus group discussions, and conducting quantitative and qualitative content analysis on a sample of projects (approximately eight in each country).
34. Table 2 above shows how each of the three components of ADC's HRBA was included in the evaluation according to the engagement across all 11 priority countries and the 4 countries selected for further in-depth inquiry.
35. Among the four selected countries, a range of sectors were included in the country strategies and project implementation (see Table 3), and the sampling of projects to review in detail aimed to incorporate relevant examples.

Table 3: Sectoral coverage across the four selected countries

Ethiopia	Uganda	Kosovo	Palestine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Security and Sustainable Resource Management • Basic Services at Local Level • Democratisation / Good Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Supply and Sanitation • Rule of Law, Justice and Peacebuilding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Private Sector Development • Good Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Health • Humanitarian Aid • Contribution to Multi-donor Programmes for Palestinians in West Bank

2.2. Limitations, risks and mitigation measures

36. When planning the evaluation, a number of possible challenges were identified. The more detailed descriptions and considerations are included in Annex 3. Those mentioned here are issues that required responses during the evaluation process.
37. Focus group discussions: The facilitation of FGDs using online software evened out participation as it is more typical for respondents to take turns in talking or answering questions, particularly in order to manage delays in sound transmission. This however creates its own limitations in terms of restricting more free-flowing and spontaneous conversations. This was managed through taking more time to allow participants to provide their reviews and invite them to respond to points that others had made.
38. Further limitations or constraints faced by the evaluation were relatively minor but are mentioned here. In particular, a key constraint for a proportion of stakeholders both internal and external to ADC related to their availability to engage with the evaluation process. The pressures of existing priorities and responsibilities, plus the changed working patterns due to COVID-19 meant that schedules were disrupted. This, for example, affected the extent to which the evaluation could engage certain cohorts of ADC partners in focus groups discussions. However, the survey was able to mitigate where the schedules of individuals were not conducive to their participation in interviews or FGDs.
39. The evaluation methodology was implemented largely according to the intended approach, with two slight deviations. The original plan included three FGDs, two of which were geographically organised (for civil society organisations in Vienna and for partner organisations in Ethiopia) and these took place. The third FGD was intended to be thematically organised by inviting individuals from partner organisations in one of the countries, all of whom had attended human rights training delivered by ADA. In practice, however, the training events that had taken place were not recent, so this thematic group was dropped. The possibility of facilitating FGDs for other geographically focused partners (e.g. in Palestine or in Uganda) was also dropped due to the lack of availability of participants. Instead, stakeholders were invited to participate in interviews and/or the survey. The timing of the data collection deviated slightly from the original plan, whereby the sequencing changed, with survey and content analysis taking place towards the end of the data collection. This meant the results of both, although followed up where needed, were not used systematically to inform the interviews which took place over the entire course of the data collection period. However, advantageously, the sequencing of the survey in particular took place when a considerable

number of interviews had been conducted, which allowed the survey instrument to be tailored based on the preliminary findings from the interviews.

2.3. Quality standards and ethical considerations

40. The evaluation process engaged with ADA's processes for quality assurance, particularly in relation to review of the draft Inception Report and the draft Evaluation Report by the Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Reference Group. The evaluation drew on Austria's national evaluation standards¹³ and OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance for evaluation quality, for example the draft structure of the Inception Report and the Evaluation Report was based on good practices from UN agencies and development partner evaluation quality assurance standards.
41. The evaluation observed international principles and standards on ethics in evaluation.¹⁴ In particular, the evaluation team upheld the UN Evaluation Group norms of credibility through independence, impartiality and rigorous methodology. The principles of transparency were promoted within the approach while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of evaluation participants. The principle of 'do no harm' was adhered to.¹⁵
42. The evaluation methodology required primary data collection, exclusively with individuals participating in a professional capacity. This means that the standards of data and individual protections applied, including seeking informed (and ongoing) consent.¹⁶

2.4. Mainstreaming HRBA to the evaluation

43. The strategy for implementing human rights in programming is called HRBA, based on the UN definition of this concept.¹⁷ Evaluation being an integral part of programming, it is incumbent on the process to incorporate a rights-based approach, just as projects and programmes themselves should mainstream HRBA. Thus, mainstreaming HRBA to evaluation includes certain elements across the various phases of the evaluation process.
44. The evaluation was able to implement some normative principles (detailed below) but HRBA was not able to be fully implemented. For example, the evaluation did not consult rights holders as part of the data collection due to time and resource constraints and restrictions on

¹³ Evaluation Policy of the Austrian Development Cooperation, 2019.

¹⁴ UN Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, UNEG, March 2008; UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System, 2007; DFID Ethics Principles for Research and Evaluation, 2011; Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics Principles, 2012.

¹⁵ IOD PARC's ethical code contains an ethical framework for all its work including primary data collection with children and disadvantaged communities.

¹⁶ All interview and FGD participants were provided with a two-page summary of the evaluation outlining its purpose, objectives and timeline. Survey participants were provided with similar information as part of the introduction page to the survey questions. All participants were provided with the contact details of the evaluation team members and the evaluation manager at ADA. Interview participants and FGD participants were alerted to the contact details and informed about the ongoing nature of consent meaning they could contact the evaluation team at any time during the process to either add or retract information, or withdraw entirely.

¹⁷ Stamford Inter-agency Workshop Report "The Second Interagency Workshop on Implementing a Human Rights-based Approach in the Context of UN Reform", 5–7 May 2003.

travel due to COVID-19. Neither rights holders nor government or civil society partners were part of the decision to conduct the evaluation nor did they participate in the evaluation's governance mechanism (i.e. the reference group).

45. During the inception phase the process incorporated participative approaches by engaging with stakeholders, undertaking a rights-based initial desk review, and incorporating rights-based considerations into the evaluation matrix. During the data-collection phase the rights-based approach was implemented through the awareness on positionality of the evaluators, ensuring confidentiality and consent processes, and creating safe spaces for respondents to speak openly. At the analysis stage, the evaluators reviewed respondents' understanding of human rights and gender equality.

3. Evaluation findings

3.1. Relevance

EQ1 Clarity of the HRBA policy and manual

EQ1. How clearly and specifically were the ADC policy document of 2006 on human rights and the Human Rights Manual of 2010 formulated, in order to provide guidance for programmers and implementers given the three strategic intervention levels for the integration of human rights?

Key findings

- 1.1 ADC's policy and manual laid the important foundations which strongly embedded human rights normative principles and set the tone for Austria's commitment to human rights.
- 1.2 The commitment of ADC to human rights as an intervention is clear, but internal stakeholders want more knowledge and expertise in order to apply more sophisticated and context specific responses in programmes and projects.
- 1.3 Political dialogue seems to be generally separate from the policy and manual, and less integrated with the other two levels in practice.

The policy and manual

- 46. The policy document and human rights manual clearly set out Austria's commitments under the human rights standards it had ratified at that time, and more generally with regard to the body of international and European conventions and agreements to which Austria is a party.
- 47. The policy translates the Law on Austrian Development Cooperation clearly; inevitably it has some outdated references, and new human rights instruments have been introduced since the policy was published in 2006. Nevertheless, it continued to serve its purpose as setting out ADC's HRBA as a priority.
- 48. The manual goes into much more detail about the context and history of human rights, explaining some of the major technical components. This is not an easy task and the Manual does a good job. It is much longer than the policy, and similarly can only provide a certain amount of information without becoming an encyclopaedia and inaccessible. Indeed, while only 55 per cent of survey respondents had read ADC's policy, only 41 per cent had read the manual (See Survey Q15 and Q16 in the Annex).

The purpose of the policy and the manual

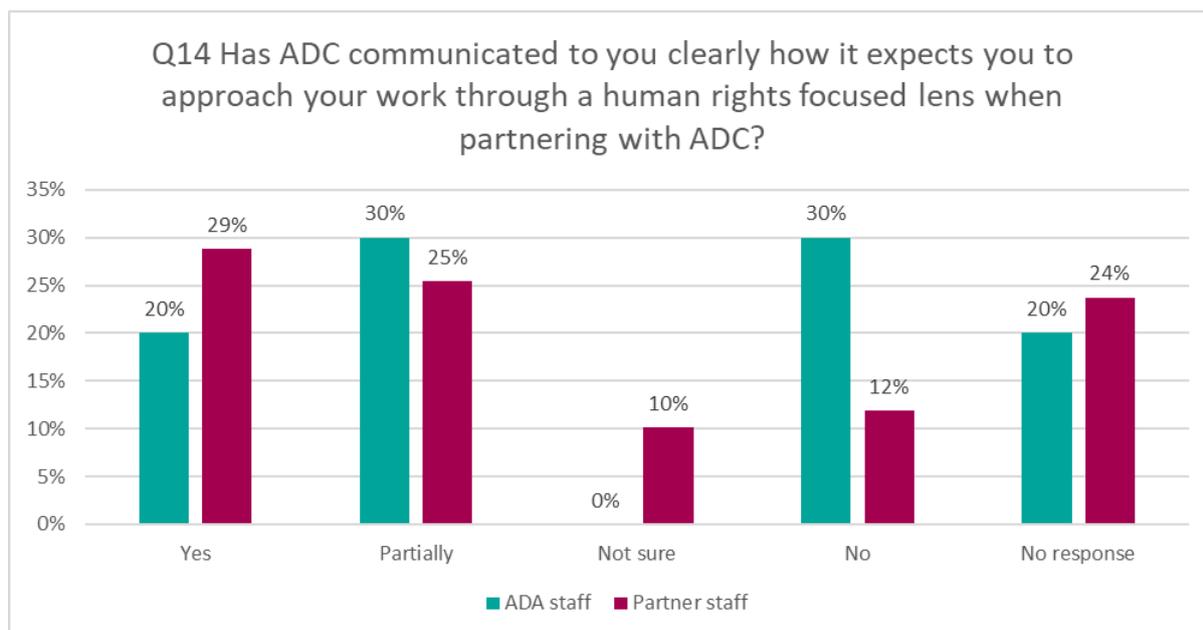
- 49. It is fair to say, however, that both the policy and the manual served very specific purposes which have had long-lasting impact on ADC's practice and its engagement with partners. These two documents 'manifested' the legal commitment in law into recognisable policy and practical commitments, which ADC has taken very seriously ever since.
- 50. The country strategies reference the law itself, and all country strategies make reference to human rights at least once, and two explicitly cite HRBA. Nine of the ten available country

strategies place an emphasis on a range of principles, often related to human rights but just as frequently related to development cooperation principles such as (country) ownership and (donor) harmonisation. Partners are mostly very aware of ADC's commitment to human rights.

51. How ADC stakeholders (internal and external) understand the conceptualisation of the three levels of HRBA is now clearer than the way it is presented in the manual. The manual defined 'human rights as a principle' as being both normative principles and human rights as a 'component' to be introduced into programming. The manual's definition of human rights as an intervention sector refers to a project or programme that supports the 'human rights sector'. It then expands the definition to identify (non-human rights sector) projects that contribute to the realisation of human rights, for example an education project that is clearly based on the normative principles. This could imply that if all projects incorporate the normative principles, then by this definition they could all be categorised as human rights interventions. The common understanding among stakeholders currently is that 'human rights as a principle' means normative principles should be mainstreamed into the way in which (all) projects are implemented regardless of their objectives. Stakeholders tend to agree with the policy's opening statement that 'human rights interventions' are "programmes and projects whose main aim is the implementation of one or more human rights [and] will continue to be promoted".¹⁸
52. The purpose of the policy and manual in laying the foundations of ADC's HRBA has been well served, but there are limitations to what further they can achieve. For example, they are not enough to rely on communicating ADC's HRBA comprehensively to either staff or partners. The survey indicated that 60 per cent of ADA staff respondents but only 33 per cent of partner staff respondents believed they had a clear understanding of what ADC is aiming to achieve through its HRBA (Survey Q12 and Q13).
53. Only 1 in 5 ADA staff and less than a third of partners who participated in the survey thought that ADC had communicated clearly how it expects them to approach their work through a human rights focussed lens (Survey Q14) (Figure 3). Some ADA staff reported receiving relatively comprehensive inductions into ADC's HRBA when they joined the organisation, while others reported that they had not been provided with any documentation such as the policy and the manual.
54. Even where staff had become familiar with ADC's documentation, some observed that the manual on its own was insufficient to provide them with the knowledge of exactly how to go about implementing all aspects of human rights. Similarly, partners reported different levels of engagement with ADC regarding its expectations: some very thorough and some very little. Across all stakeholders, the implementation of normative principles appears to be much clearer compared to human rights as an intervention area. Stakeholders, particularly internally to ADC, reported a need for more detailed and technical understanding across a broad range of human rights specialisms and in multiple country contexts.

¹⁸ ADC Human Rights Policy, 2006, p. 12.

Figure 2: Survey results: respondents' perspectives on how clearly ADC has communicated its expectations regarding human rights to partners



55. Of all the intervention levels of ADC’s HRBA, the political dialogue element is the least connected to the policy. This is discussed in more detail in evaluation questions (EQs) 3 and 8.

Strengthening the clarity and depth of understanding of ADC’s HRBA

56. While the policy and manual could be brought more up to date and provide some greater clarity on HRBA and its components, ADA stakeholders particularly expressed a desire for additional advice to personnel charged with developing country and thematic strategies and with designing, implementing and monitoring programmes and projects. Preferences were for achieving this through other means than revising the manual, for example by developing dedicated online training modules and issue papers – and by further disseminating information about good practices in this field.

EQ2 Current relevance of ADC's HRBA

EQ2. To what extent has the HRBA, as outlined in the policy and manual and as applied at the three intervention levels, remained relevant and appropriate to developments/discourses in the field of a human rights-based approach to development?

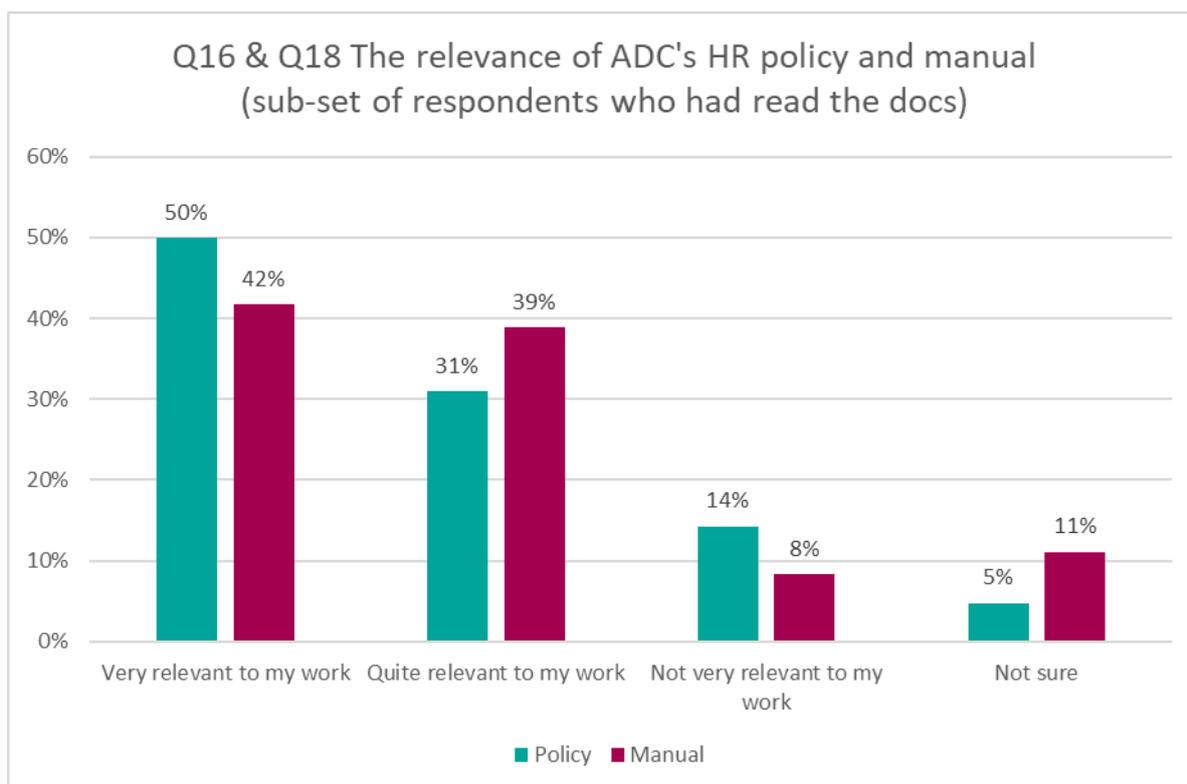
Key findings

- 2.1 The policy and manual are relevant in that they respond to a need for a clear framework for HRBA, and they remain relevant from a human rights technical point of view. The gap is felt in the limitations of either a manual or a policy to equip ADC stakeholders with the practical and in-depth knowledge that some seek.
- 2.2 Despite the waxing and waning of human rights in development discourses, the need for a HRBA within ADC remains a high priority among all stakeholders.
- 2.3 Political dialogue is probably the most challenging area where external factors influence HRBA, bringing in elements that go beyond those covered by ADA projects themselves (e.g. peace and security). This is more challenging but nonetheless important to track and monitor to inform ADC's overall interactions with human rights discourses and developments.

The continued relevance of the policy and manual

- 57. There was a perception among most ADC stakeholders interviewed and surveyed that the purpose of and need for a human rights-based approach had not changed greatly over time: HRBA was appropriate and necessary as a policy. But there was an interesting contrast: the survey did not reflect a resounding endorsement of the relevance of either the policy or the manual. As mentioned above, just over half of the survey respondents had read the policy and just under half had read the manual. And within these subsets, among the respondents who had read the policy or the manual, 50 per cent found the policy to be 'very' relevant to their work, and less than half (42 per cent) found the manual to be 'very' relevant. A further proportion of respondents found the documents 'quite' relevant (Figure 3).
- 58. These apparently tepid levels of support for HRBA stood in sharp contrast to the strength of commitment and spirited support for human rights expressed by the diplomats, ADA managers and advisors interviewed, and by staff in Coordination Offices. Interviews indicate that this discordance reflects a sense that the policy and manual are valid conceptually, but do not offer the kind of practical, hands-on advice that staff – particularly those designing projects and monitoring their implementation – might feel is relevant *to their work*. A further sign that the manual (more than the policy) probably did not meet all the expectations of staff is that some of them reported that they would appreciate more guidance and training on practical human rights approaches. An interviewee noted, for example that, while the manual broaches the issue of disability and correctly connects it to the need to fight discrimination, it does not address the 'how', nor does it direct the reader to examples of successful interventions in this field.

Figure 3: Survey results: respondents' perceptions of the relevance of ADC's human rights policy and manual



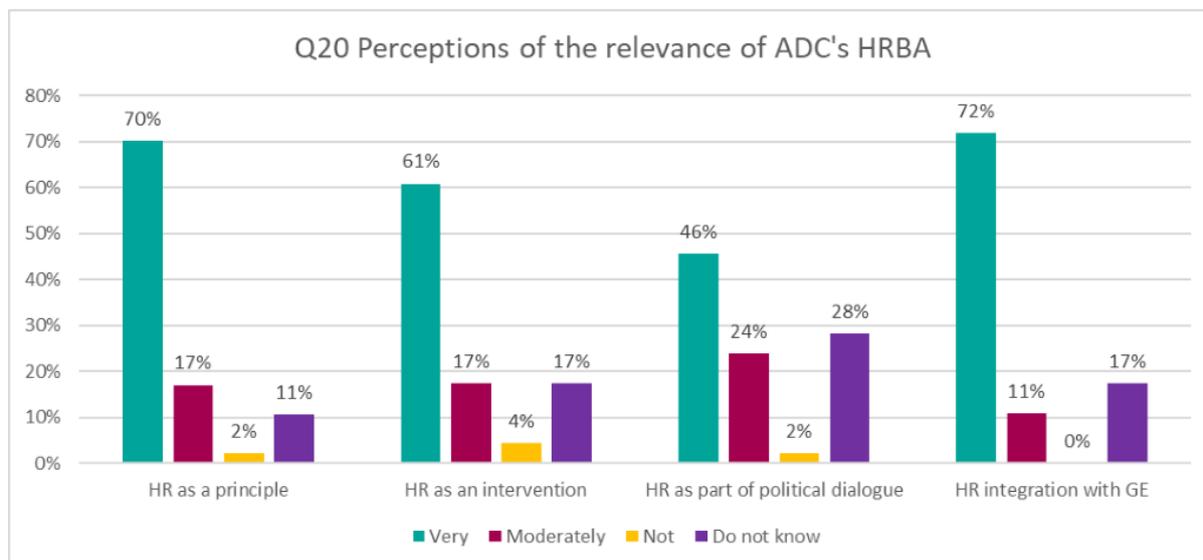
59. It would be unfair, based on these responses, to blame the manual as such. No manual can incorporate all the practical information that staff designing projects with a human rights dimension might be seeking, and manuals are not the only way to strengthen knowledge and communicate ADC's HRBA. Evaluation Question 4 considers resources for implementing the HRBA in more detail.

The continued relevance of ADC's HRBA

60. Taking a broader view of ADC's HRBA, not solely focused on the policy and manual, there were very strong views among ADC stakeholders of the importance of the human rights-based approach. This was similarly reflected in a specific question in the survey regarding how relevant respondents viewed the three levels of intervention, and the integration of human rights with gender equality. Among survey respondents, 70 per cent viewed ADC's work on human rights as a principle as 'very relevant'; 61 per cent said ADC's work on human rights-focused interventions was 'very' relevant; and 46 per cent said that ADC's work on human rights as part of political dialogue was 'very' relevant (Figure 4). Despite this apparent unanimity, interviews show that stakeholders are sometimes uncertain about the relevance of HRBA in relation to socioeconomic projects (e.g. poverty reduction, or agriculture, or water), where HRBA may be seen as of less central importance than in, say, projects on access to justice. Similar uncertainties also appear in relation to views of HRBA as part of political dialogue: many interviewees confess a lack of familiarity with the way political dialogue is conducted.

61. At the level of political dialogue this was much less documented, especially within countries, but the principle of consultation and partner-led development seemed very present in the process that MFA facilitates to develop each country strategy. This means that the country strategies are agreed with government partners in order to ensure their relevance to the national contexts.

Figure 4: Survey results: perceptions of the relevance of ADC's HRBA across the three levels of intervention and the integration of human rights with gender equality



62. There were views among civil society organisations and some coordination offices in-country regarding the potential for the country strategy development process to build on its existing consultation processes and incorporate wider or more in-depth dialogue with civil society organisations in-country. This reflected a desire for increased engagement between partners and ADC actors to connect project implementation and policy dialogue. In practice, the specific process of the development of country strategies might not be the most appropriate vehicle for such dialogue, particularly if government and civil society partners engage in robust discussion or disagree on certain issues. The qualitative feedback from survey respondents also mentioned the need for ADC to facilitate greater coordination, coherence and collaboration in partner countries with both civil society and other development partners. For some this would be a natural part of advocacy agendas and political dialogue on the part of ADC in a convenor role. This is where the Coordination Offices can have a pivotal role in linking the interventions that ADC supports, with the priorities of ADC, and the in-country relationships with civil society, development partners and the government.
63. Feedback from diplomats and other ADC stakeholders who engage with or give input into national level dialogue raised issues (e.g. peace and security) that go beyond those mentioned in the Country Strategies or that are part of projects and programmes. This demonstrates that political dialogue stays relevant by engaging in contemporary and emerging issues. It also means, however, that political dialogue on emerging issues effectively operates in a related but somewhat parallel way to the planned strategies and implementation of projects, and that the outcomes of political dialogue are not seen as having an impact on strategies and projects.
64. Several interviewees have also highlighted the need for Austria to contribute to the 'pushback against the pushback' – that is, to the views expressed or implicitly supported by some countries, including in multilateral settings, that seek to deny the universality and indivisibility of human rights. It is not the intended role of the HRBA policy to address this challenge, and at its time of writing there was seemingly wider support for human rights. However, the growing questioning of human rights constitutes a strategic risk for Austria and other like-minded countries, which goes beyond development cooperation and therefore needs to be addressed at the political level. The policy and manual are obviously not, in and of themselves, designed

for advocacy, but interviews show that there is a role for ADC to play in support of Austria's wider policy advocacy on human rights.

EQ3 Alignment of current practice

EQ3. To what extent is current ADC practice aligned with the HRBA as outlined in the policy and manual?

Has it been adapted/changed over time, and if so, how?

What developments were conducive to adaptations of the original concepts?

Key findings

- 3.1 Practice is relatively well aligned but HRBA seems at risk of dissipation because of the lack of perception that ADC has championed human rights externally consistently and overtly.
- 3.2 The focus of human rights has adapted as key issues have gained greater prominence (e.g. gender equality or disability), but practice in-country aligns strongly with the Country Strategies, many of which remain committed to human rights
- 3.3 There is a lack of clarity about what ADC wants to achieve (i.e. on a long-term basis) through all three levels of the HRBA, although greater coherence would contribute to linking them more closely.

Adaptations in focus rather than approach

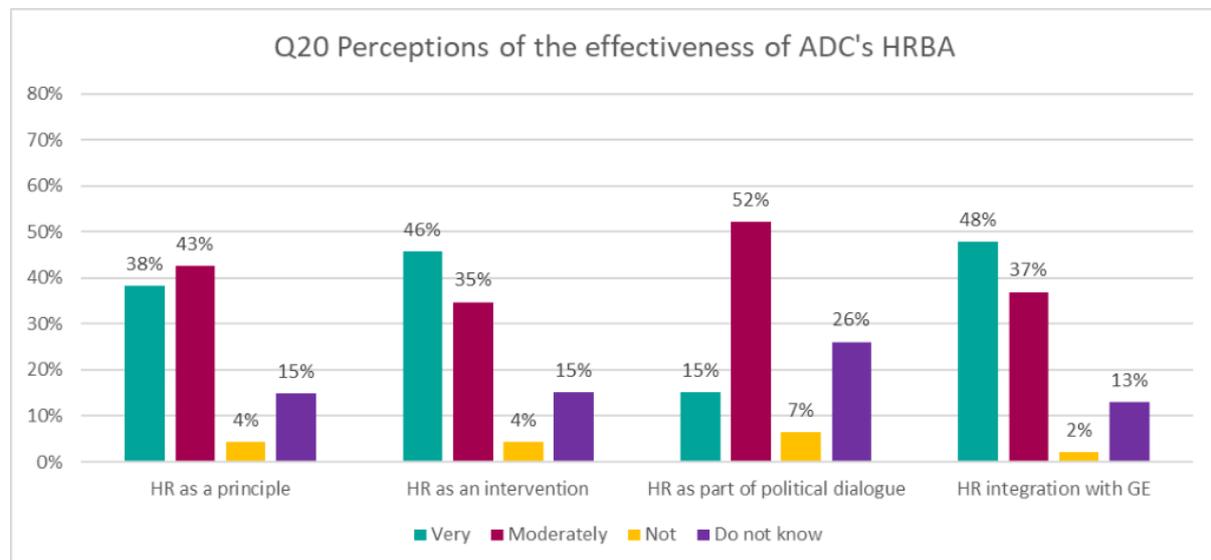
65. Current ADC practice, particularly in terms of the Country Strategies and the interventions at programme and project level, seem well aligned with the HRBA as per the aims of the policy and the manual. They all cite human rights as the basis for development cooperation, with some elaborating in detail the normative principles, and the specific ways in which the outcomes relate to realising human rights. In many ways, adaptations are driven by country-level engagements and the realities of government partners' perceptions of human rights. This can change how ADC communicates about human rights, for example it is logical to focus on the National Happiness Index in Bhutan, but it has not changed how ADC incorporates human rights normative principles. While the approach (of embedding normative principles) seems to have remained relatively consistent, certain topics have gained prominence that have influenced ADC's focus; for example, the rights of persons with disabilities and the recent prioritisation of gender equality. ADC's practice has also inevitably evolved through its long-term partnerships, especially with civil society organisations. Frequently, projects managed by civil society organisations are funded for subsequent cycles, and an important requirement is that learning from earlier programme cycles are documented and capitalised on in order to inform the next iteration. In this way, ADC's work through its partners has necessarily built on previous experience and outcomes.

Commitment and relevance are more strongly recognised than ADC's effectiveness

66. The timestamp on the Human Rights Policy and Manual, and the fact that there seems to have been little corporate level activity since the very enthusiastic and well received launches, means that there is a sense of stagnation among some stakeholders. There was a difference in perceptions among survey respondents regarding the commitment and relevance of ADC's HRBA which was consistently well regarded, compared to the effectiveness of ADC's HRBA

(Figure 5). While effectiveness as such is not part of the evaluation focus, these perceptions illustrate the differences in perceived alignment in current practice.

Figure 5: Survey results: perceptions of the effectiveness of ADC's HRBA across the three levels of intervention and the integration of human rights (HR) with gender equality (GE)



ADC's positioning on HRBA

67. Political dialogue and the prominence of human rights at the global level is being affected by geo-political influences. This means that human rights as part of political dialogue is more important than ever, with Austria advocating strenuously for human rights at the UN and in the EU. These are high profile forums for it to be vocal in as a Member State with the legitimacy of a documented track record in addressing human rights which gives Austria leverage with which to advocate.¹⁹ Such geo-political influences are also affecting the partner governments that ADC works with and this may see a demise in the prominence of human rights priorities and principles in these countries. These are issues likely to be beyond ADC's influence, however, and yet ADC still needs to be prepared for, if it is going to continue its commitment to human rights.
68. This evaluation returns to the issue of human rights as a component of political dialogue (EQ8) and suggests that ADC could be more explicit about its human rights priorities to provide clearer direction which would link the aims of three intervention levels more closely. Without an overarching human rights strategy, which sets out a long-term direction and vision for what ADC wants to achieve, there is a risk of much reduced external visibility. This would not be without challenges, including the potential for political disagreement with some partner governments, as many of ADC's diplomatic stakeholders highlighted the increased resistance to human rights in the external environment. Currently in ADC, there is no single set of criteria or indicators to measure or monitor the alignment of Austria's HRBA practice with its relevant policy. While there are ways to monitor implementation of human rights commitments by Austria and its development partner countries,²⁰ an assessment of the implementation of the

¹⁹ Austria's commitment to human rights was the main thrust of its successful campaign for the presidency of the Human Rights Council 2019–2021.

²⁰ This refers to the existing mechanisms such as the Universal Period Review, and human rights and development indices which provide information on member states as opposed to specifically monitoring ADC.

HRBA policy can only take a narrow approach, focusing on the effectiveness and impact of programmes and projects supported by ADC.

EQ4 Resources for HRBA

EQ4. To what extent are resources (financial, human, time and technical) available and sufficient to ensure implementation of the HRBA in ADC?

Key findings

- 4.1 There is a strong sense that all resources (financial, human, time and technical) for HRBA in ADC are constrained.
- 4.2 There is a demand among internal stakeholders and partners for increased dialogue and consultations on the substance of implementing human rights in practice.

Different types of resource constraints

69. Austria's recent OECD peer review emphasised that ADA's human resources were "under pressure", frequently citing "heavy workloads" for both staff in HQ and in the country coordination offices.²¹ While there were capability constraints felt by respondents in this evaluation, a more frequently recurring theme was the lack of capacity that ADC internal stakeholders have to meaningfully engage with project design and implementation processes and take part in dialogue with partners about human rights. In this regard this evaluation's findings echo the evaluation of the EGSIM in 2019,²² that spoke of the need to "skew towards collaboration". The management response to the evaluation accepted the recommendation and committed to re-enforcing training for staff to better understand the EGSIM system and promote a consultative, iterative method to using the tool in a team-based approach for each project.
70. Beyond the EGSIM mechanism, the lack of space for collaborative approaches within ADA is still being keenly felt (particularly emphasised by Austria-based partners but also some partners in the 11 focus countries). In response to the gaps in knowledge and expertise around human rights, the gap was reported in the technical and nuanced implementation of projects. The request for "more training" was frequent, and often accompanied by a request that it is made mandatory. The relationship of 'mandatory' to training clearly signals the importance of an issue, and training in and of itself is important and useful. But even if additional training specifically on technical areas of human rights is not provided internally, for example, by the advisors in the Themes and Quality department, there are still routes for staff to gain access to training (including requesting funding) as part of ongoing professional development opportunities provided through the Human Resources department. While some staff take this up, others do not, and primarily it seems because of a lack of time available.
71. The ADA staff in HQ and in countries that mentioned training were not always specific regarding what training they felt they were lacking, but there was a recurring response that more expertise and knowledge was required in the area of implementation. This was also reflected in the qualitative responses to the survey where the depth and breadth of human rights application cannot be captured in materials such as ADC's human rights manual. This may also explain why the regular EGSIM training for internal stakeholders, which includes 'social standards', is not perceived as training focused on human rights. A question arises

²¹ OECD, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Austria 2020

²² Evaluation: Environmental, Gender and Social Impact Management at ADA, May 2019.

about the utility of ‘a’ single and universal training on human rights provided internally given the complexities of implementing a wide range of human rights interventions with different technical foci and in different contexts. This was emphasised by ADC stakeholders in country particularly where this is a demand for technical human rights applications to their specific contexts.

72. In addition, adding an internal training obligation for staff also adds to the internal obligation of the Human Rights advisor. The majority of ADC’s internal stakeholders and Vienna-based NGOs commented on the limitations of the advisor’s role due to the combined responsibilities not only for governance but also for migration. The 2020 OECD peer review explicitly recommended adequate resourcing for ADA to fulfil its responsibilities.²³

Existing wealth of knowledge and skills

73. In order to help understand where internal and external stakeholders get their knowledge and skills related to human rights, interview and survey participants were asked about their backgrounds, focus of work and how they update their expertise. From the interviews it was clear that numerous staff are highly qualified in their areas of expertise, including in specific technical areas of human rights and international laws. Interview respondents, particularly internally to ADA, frequently noted that they had not participated in any training or capacity-building specifically focused on human rights, and were not aware that any had been provided by ADA. The experience was slightly different for partner organisations in some of the priority countries, where it was much more likely that the coordination office arranged training and knowledge-sharing events, sometimes annually, on human rights issues.
74. The survey results reflected this with 19 per cent of respondents indicating they had received training provided by ADA (or MFA) related to either human rights or gender equality. This compares to the other sources of gaining knowledge which were through learning and work (86 per cent), self-generated through qualifications or self-selected courses (75 per cent), and through training courses provided by an employer or education institute (59 per cent).
75. ADC partners also present a wealth of knowledge and experience. Good practices were identified by some of the partner organisations whereby their expertise is drawn on by ADA to provide technical inputs for other ADA partners (see the example of Kosovo Women’s Network in the section on Good Practices).

Existing expertise and capacity

76. Numerous internal stakeholders have extremely advanced technical expertise and advanced qualifications in human rights and related subjects. Others are similarly educated and experienced in their specific areas but not necessarily in human rights specifically. This is to be expected as not everyone can be expert in everything, and in particular the field of human rights is very large embracing many specialisms. A consequence is that not everyone has the background or the language to place what they do in the context of a technical paradigm of human rights. There are some highly advanced projects focusing on very technical areas that are pillars of the concept of human rights. An absence of technical knowledge and language to place them in their human rights contexts, may be contributing to the perception among some staff that they are not doing ‘enough’. Essentially not everyone in ADC is aware of just how relevant their work already is to human rights, and they are not in a position to affirm to themselves and others the extent to which human rights is being addressed.

²³ See Recommendation 4, and Chapter 4. Austria’s structure and systems, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Austria 2020.

77. The vast realm of 'human rights' and the range of ADC's thematic and technical work, coupled with the diversity of each of the unique 11 priority countries and the specific composition of each partner's portfolio creates a scenario that may seem overwhelming. The bespoke application of human rights principles plus more technical knowledge to support projects and programmes to advance human rights outcomes (and be sure that they are not being undermined) requires an ongoing building of knowledge and consolidating of learning over time. The current lack of this, due to human resource constraints and other compliance-based pressures, is noticeably experienced by internal stakeholders and by some partners. This reflects the above-mentioned findings and recommendations of the OECD peer review.

The role of risk management vs promotion of HRBA

78. There was very little quantifiable data regarding the resources that are used to implement HRBA. There are also differences in perspectives among evaluation participants about some of the resources and whether they are HRBA-focused or not. An example is the EGSIM checklist on which the Themes and Quality section invests considerable time and expertise. The section's team members provide training in environmental, gender and social impact management and subsequently the programme managers and partners use and review the tool in programme design. For some respondents, the EGSIM is clearly a manifestation of HRBA in action by ensuring the 'do no harm' principle and through promoting the normative aspects of HRBA. For other evaluation participants the EGSIM is not nearly human rights focused enough and does not facilitate or guide projects to increase their relevance to human rights outcomes. This is almost inevitable, however, because the EGSIM is primarily a risk management tool, meaning that it checks human rights normative principles are included, and that any undesirable practices and effects will be avoided. It does include questions to determine whether certain effects will be achieved but these are fewer than the risk avoidance questions.

3.2. Coherence

EQ5 Shared understanding of HRBA

EQ5. To what extent is there a commonly shared conceptual understanding of the HRBA across ADC and its implementing partners?

What specificities and complementarities can be identified?

Key findings

- 5.1 The three-level structure of ADC's HRBA was well known across all stakeholders. Within this, the strongest shared understanding was of the level of human rights principles and their application.
- 5.2 Partners and ADA stakeholders whose work focussed on initiatives that clearly relate to human rights outcomes (e.g. access to justice) were confident about ADC's HRBA in relation to interventions. But there was a lack of clarity about what it means to promote and protect human rights through interventions when the thematic focus was broader – for example in relation to economic, social and cultural rights. This can translate into both internal and external stakeholders being unsure of what ADC's expectations are of partners.
- 5.3 There was a shared understanding of the relationship between human rights and political dialogue, although this was among a smaller subset of stakeholders as this aspect of work has narrow visibility.

Strongly shared understanding of HRBA as a principle among ADC stakeholders

- 79. There was a relatively clear sense of common understanding between internal and external stakeholders regarding the structure of ADC's HRBA as was evident from the consultations through interviews and focus group discussions. This means that there is a wide appreciation that ADC's HRBA consists of three levels: 1. human rights as a principle; 2. promotion and protection of human rights through interventions; and 3. human rights as part of political dialogue. External stakeholders, particularly civil society partners that implement projects, also had a strong awareness of the three levels. They cited the guidance materials and requirements for applying for funding which navigated them through ADC's policies and expectations, including in relation to human rights.
- 80. Human rights as normative principles (i.e. non-discrimination and equality, participation, empowerment and accountability) were most frequently voluntarily discussed by all stakeholders, internal and external. The application of these principles, particularly non-discrimination, inclusion and participation, and empowerment, were cited most frequently, with accountability as a principle of working least mentioned. The application of these principles in how ADC programmes and projects are designed and implemented seems well understood, and respondents from within ADA particularly referenced the usefulness of the earlier investment in the promotion of HRBA when the policy and manual were launched. Stakeholders across the International Programmes and Projects Department reported that the profile given to human rights at the time resulted in shifting perspectives among ADA staff.

Survey responses reflecting partners' understanding of ADC's HRBA

"ADC strives to ensure that principles of participation, non-discrimination, accountability and others are taken into account in planning and implementation of activities."

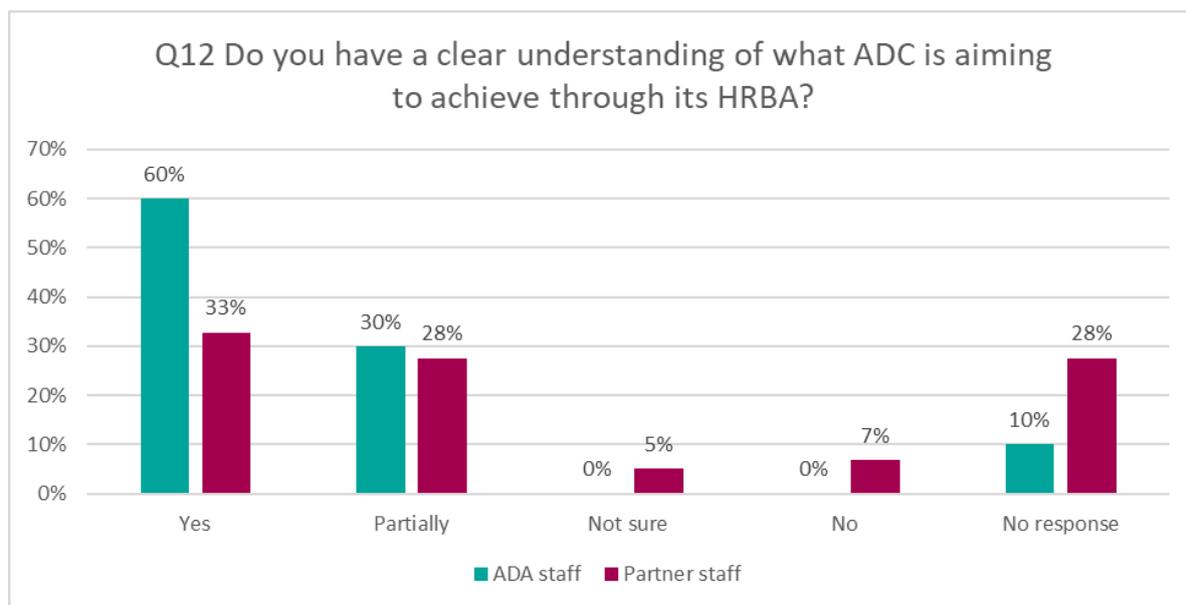
"ADA's approach to HRBA is quite significant. Human rights and its development interventions are quite interrelated. The organisation mainstreams basic human rights in all its development interventions and programmes focusing on women's empowerment, child protection, and safety of the most vulnerable groups of society. In addition to creating material and resource access, health and education to the poor community, ADA mainstreams some fundamental human rights in all its project interventions, such as: emotional integrity, respect and dignity, social belonging, cultural identity, organisational capacity and accountability."

81. The principle level of ADC's HRBA has been partially reinforced by related training on the EGSIM and specifically on social inclusion. But across all ADA staff the experience is very different, with a minority mentioning training that was very helpful, many indicating that they have not received any training or inputs at all, and one person referring to recent training that was difficult to follow. In priority countries the view was different because of the very different roles that coordination office staff have when compared to staff in HQ. As an in-country colleague put it "For me the HRBA policies and manual are what we do here every day".

Mixed appreciation of how HRBA relates to interventions

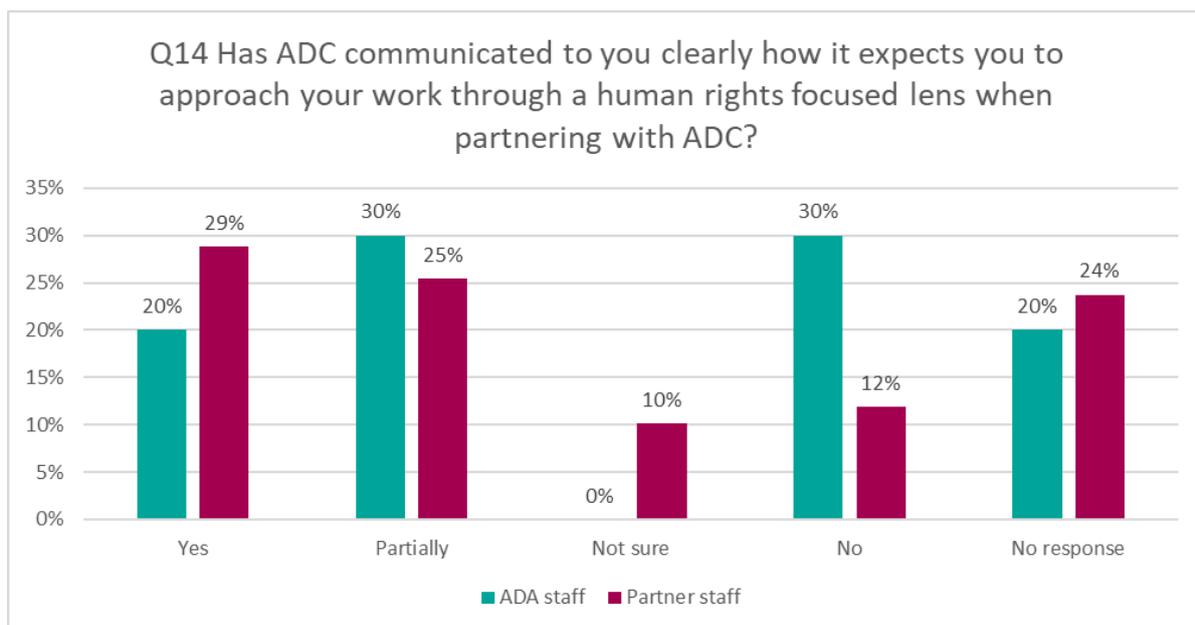
82. Where there is the most divergence in understanding is at the level of intervention and what ADC's human rights-based approach means at the level of programme and project outcomes. For several partners there was a clear distinction between 'HRBA', which they interpreted as the normative principles, and 'human rights' which they applied to project objectives.
83. There were unambiguous examples of projects where ADA staff and partners were highly confident that the objectives were intended to influence the capacity of rights holders to claim specific rights or to strengthen the capacity of states to respond to their obligations. For example, a survey respondent said: "The deliberate focus on working with the Justice Law and Order Institutions illustrates ADCs commitment of delivering with a human rights lens and fostering an effective mechanism of achievement". Where projects have different (non-human rights) thematic foci, numerous ADA staff reported that they were not sure what it means to comprehensively implement a human rights focus. One of the challenges is that, while the area of 'human rights' is vast, also monitoring and improving the situation or status of human rights in any particular context (as the ADC manual promotes) is also a long and complex process.
84. As part of the evaluation process, the survey asked stakeholders whether they understood what ADC is aiming to achieve through its HRBA. Among survey respondents, 60 per cent of internal stakeholders and only 33 per cent of partner staff said they had a clear understanding of what ADC is aiming to achieve through its HRBA (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Survey results: respondents' views of whether they have a clear understanding of what ADC is aiming to achieve through HRBA, disaggregated by internal and external stakeholders



- 85. There were mixed views on the extent to which ADC could achieve all its ambitions, particularly when working through implementing partners. Partners highlighted what can be achieved when ADC places a priority on an issue, as it has for gender equality. At the same time, feedback from partners indicated that the risk of ADC trying to place a focus on too many issues can lead to dilution rather than comprehensive coverage.
- 86. With ambiguity around what HRBA means for the intervention level, it is perhaps not unsurprising that survey respondents varied in their perspectives of whether ADC's expectations had been communicated to them. Similarly, only 20 per cent of internal stakeholders and 29 per cent of partner staff said that ADC has very clearly communicated how it expects partners to approach their work through a human rights focused lens (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Survey results: respondents' perspectives on how clearly ADC has communicated its expectations regarding human rights to partners, disaggregated by internal and external stakeholders



Shared understanding of HRBA and political dialogue among a smaller group of stakeholders

87. There was a seemingly consistent understanding of human rights at the political dialogue level in theory, but this is an area that the fewest number of stakeholders engaged in directly. For coordination offices, particularly where there is no embassy, political dialogue is part of the role of heads of office and other staff, so there was a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges among staff currently or previously in these roles.

Complementarities between partners and ADC

88. Civil society organisations find themselves well aligned with ADC's HRBA. In many cases ADC has identified partners that already align with core human rights objectives or values. Highly specialised partners have been sources of expertise for both ADC and its partners, for example, on inclusion and on gender equality. Other partners have increasingly incorporated human rights principles as a result of working with ADC, for example by introducing more explicit human rights language, increasing participation of persons with disabilities, and increasing the focus on gender equality.

Complementarities between human rights and development

89. Complementarities were identified in relation to the rationale of ADC's HRBA which aims to combine human rights and development. For example, in Palestine, four of the eight sample projects aligned with national development plans and explicitly mentioned their contribution to the SDGs. In Uganda, all the projects mention their contribution to the SDGs, and six out of eight projects explicitly align to the Uganda National Development Plan and other national frameworks. The Agenda 2030, and its set of Goals, is an important vehicle for enhancing coherence, in particular because it meets a broad international consensus among governments and with civil society. It is worth mentioning that within the SDGs, which are part of a very broad agenda, elements can suit different stakeholders for different reasons. This poses a situation where competition is possible, including where goals are furthered in detriment to human rights. It is therefore appropriate for ADC to set its work in support of reinforcing human rights within the SDG framework, with the aim of contributing to beneficiary countries' buy-in, and to possible future engagement with them.

EQ6 Human rights as an ADC principle (Intervention level 1)

EQ6. To what extent are normative human rights principles (participation, empowerment, non-discrimination, equal opportunities and accountability) consistently integrated into programming at strategic and operational levels?

Assuming there are differing degrees of integration, what are the reasons and specificities with regard to context?

What role do mechanisms aimed at backstopping, steering and assessing of human rights play (i.e. checklists related to EGSIM)?

Key findings

- 6.1 All projects and programmes incorporate normative principles to some extent with the exception of some private sector projects. Projects that comprehensively incorporated normative principles were more likely to have a strong human rights focus, compared to projects that did not have such explicit human rights outcomes and which were more selective in incorporating normative principles.
- 6.2 The factors that influenced integration positively included the expertise of partners and ADC's prioritisation of normative principles. But not all partners may have the requisite expertise or be required to pay the same attention to incorporating human rights principles.

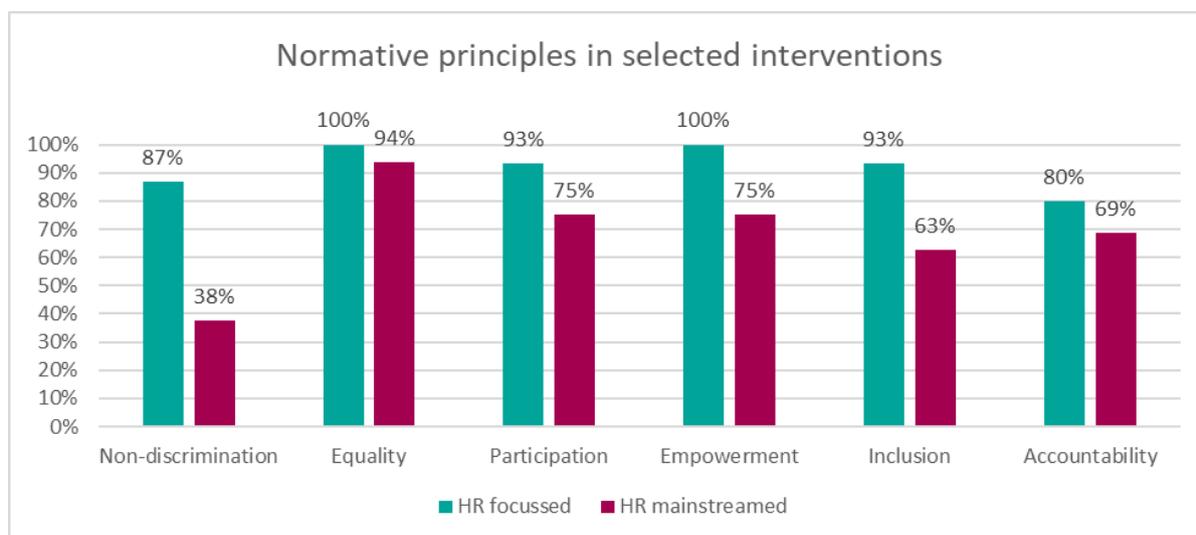
Normative principles were most comprehensively embedded in human rights focused interventions

- 90. For each of the countries, eight projects in total were identified that were current or recent: four projects with a human rights focus, and four with a different focus and the assumption that human rights normative principles were mainstreamed. With the exception of one private sector project, all projects and programmes incorporated at least two normative principles.²⁴ More than half of the projects reviewed comprehensively embedded all six normative principles, most frequently within projects that had a human rights focus (n11) compared to those that had a different focus but were intended to mainstream normative principles (n6).
- 91. The project sample is not representative of ADC's portfolio, so these figures should be considered with caution and cannot be extrapolated to represent the population of projects and programmes. Among the sample, there was no pattern evident of greater incorporation of normative principles depending on whether the country strategy focused on human rights or was broader. Six out of the eight projects in Uganda, where ADC's country strategy is focused on human rights, had fully mainstreamed normative principles. But relatively similarly, five out of eight projects in Kosovo also fully mainstreamed normative principles, although ADC's country strategy is not as strongly focused on human rights. Among the projects reviewed from Ethiopia and Palestine, the number of projects that fully mainstreamed normative principles was three out of seven and two out of eight respectively. Nevertheless, even in these countries, it was clear from interviews that Coordination Office managers and staff took

²⁴ For the purposes of analysis, the normative principles were disaggregated into six categories: Non-discrimination, Equality of opportunity (which included gender equality), Participation, Empowerment, Inclusion, and Accountability.

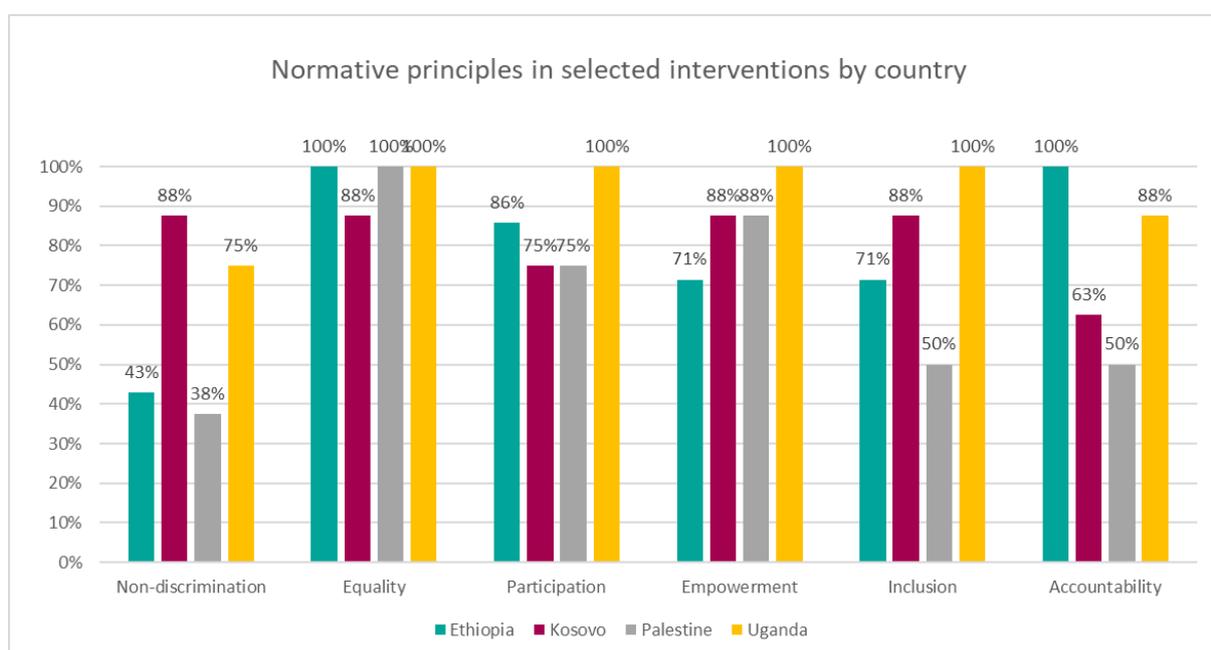
a rights-based approach to project implementation, even where this was not explicitly prioritised in project documents.

Figure 8: Survey results: respondents' perspectives on normative principles in selected interventions



92. The diagram below shows the percentage of sampled projects which incorporated human rights normative principles. The data is disaggregated by country in Annex 7: Profile of Sampled Projects.

Figure 9: Survey results: respondents' perspectives on normative principles in selected interventions by country



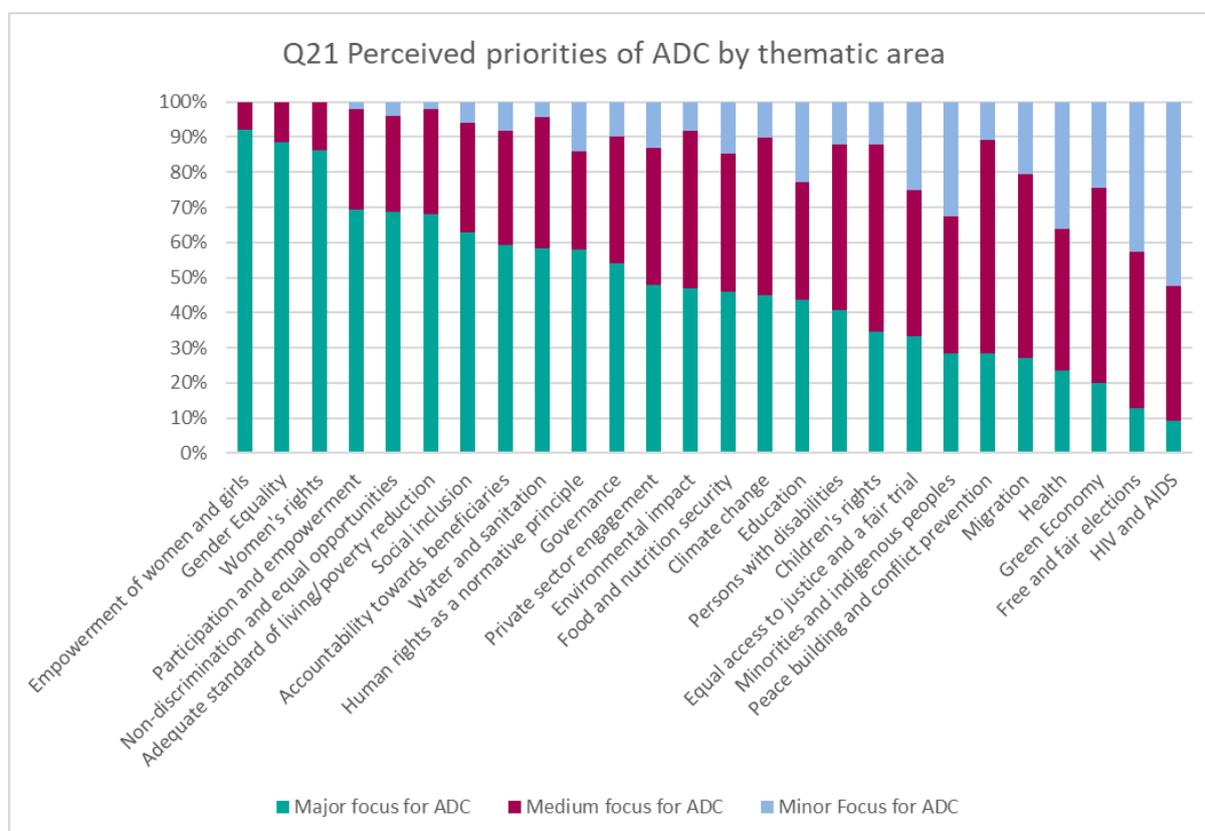
93. The attention that ADC places on normative human rights principles was strongly recognised by stakeholders with 'participation and empowerment', and 'non-discrimination and equal opportunities' identified as a major focus for ADC by approximately 70 per cent of survey respondents (see survey Q21 in Annex 10). 'Accountability towards beneficiaries' and 'human rights as a normative principle' was considered a major focus of ADC by approximately 60 per cent of survey respondents.

94. The data above reflects a binary distinction regarding whether or not a project or programme cited specific normative principles. The following analysis considers in more detail the level of attention placed on specific principles across the projects in four countries.
95. Across the sample of projects in **Ethiopia**, the most frequently applied principles are **participation, empowerment, inclusion, equality** – all with regard to rights holders. The least frequently applied principals (least mentioned) were **non-discrimination**, and **accountability (to duty bearers)**. Nevertheless, Ethiopia was the country in which all projects cited accountability as a normative principle. In some cases, accountability was a feature of the intervention such as the principle of mutual accountability within cooperatives. In other projects accountability was at the core of the project's objectives, such as the support of development partners to the national Growth and Transformation Plan implemented by a UN agency and based on partnership working to increase accountability.
96. The normative principles were more frequently explicitly mentioned in projects implemented by UN organisations due to the specific reporting arrangements against the SDGs, and against fulfilment of various commitments under relevant UN conventions. In focus group discussions, UN partners confirmed that this prominence of human rights was due to their legal mandates which guided all their work. Approaches such as a people-centred approach, the principle of 'nothing about us without us', 'reaching the furthest behind', have been used which added implementing normative principles in a complementary way without explicitly mentioning 'HRBA'. UN agencies used more formal institutions and established structures to mainstream or apply normative principles, and they referred to government commitments under various conventions when addressing issues of accountability, inclusion, participation, and gender equality. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and NGOs were more likely to use less formal structures and institutions to strengthen the effectiveness of their interventions by increasing community participation, inclusion of community in decision-making, and increasing ownership over projects. They also worked with traditional leaders and influential community members in different ways, for example to draw on indigenous knowledge on water management (inclusion and participation), or working with members of communities that practice female genital mutilation (FGM) to eliminate the tradition without criminalising, penalising, or discriminating (non-discrimination).
97. Within the sample of projects in **Uganda**, the most frequently applied principles were **participation, empowerment, inclusion**, with regard to rights holders, and **accountability** with regard to duty bearers (and enabling rights holders to hold duty bearers to account). The least frequently applied principle (least mentioned) was **non-discrimination**. Overall, the selected projects in Uganda were most likely to incorporate all of the normative principles, potentially influenced by ADC's country strategy in which human rights and governance are key priorities. In this regard, ADC partnered with human rights institutions that have a strong understanding of normative principles and human rights objectives, which is often reflected in their organisational mandates.
98. Normative principles were fully mainstreamed in projects where the focus of the intervention was human rights. However, even for the projects focused on water and sanitation, principles of inclusion, participation and empowerment were frequently mainstreamed (less so for accountability and non-discrimination). Two projects explicitly mentioned their adoption of a 'human rights based approach' implemented by OHCHR and the Human Rights Centre Uganda (HRCU).
99. ADC's strategy for **Kosovo** does not have the same level of human rights focus compared to Ethiopia and Uganda. But as mentioned above there was a relatively high proportion of projects within the sample that fully mainstreamed normative principles. Within the project and

programme documents of those in Kosovo, there was a greater focus on **accountability** which is cited much more frequently in comparison to other countries. Other principles most frequently mentioned and applied are **empowerment**, **participation** and **inclusion** (of women, youth and disadvantaged groups, namely ethnic minorities). Partners in interviews described the context of Kosovo in which the conflict and post-conflict recovery placed human rights at the centre of the perspectives, particularly in relation to accountable institutions and the participation of women in governance and economic life. There was one project (the private sector partnership framework) in which normative principles were not mainstreamed: none were mentioned in any of the project documents consulted.

100. In the case of **Palestine**, the analysis found that all projects incorporated some of the normative principles, although there were only two projects included in the sample that fully mainstreamed all of the principles. One was focused on promoting well-being and mental health for vulnerable groups in Palestine; and the second was a contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) health project. ADC's projects and programmes in Palestine may more frequently consist of contributions to other agencies such as UNRWA and World Health Organization (WHO), which may account for the differentiation in citing normative principles in the available project documentation. Moreover, within the sample of projects several were contributions to supporting existing facilities such as a hospital or a desalination plant, which have a very different profile and approach to implementation compared to, for example, the Women for Peace project 'My right to my future' which integrated five out of six normative principles.

Figure 10: Survey results: respondents' perceived priorities of ADC in relation to human rights themes and principles



101. Projects in Palestine were also found to use terminology that was less typical of human rights discourse. 'Capacity-building approach', 'sensitive and culturally appropriate approach', 'people-centred approach' and 'patient-centred approach' were used by the different

implementing partners to describe their ways of working which at times related to the normative principles.

Factors that influence the implementation of normative principles

102. As mentioned above, the partners that ADC works with often have already committed to human rights concepts including embedding some or even all normative principles. Civil society partners discussed their experiences of working with ADC, which strongly influenced their approaches to incorporating human rights as a principle. ADC's emphasis was mostly welcomed and partners appreciated the rationale for being required to address human rights in this way. There were some concerns raised among stakeholders internal and external to ADC for different reasons. Some partners reported feeling a strain in trying to meet all of ADC's expectations, particularly where some elements of normative principles were not part of their area of expertise. One partner organisation characterised ADC's aspirations as laudable but ultimately 'transferring' too many priorities to partners and expecting them to deliver. All of these partners were highly competent and conscientious and took very seriously ADC's policies and requirements. From within ADC, some staff questioned whether it was an ideal strategy to require partners to implement some human rights principles before they had gained expertise in these areas fully. There was also a slight unease at the uneven application of what could be interpreted as conditionality around human rights: interestingly civil society partners did not object to being required to implement normative principles themselves, but did share their observations that this requirement did not seem to apply to private sector partners.
103. The EGSIM process provided a clear mechanism for assessing the incorporation of normative principles into project implementation. In particular, gender equality and other inclusion categories were made more systematic and evident in the project design and implementation, which led to conducting assessments including on gender and vulnerable categories within several projects at the inception phase to tackle the recommendations on inclusion. The EGSIM process also led to the revision of logframes and greater disaggregation of indicators during the inception phase based on relevant categories/identity markers, such as sex, urban/rural location, disability, and ethnicity within some of the projects. Some stakeholders sounded a note of caution, pointing out that the EGSIM as a backstop can only do so much to alert ADA and partners to potential risks. Serious breaches of compliance or trust can still occur and examples were given of where the insight and expertise of ADA and partner staff enabled them to raise concerns that could not be detected by the risk management assessments.

HRBA principles at the strategic level

104. Strategic level activities refers here to the actions taken that are relevant to country strategies but are not part of projects or programmes. For example, HRBA principles are evident in terms of the participatory approaches that MFA and ADA staff described in a specific initiative, working with in-country partners to respond to a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. But, as also mentioned in EQ8, these kinds of strategic activities are much less documented in the ADC reporting and materials.
105. The specific principle of being partner-led, especially when working with a government partner, was held in high regard, but conversely lent itself to ADC stakeholders potentially being reluctant to raise human rights outcomes as part of dialogue. MFA stakeholders referenced the consultations with government and ADA stakeholders as part of the development of country strategies. There was a shared understanding across ADC stakeholders regarding the distinction between a human rights-focused or human rights-mainstreamed strategy.

However, when analysing the text of the strategies the common knowledge within ADC about this distinction was not necessarily strongly reflected. For example, the strategy for Ethiopia is considered human rights focused while the strategy for Kosovo is considered human rights mainstreamed. Both cite human rights, and emphasise the rule of law and accountability of strengthened institutions. Good governance is a thematic outcome area for the Ethiopia strategy, whereas it is a cross-cutting priority for the Kosovo strategy. The more frequent references to human rights and the rule of law in the strategy for Kosovo give the impression that, similarly to Ethiopia, it is also human rights focused.

EQ7 Promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area (Intervention level 2)

EQ7. To what extent are projects/programmes specifically designed to promote human rights in line with, complementary to, and/or supportive of ADC's HRBA?

To what extent is the scope of projects/programmes based on a systematic approach in terms of rights (what rights), target groups (whose rights) or other aspects?

Key findings

- 7.1 Projects and programmes that are human rights interventions had strong alignment to ADC's HRBA particularly in relation to using a dual strategy to engage both rights holders and duty bearers.
- 7.2 Interventions addressed a broad range of human rights, and each targeted multiple categories of rights holders, particularly in relation to fulfilling the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.

106. ADC's Human Rights Policy defines the promotion and protection of human rights as an intervention area as: programmes and projects whose main aim is the implementation of one or more human right will continue to be promoted. Within the sample of projects analysed for the evaluation, analysis focused on the content of the projects that were human rights focused.²⁵ As already mentioned, the sample was purposively selected, rather than representative of ADC's portfolio of projects and programmes.
107. Returning to how human rights interventions are defined in ADC's manual, the projects in the sample frequently demonstrate the recommended 'dual strategy' of targeting both rights holders and duty bearers. Some are focused on the 'human rights sector' including the law, justice and public sectors. Wider sectors, for example education and health, also focus on rights holders and their capability to claim rights, and duty bearers are included within these structures (i.e. teachers and health personnel), or are more subtly combined with key stakeholders, for example engaging men and boys in prevention of violence against women. The projects therefore bridge the gap between the normative framework (by citing the rights that should be claimed) and the specific responsibilities of institutions and individuals, as promoted in the manual.

²⁵ Approximately half of the projects sampled were human rights focused and half were focused on other objectives, but within which normative principles should be mainstreamed. The distinction between the two categories (human rights focused or human rights mainstreamed) was made by identifying projects based on the names, descriptions and data and confirming with ADA programme managers where possible. In practice, the accuracy of the allocation of the two categories may be in question. One of the issues for ADA's internal systems is the limitations of what metadata the project database can record. Although there is a clear creditor reporting system (CRS) code for human rights, it is too narrow to use – if a programme is focussed on a specific human right then it is captured by another code.

108. Below is a summary typology of the sampled projects that aimed to realise human rights.

Table 4: Typology of projects that aim to realise human rights

Human rights promotion and protection	Directly increasing the capacity of rights holders to claim (all of) their rights, and increasing accountability of duty bearers by promoting human rights standards, laws and approaches.
Civil and political rights	The right to participate in public affairs and access public services , by increasing accountability on the part of duty bearers: non-discrimination and equal opportunities for conventionally marginalised and excluded populations in decision making, for example, persons with disabilities, or women (including women’s role in peacebuilding related to Security Council Resolution 1325), or members of minority communities.
	Obligations on the state for ensuring effective remedy for victims of human rights violations broadly and for specific populations such as women, and ensuring fair trial rights .
Economic, social and cultural rights	The right to participate in society, culture and the economy : non-discrimination and equal opportunities for conventionally marginalised or excluded populations in, for example, education or community-based programmes.
	The right to the highest attainable standard of health : for marginalised or excluded populations including mental health and well-being for children, older people, persons with disabilities, and differentiated responses for women, men, girls and boys; disadvantaged women who are pregnant and have specific health needs.
Specific issues that violate multiple human rights	Preventing FGM through community structures: the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to be free from violence, the right to life and physical integrity, the right to non-discrimination, and the right to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
	Preventing and responding to violence against women (e.g. domestic and/or sexual) through promoting the positive obligations on the state to increase the functioning and accountability of formal mechanisms and institutions, for example legal systems; the right to be free from violence; the right to life and physical integrity; the right to non-discrimination; and the right to be free from cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

109. ADC and partner stakeholders discussed further projects that strengthened the fourth estate (free and independent media and press) and protected journalists, and particularly governance-focussed projects that increased accountability of duty bearers in multiple sectors and dimensions.

110. While many project implementers disseminate project information through their own websites and on social networks, they do not necessarily focus on human rights. Project documents do not systematically incorporate a communication strategy – including the identification of target audiences and the identification of tailored messages addressed to each audience – in each project and programme. It may often be possible, and beneficial, to add a public awareness-raising dimension to projects and programmes, focusing on their human rights protection and promotion aspects.

111. Many of ADC's civil society partners expressed a desire for further dialogue with ADC on human rights, both at their programme design stage when they are applying for funding, and also during implementation. This seemed more than simply an 'appetite' for discussion but a seriously felt need. The 'bureaucracy burden' reported by ADA staff is not at too great a risk of affecting partners in terms of paperwork expectations (as mentioned above, the project approval process is a periodic event for them), but rather they are experiencing the lack of space for dialogue caused by its effect on ADA staff. This space for dialogue is seen as important for gaining mutual understanding, for having a shared sense of the work undertaken, and for exchange of ideas and expertise.

The role of country strategies

112. Based on reviewing the detail of specific projects, as well as the consultations with ADC stakeholders, it seems clear that the country strategies provide strong direction for the focus of ADC's work in each country. In considering the implications of this, the analysis initially explored whether this alignment of projects and programmes with their respective strategies provided an opportunity to consider whether more in-depth human rights analysis can be applied in development of the strategies. The current process for determining the priorities for country strategies is based on building on previous experiences and priorities and incorporating learning from the prior cycle. This would have the potential for incorporating, for example, one or more specific recommendations of recent Universal Periodic Reviews or other Human Rights Committees, or potentially the political and policy dialogue supported by ADC.
113. After further consultations with relevant ADC staff responsible for the development of country strategies, the process is already at capacity in the sense that adding further analysis on human rights in order to shape the strategies would risk significantly extending the time taken for their development and delaying their finalisation. Indeed, a human rights analysis of Ethiopia's context was undertaken at the time of the development of the most recent country strategy, but its results did not noticeably inform the document. However, there remains potential for more in-depth human rights analyses to inform the implementation of country strategies, for example through the project and programme designs within countries, or to set the policy dialogue agenda.

Categories of rights and target groups across human rights-focused projects

114. The evaluation question asks specifically whether the scope of projects is based on a systematic approach in terms of what rights are included: it is the responsibility of the evaluation team that we did not define 'systematic' in the context of this question. It is evident that careful consideration was given to projects' identification of specific target groups that are in line with the priorities identified by ADC's human rights-based approach.
115. For example, in the sample of projects in Ethiopia, gender and disability are some of the categories of vulnerabilities and/or disadvantages that seem to have been systematically targeted both in specific projects as an intervention area and as an inclusion category within other projects with a different thematic focus. For the projects in Palestine, women, children, youth, refugees, persons hospitalised or with chronic illnesses, were more systematically targeted both in specific projects with human rights as an intervention and as an inclusion category within other projects with a different thematic focus. However, as rightly mentioned in some of the project documents, given the fragile and conflict context of Palestine, the Palestinian population as a whole is considered a disadvantaged group. Among the projects in Uganda, women, refugees and children were systematically targeted both in specific projects as an intervention area and as an inclusion category within other projects with a different thematic focus. In this regard, 'systematic' has been interpreted as the consistent

inclusion of target populations in projects. Within the projects in Kosovo, women`s rights, the rights of people living with disability, and ethnic minorities are some groups that have been more systematically targeted both with human rights-focused projects and those where normative principles were the mainstreamed approach.

116. Of interest, are the responses to survey Q21 on the perceived priorities of ADC by thematic area, which also included key normative principles (Figure 10, Section EQ6). This has been mentioned elsewhere but is highlighted here as normative principles were recognised as a strong focus for ADC.

EQ8 Human rights as a component of political dialogue (Intervention level 3)

EQ8. To what degree are human rights systematically integrated into political and policy dialogue at bilateral level?

Which context-related specificities in policy dialogue at bilateral level can be extrapolated?

To what degree are the different types of human rights (economic, social and cultural rights) equally represented?

Key findings

- 8.1 ADC's political dialogue (and human rights within it) is the least visible component of its HRBA.
- 8.2 Nevertheless, there seemed effective coordination between MFA and ADA in supporting mutual understanding of all diplomatic considerations including human rights, but the latter is not necessarily part of a specific agenda with shared human rights objectives.
- 8.3 There is a diversity of engagement at bilateral and multilateral levels that is relatively undocumented but seemingly effective at maintaining dialogue. The effectiveness in achieving human rights outcomes through bilateral activities is less clear but certainly seems like an opportunity for further inquiry.

Political and policy dialogue at country level

- 117. There was a mixed picture of the extent to which Coordination Offices engaged in political and policy dialogue which was very dependent on the country context (particularly whether or not an Ambassador was based in the country), the human resources available, and whether Austria had strong direct bilateral links or worked in collaboration as part of the EU in-country representation.
- 118. There was consistent feedback from Ambassadors and Heads of Coordination Offices that they maintained dialogue between them for mutual information sharing. This related to both the key priorities for ADA (based on the projects and programmes) and for MFA (in terms of foreign policy considerations). This seemed much more about individuals ensuring that they were informed of developments or priorities rather than a joint agenda in which political dialogue (MFA) and policy dialogue (ADA) are planned to complement and reinforce each other in relation to human rights. With a more intentional approach, one might anticipate observing alignment between the objectives of the programmes or projects, policy dialogue and the political dialogue priorities in various fora. There are broader considerations in terms of relations between countries that are more likely to be the focus of engagement, but within which human rights was sometimes at the fore.
- 119. There was not enough data on the types and content of engagement at bilateral level that incorporated human rights issues to ascertain the degree to which different types of human rights (economic, social and cultural rights) were equally represented. Dialogue was more wide-ranging, particularly where there are sensitivities with government partners. There was also political sensitivity regarding the language of human rights which seemed mainly linked to the specific political viewpoints of the government partner rather than a government's

human rights record per se. The issues and topic within human rights could be relatively easily raised with all government partners, but sometimes Coordination Office staff avoided the term 'human rights' as needed.

120. But what is not clear is whether there are specific human rights political dialogue objectives for either MFA through Ambassadors or for ADA through Coordination Office engagement with government partners. When a country engages in political dialogue at multilateral level through the UN system, there are multiple agenda items and issues that Austria will have formal positions on. There are processes with negotiations that Austria has to navigate, and objectives might shift depending on those negotiations, but the outcome in the form of a resolution or agreement signals a result, which may need Austria to re-position itself depending on future processes.
121. At the bilateral level, it may be perceived as much less appropriate for Austria to have 'a position' on an issue, when the principles of development (and human rights) are focused on partner-led prioritisation. This is where long-term engagement becomes important, not solely longevity by virtue of being somewhere for a long time, but the forward-looking development goals and plans of national partners. The utility of the governments' own national development plans and roadmaps are vital here, as are the SDGs.
122. What appears to be absent are clear statements about what ADC's engagement will be at a policy level, whereas it is more obvious for the funding mechanisms for projects that are more explicit in the country strategies. As mentioned earlier in relation to EQ3 there are political risks of having an overt human rights position and direction. This may be mitigated by developing priorities for human rights outcomes explicitly in consultation with the governments of the partner countries, just as the current country strategies already are.
123. Project and programme documents do not usually incorporate an explicit advocacy component, or references to a process for informing political dialogue on the basis of project or programme results and outcomes. Yet interviews have shown that experience from projects has sometimes been taken into account in the preparation of specific elements of political dialogue with beneficiary countries, for example in Uganda (in relation to discrimination against LGBTQ people) and Kosovo (gender equality). Experience from past projects has also been used by Austrian diplomats to illustrate their positions in multilateral fora. Such instances of advocacy based on experience from ADA projects and programmes appear to have been the exception rather than the rule, and to depend primarily on individual diplomats' personal experience. A more systematic linkage of experience from projects and political dialogue planning would probably enrich the dialogue, and programmes implemented with ADC support could be more systematically complemented with calls for specific legal, regulatory or practical steps that relevant authorities (national or local) in partner countries should take to enhance human rights safeguards addressed by these interventions. This advocacy does not need to be made public because doing so may be counter-productive, but ADC can ensure that mechanisms and strategies are in place for addressing the relevant issues with appropriate counterparts. A recommendation to that effect is made below.

Modalities of bilateral engagement

124. From individual experiences of country offices, it was not surprising that there were diverse considerations given the uniqueness of each national context. Several modalities were mentioned regarding political dialogue on human rights:
 - Relatively informal and ongoing engagement with counterparts within the partner government;

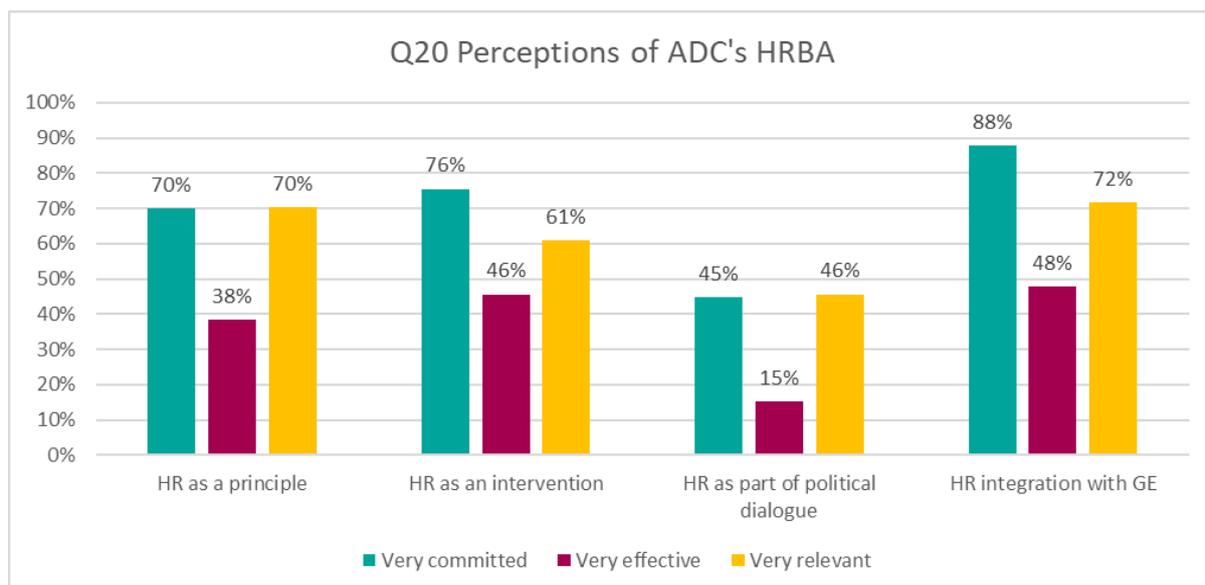
- Formal political dialogue processes and meetings; and
- Specific human rights focused initiatives with both civil society and national government partners such as preparatory work for UPRs.

125. These kinds of activities may be visible in annual work plans for Country Coordination Offices or for Section VII in MFA (they were not requested or seen as part of this evaluation), but are not visible in the publicly available country strategies. Stakeholders reported that there are advantages and benefits to all of them in terms of raising human rights. In some country contexts more formal political dialogues would be welcomed where there is an established expectation or convention that human rights issues are on the agenda for such discussions. Formal political dialogue, however, may not mitigate concerns among stakeholders in countries where there are greater risks to engaging in discussions on human rights for some individuals. Perceived and potentially actual risk is greater for national staff who do not have diplomatic status and therefore have no international protections. It was not ascertained whether this deterred staff from raising issues, or whether they raised issues anyway and felt more exposed for doing so.

Visibility of political dialogue among stakeholders

126. Human rights as part of political dialogue was the least visible component of ADC's HRBA among survey respondents. ADC was considered 'very committed' to human rights as part of political dialogue by 45 per cent of respondents who answered the question, and was viewed as 'very effective' by only 15 per cent of respondents (Figure 11).
127. Qualitative responses touched on the political dialogue very positively, for example, citing ADC's commitment to human rights in political dialogue being instrumental in influencing justice institutions and civil society organisations to prioritise and mainstream human rights. When stakeholders were less positive they questioned the coherence of ADC's commitment to human rights with political and economic priorities. The critique refers to Austria's economic priorities being more important than those of ADC.

Figure 11: Survey results: perceptions of commitment, effectiveness and relevance across the three interventions of HRBA and the integration of human rights and gender equality



Linking bilateral engagement with international processes

128. The engagement in international processes seems to have useful benefits too in terms of increasing dialogue on human rights because monitoring mechanisms such as the UPR are truly universal. Therefore, Austria is as subject to the UPR as are its partner governments in the 11 priority countries. There is a levelling and equalizing effect to this rather than a risk of being perceived as an initiative that is one-way from donor-country to recipient-country. Austria has worked with partners in-country to prepare and respond to UPRs, and in turn has received increased comments from partners countries as part of its own UPR.

Multilateral engagement

129. Multilateral engagement was not an explicit component of this evaluation question, but it emerged as an important component of Austria's political and policy dialogue both at the EU and UN levels. The EU engagement obviously takes place in Brussels, but Austria is also a member state of EU delegations to its partner countries, and frequently contributes to EU member discussions as part of EU dialogue with partner governments. The engagement at UN level is also important and there is no doubt that Austria is an actively engaged member state seeking and gaining election to committees and commissions over the years and participating vigorously despite its modest resources. Testament to its commitment in this area is its success in being elected to hold the presidency of the Human Rights Council (2020).

EQ9 Coherence of the HRBA and other areas of engagement

EQ9. What attempts have been made to combine ADC's HRBA and mainstreaming of gender equality into a complementary framework and to integrate the HRBA in the planning and implementation of strategic evaluations – and is there room for improvement?

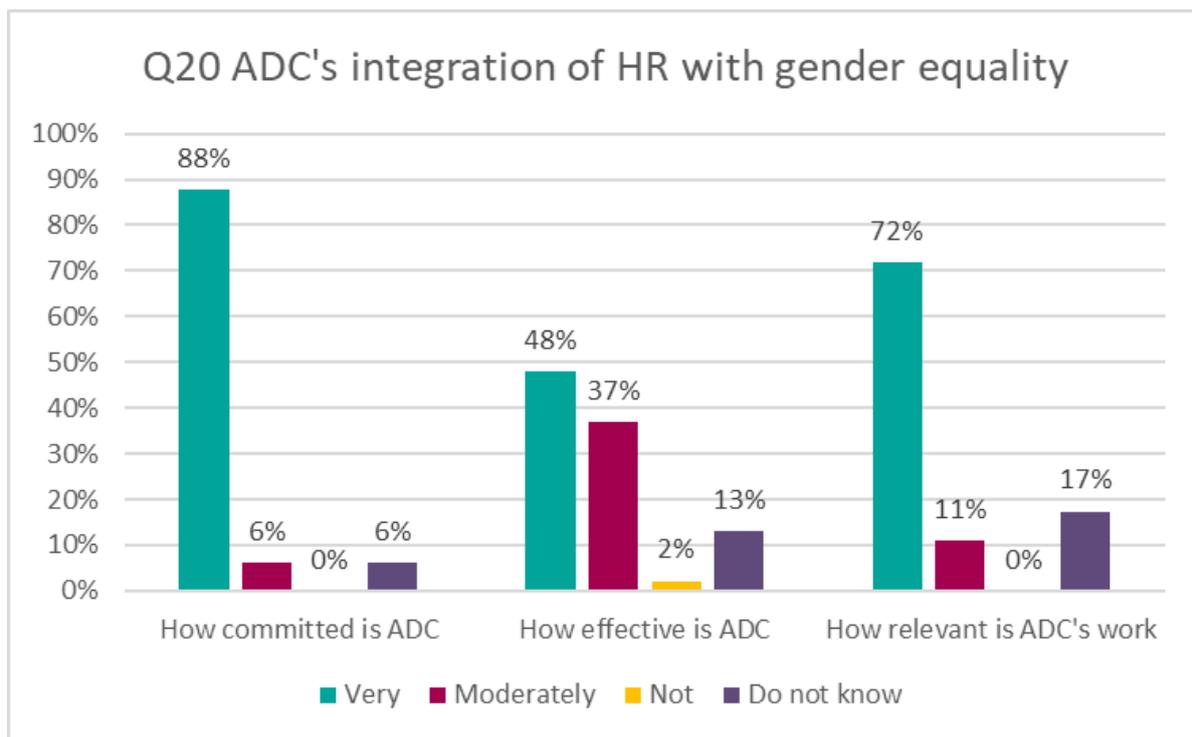
Key findings

- 9.1 There is strong integration of gender equality into ADC, but integration of human rights and gender equality is less strong because the latter is prioritised structurally and politically, and almost seen as a substitute for the HRBA framework.
- 9.2 Strategic evaluations are currently not required as standard to use normative principles as part of their design and implementation, nor are human rights principles part of the decision-making process for prioritisation.

HRBA and gender equality mainstreaming

- 130. Human rights as a principle remains embedded in ADC's work and the recent introduction of a strong emphasis on gender equality has taken greater prominence in processes, particularly around programme or project approval and design. The EGSIM manual has references to human rights principles and human rights considerations are explicit within some of the thematic areas within the 'Standards' section, although human rights does not have its own subsection there. But in the checklist itself there is greater clarity within the 'human rights and social standards' criteria, indicating the extent to which human rights remain a key priority.
- 131. In the responses to survey Q21 (see Figure 10, section EQ6) the three strongly perceived priorities of ADC most frequently cited were: empowerment of women and girls (92 per cent); gender equality (89 per cent); and women's rights (86 per cent).
- 132. When specifically asked about ADC's integration of human rights with gender equality (Figure 12), survey respondents were most positive about this aspect of ADC's HRBA (comparing the three levels of intervention). 88 per cent of respondents thought that ADC is 'very' committed to integration, 48 per cent of respondents thought that ADC is 'very' effective, and 72 per cent thought that ADC's integration of human rights and gender equality is 'very' relevant.
- 133. In dialogue and in consultations, however, stakeholders provided a more complex picture of the relationship between human rights and gender equality. The two concepts were often seen as an either/or rather than one being an integral part of the other (in either direction). Given the political priority that requires a quota of projects to have either Gender Marker 1 or 2, there was a perception among some stakeholders that gender equality had almost become a substitute for the HRBA framework.

Figure 12: Survey results: perceptions of ADC's integration of human rights with gender equality



134. It should not be underestimated that there is little capacity for division of labour when a new policy directive comes into force, and internal staff are required to prioritise their limited time. In a small Country Coordination Office of perhaps just 3 persons, or for a programme manager with responsibility for several countries, doing more of X may lead to doing less of Y. Part of the challenge is that human rights as an underlying principle is relatively cemented, but it is much less visible as an overarching and long-term objective. It is then less clear how all the other issues (gender, environment, social inclusion, etc.) that get more or less priority at certain times (e.g. within a three-year programme cycle) are actually part of a much longer-term vision for ADC's approach to human rights. Without addressing these more explicitly as human rights issues, ADC misses the opportunity to emphasise the consistency of its approach across the board. While gender equality and women's empowerment are clearly acknowledged internationally as integral parts of the human rights agenda, the links between human rights and climate change remain under-represented. The impetus for engaging in these issues is reflected in international pushback against challenges to the universality of human rights reported by those stakeholders most engaged in political dialogue.
135. It should be noted also that prioritising a given area of human rights (such as gender) is not in itself a sign of disregard for an integrated HRBA. While recognising that human rights are indivisible by nature, it is perfectly legitimate for ADC, in a given programming period, to prioritise areas of human rights in accordance with a particular country strategy. This was arguably the case in Kosovo, where ADC correctly assessed the scope for a gender equality approach to achieve a substantial impact. In a different context such as Uganda, the commitment to LGBTQ rights was just as strategic in that it reflected a principled Austrian position, even if it was not likely to achieve a short-term impact.
136. It is important also to note that many areas of Austrian development cooperation, ranging from the fight against climate change to support for vocational education, are increasingly recognised as aspects of human rights, even though the formal OECD nomenclature does not

facilitate recognition of this fact. Interviewees – diplomats as well as ADA staff – explicitly highlighted activities in these fields as contributing to the exercise of human rights by young people.

HRBA within strategic evaluations

137. UNEG standards on incorporating HRBA and gender mainstreaming into evaluations combines two aspects – how the principles of human rights and gender equality are implemented as part of the process of an evaluation, and the extent to which an evaluation determines that normative principles were incorporated and sought to achieve human rights and gender equality outcomes.²⁶ For the purposes of EQ9, this discussion focuses on the first aspect only: the integration of HRBA in the planning and implementation of strategic evaluations.
138. There is not currently a requirement for strategic evaluations to incorporate the normative principles into their design or conduct. The 2019 Evaluation Policy of the Austrian Development Cooperation and its theory of change identify the intended impact of the policy in the context of ADC’s contribution to the 2030 agenda. Although HRBA is not explicitly cited in the policy, relevant elements of participation and partnership are included in the standards and principles.²⁷
139. Participation and empowerment is the key principle to consider within evaluation implementation because it can form the mechanism for ensuring the other principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, and accountability. ADC expects the process of conducting strategic evaluations to be participatory. The evaluation policy states, in relation to the design phase, that “ideally, relevant stakeholders are involved at this stage to promote transparency, participation and ownership”. At the evaluation inception phase, ADC standard procedure is to work with external evaluators to map stakeholders in order to invite their participation. While the stakeholder mapping for the purposes of consultations and data collection includes individuals both internal and external to ADC, in general the term ‘stakeholders’ is used narrowly to refer to internal individuals, such as the members of the evaluation reference group. Typically in international expectations of HRBA, stakeholders are more broadly defined to include rights-holders, duty-bearers, and wider partners, including civil society organisations, development cooperation partners, the private sector, and any group that has an interest in or is affected by the strategy or intervention. Their participation in an evaluation could be as an informant, a member of the reference group, as an evaluator, or the audience to be informed of the evaluation.²⁸ This means there are opportunities to expand the approach to participation in ADC’s strategic evaluations by including a wider range of ‘stakeholders’ in the mapping exercise, and also considering the extent to which one or more rights holders and duty bearers (or representatives of) participate in key decision-making and advisory mechanisms such as the reference group. The approach can also start earlier in the process by including civil society and/or government partners in consultations regarding decisions around strategic evaluation priorities.
140. The second theme of incorporating HRBA into strategic evaluations is ethical approaches; these relate to the specific ways of managing individuals’ participation in evaluations. Ethical

²⁶ UNEG, Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance, 2011.

²⁷ III.a. Standards and Principles for Good Evaluation of the Evaluation Policy of Austrian Development Cooperation, 2019.

²⁸ Ibid, Table 2.2: How to populate and use the stakeholder analysis matrix in UNEG.

approaches incorporate key principles, such as managing power dynamics, ensuring that participation is voluntary and not coerced, facilitating and ensuring informed consent (which is ongoing and can be withdrawn), transparency about how information will be used, a mechanism for raising concerns, and assuring confidentiality and anonymity.²⁹ Ethical considerations incorporate the data collected in terms of the ability to disaggregate by key characteristics and responsible data management across the 'data lifecycle'.³⁰ The highest standard is seeking and gaining formal ethical review board approval for evaluation designs and implementation. This may be more typically expected when evaluations or research include methods of collecting data from rights holders and community members, but from the perspective of an ethical review board, any research or review process that includes persons should be considered from the appropriate ethical perspectives.

²⁹ For example, for this evaluation of ADC's HRBA, the evaluators prepared a one-page briefing for these reasons. The briefing informed participants of the purpose of the evaluation and their participation, provided the contact details of the evaluation team (so that consent could be revised or withdrawn later), and of ADC's evaluation manager (for the evaluation team's accountability so that participants could raise concerns directly with ADC). At the start of each interview or focus group discussion, the evaluators drew the participants' attention to the brief, emphasised the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation and the ongoing nature of consent, explaining that participants could contact them later to add or retract information, or withdraw from the evaluation entirely.

³⁰ For example, see Oxfam's Responsible Data Management Toolkit, 2017.

4. Conclusions

A. The wide-ranging evidence of HRBA implementation does not always match perceptions particularly among stakeholders internal to ADC.

Findings: 1.2 — 1.3 — 5.3 — 6.1 — 7.1 — 7.2 — 8.1 — 8.3

141. ADC's HRBA seems to be well mainstreamed as both a principle and through the focus of interventions. The analysis of the sample of projects across four countries identified in particular the consistency with which interventions aimed to address HRBA normatively through how they are implemented. In interviews, external stakeholders confirmed this from their perspectives including among ADC partners. The experiences of internal and external stakeholders do not always align, however. In some ways this can be attributed to the seriousness with which internal stakeholders view the importance of both human rights as a principle and particularly human rights outcomes through specific interventions. There are high expectations among many internal stakeholders that ADC's HRBA should be more comprehensive, more consistent, more prominent.

B. There are mixed messages about the importance and positioning of human rights.

Findings: 2.2 — 3.1 — 3.3 — 4.1 — 8.1

142. Uncertainty prevailed among some stakeholders about whether human rights will always be an important priority for ADC, because within ADA there is the reality that strategic decisions are made by MFA. Yet the country strategies, led by MFA in consultation with ADA including the coordination offices in-country, seem to retain their focus on human rights. This is because each country strategy builds on the previous one, such as in Uganda where ADC has prioritised governance and therefore is likely to build on this going forward. This does not mean, however, that strategies do not evolve over time to incorporate new areas of focus.
143. The limitations of being a relatively small development partner are felt strongly by internal stakeholders: too few staff, too little influence in the broader development sector. It is also experienced somewhat by partners, but they were much more aware of the advantages of partnering with ADC as a small donor. And there is uncertainty about decisions being made outside ADA that directly affect the scope and focus of work (e.g. the choice of priority countries).
144. Overall resources are spread thinly, and particularly for the technical advisor roles whose remit includes human rights, governance and migration. Arguably, ADC is experiencing the very typical mainstreaming dilemma where on the one hand, human rights should be fully mainstreamed which means that it is everyone's responsibility. On the other hand, this risks human rights becoming 'no-one's responsibility'. There is a sense the ADC approach to human rights is not 'led' or directed from anywhere specific within the structures. The human rights agenda can be perceived as static and contained within the policy and manual, rather than dynamic and with a direction advanced by, for example, an individual, team, working group or senior leadership.

C. The foundations of ADC's HRBA are unique and present an opportunity to reinvigorate the HRBA.

Findings: 1.1 — 2.3 — 5.1 — 7.2 — 8.2

145. The unique history of HRBA in ADC from the Vienna Conference onwards has contributed to ADC's genuine and continued championing of human rights. The policy and manual 'manifested' ADC's commitment, and these were preceded by the Government of Austria's commitment to human rights in development cooperation being enshrined in law. Not every government can make this claim. This therefore represents a unique opportunity to revisit and capitalise on this important legacy and confirm and renew ADC's legitimacy in human rights. There is potential for this political and social capital to diminish unless an obvious externally-visible stance on human rights is taken. While some stakeholders think this is already happening, ADC needs to manage these perceptions and address the need for a more focused approach in practice.

D. There are knowledge and resource gaps, but these are keenly felt due to the need for greater knowledge management.

Findings: 1.2 — 2.1 — 4.1

146. This conclusion focuses on the feedback from stakeholders, particularly within ADA, but has important considerations for external stakeholders as well. The perception among internal stakeholders who were interviewed was that implementing human rights principles is essential but not sufficient, and there is much more scope and need to influence human rights outcomes. This can be a continual perception when working in the human rights sector where results are frequently intangible, nor are they at scale, leaving practitioners with a sense of not achieving.
147. The perceptions did not match the evidence that this evaluation found, wherein numerous good practices and innovative human rights work was identified. The discrepancy between perceptions internally and the realities in-country appears to be due to several structural factors within ADA particularly. The first is that the human resources are stretched thinly, particularly key thematic technical roles such as the advisor posts with responsibility for human rights, governance and migration. The second factor is the overall responsibilities for all staff who have seen bureaucratic requirements increase to accommodate the compliance and risk management processes. This is not to suggest that such requirements are not important, but the role of many individuals within ADC is much absorbed by these processes leaving little or no space for either strategic thinking about achieving human rights or other priorities, or even for knowing what is happening in other parts of the organisation.
148. This last point speaks to a knowledge gap among staff within ADC, which is not a minor inconvenience but rather a notable missed opportunity to promote learning and exchange of knowledge of practical responses at programmatic level within ADC. It is also a barrier to promoting coherence of ADC's HRBA.
149. There are also missed opportunities for ADC to promote and champion their partners' work both within Austria and at international level. ADC itself is highly visible in certain arenas (undoubtedly for example by currently holding the presidency of the UN Human Rights Council), but more broadly ADC is not presented within and outside Austria in dialogue and debate on human rights. It is therefore not making use of its own expertise as well as that of its partners to increase exposure of human rights issues.

E. The experiences of partners working with ADC in the promotion of HRBA are mostly very positive.

Findings: 3.2 — 4.2 — 5.1 — 6.2

- 150. Key drivers of the relevance and coherence of ADC's HRBA are its partners. Human rights outcomes take time to achieve and there are frequently stages on the way to further human rights outcomes. In this regard, the approach of ADC to work with numerous partners over the long term is an essential component – and this includes government partners as well as civil society organisations both in Austria and in the priority countries.
- 151. Not only does ADC work with partners over the long term, but its civil society relationships are also built carefully over time and based on identifying those partners where there is genuine alignment with human rights principles and objectives. This means that frequently partner organisations bring their own highly skilled expertise in human rights and elements of HRBA. ADC recognises this and there were good practices identified where partner organisations are drawn on for their expertise and to work with other ADC partners.
- 152. From where most partners sit, working with ADC is an experience that prioritises human rights, and the compliance and risks management processes that they go through are important but not burdensome efforts. Whereas ADA staff spent a significant amount of time working through project concept notes, project proposals, EGSIMs and other requirements, each partner only needs to work on their own periodically. Whereas ADA staff have the view that they don't have time to follow up on HRBA once a project is started, partner staff value the annual reporting process and take seriously the questions asked of them regarding their HRBA in implementation. Overwhelmingly their experience is that ADC take a strong interest in follow-up.

F. There are some more challenging issues about HRBA prioritisation that ADC needs to bear in mind when working with partners.

Findings: 4.2 — 5.2 — 6.2

- 153. In addition to the vastly positive feedback from partner organisations, there were also signs that ADC's HRBA can be a source of discontent, for example when it is perceived to be required with different standards across stakeholders. Both internally and externally stakeholders observed that the requirements regarding HRBA differed for civil society and the private sector. This was seen simply as unfair and not because civil society organisations want to do less, but because if ADC, its partners and stakeholders uphold the importance of HRBA, then expectations should be higher than they currently are for the private sector.
- 154. All civil society partners recognised the importance of the several priorities of ADC, including HRBA, gender mainstreaming, the environment and disability, and none would argue for these to be downgraded or ignored. But there was a perception that ADC passes on the requirements around HRBA and other thematic priorities to partners without considering the implications for them either bureaucratically or technically. Sometimes ADC has to respond rapidly to new policy priorities, but pressure for rapid response is then also placed on partners, creating a similar strain on them.
- 155. Something that civil society partners in both Austria and in the priority countries find as a deficit is the opportunity for dialogue with ADC staff. They would like to discuss human rights issues, contexts and approaches in their projects – what they are doing and how they could do it better or more; they would like to engage by bringing learning from their projects to ADC and other partners, as well as learning from them.

G. The relationship between HRBA and gender equality is at risk of being seen as competitive rather than reinforcing.

Findings: 9.1

156. For those who work at the frontline of realising the human rights of women, there is no question that gender equality is an integral component of human rights. However, for others whose work may have a different thematic focus, there can be a sense that the priorities of incorporating HRBA and gender equality (and other thematic areas) create pressures. Internal stakeholders, in a particular team of a small Country Coordination Office may be few in number with restricted time making it difficult to shift their focus to incorporate any new initiative. But there is also a perception among some stakeholders, both internal and external, that human rights and gender equality are parallel concepts.

H. Strategic evaluations can more comprehensively incorporate HRBA principles, building on the existing practices and commitments to participation.

Findings: 9.2

157. The core HRBA element of 'participation' is already an expectation of how strategic evaluations will be implemented, and there is room to expand this to include a wider range of individuals and organisations with an interest in each evaluation. Increased participation of persons, including at early stages and in decision-making mechanisms, would in turn strengthen ADC's accountability to external stakeholders. Ethical practices within evaluation implementation provide a further route to implementing the HRBA principles in evaluation and will ensure the responsibilities of external evaluators are in line with ADC's commitments. This would build on the standards and principles for evaluation already outlined in ADC's evaluation policy.

5. Good practice examples

In-depth and in-person programme design and risk assessment

158. Stakeholders internal to ADC who were involved in the design of the EU-funded work in Sofala, Mozambique were struck by the experience of the process which differed from usual. Given the size of the budget and the requirements of the EU funding mechanism, additional attention was paid to the project's design and risk assessment, with the several technical advisors and other stakeholders meeting in person and on site to plan the work. From the perspectives of internal stakeholders, this allowed a much fuller and richer consideration of the multiple human rights considerations, both in terms of incorporating normative principles into the programme's implementation, and the intended human rights-related outcomes. Such in-person engagement for designing and initiating a project has become a rarity because of the time and resources limitations on staff.

In-country capacity strengthening and training activities

159. In at least two priority countries internal and external stakeholders described a context in which capacity strengthening in the form of training on human rights was a regular feature of ADC engagement with partners. The Coordination Offices organised these either annually or twice a year, sometimes delivered by ADA's Advisors or by other external experts. Examples are in Kosovo and Bhutan, and there are likely to be others with partners also affirming through the survey that they have received dedicated training (survey respondents based in Albania, Austria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Uganda). However, this was seemingly not consistent across all partners with only 25 per cent of partner respondents in the survey confirming the same experience.
160. Providing such training has the direct effect of strengthening capacity on human rights knowledge. This is particularly true when human rights training is highly tailored to specific country contexts to support more direct explicit application of learning and knowledge. In general, training also has wider impacts as part of the ongoing relationship building and engagement between partners and ADC.

Partners as experts

161. A partner relationship in Kosovo in particular stood out as one of trust built over a long period, and one that has become an example of mutual respect and two-way provision of technical expertise. ADC's relationship with Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) stretches back over 12 years and started with a very small grant to enable the writing and production of a book documenting the progress and failures of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 a decade on. After this successful initiative, KWN entered into a three-year programme funding cycles with ADC. The importance of the longevity of the relationship was highlighted by the partner organisation, which has supported long-term processes to advocate for improvements in the law and policy, eventually seeing through the legislative changes needed, and now turning to the task of holding duty-bearers to account for implementation. Along the way, ADC has been a proactive supporter of KWN, and the Country Coordination Office has initiated the promotion of the partner and their work by introducing them to other potential donors with similar priorities.
162. The expertise of KWN has also been capitalised on, and ADC draws on KWN staff to provide gender equality and technical expertise to some of its other partners in Kosovo. The

mechanism for this is a form of 'helpdesk' built into the programme funding agreement which ADC and other partners draw on.

163. The relationship has become one of mutual benefit through the exchange of each partner's expertise and abilities to contribute to the other's objectives.

Example of a project focused on economic and social rights that integrates HRBA fully

Support to livelihoods of drought affected households and resilience building of vulnerable groups in Warder and Kebredahar Woredas of Ethiopia's Somali region implemented by UNDP, FAO and UNICEF (Project No. 3_2824_002017)

The project is conceptualized around the right to food and access to resources, and aimed at vulnerable communities, specifically women, youth, internally displaced persons (IPDs) and people with disability (PWDs) in the drought affected locations. HRBA is specifically mentioned in the project documents as well as several key HRBA principles (though sometimes using different words such as vulnerability, vulnerable communities, resilience building) have been applied as core project approaches. Application of HRBA is evident both at the design, implementation, and reporting phases.

The evidence suggests that HRBA has been fully mainstreamed in the intervention. The project conceptualization also draws on the principle of 'leave no-one behind' and is explicitly mentioned in the project document.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities to reduce the impact of droughts and climate risks in Warder and Kebredahar Woredas of Ethiopia's Somali Region. As such, the principles of inclusion, participation, empowerment and gender equality have been used explicitly in the project design and implementation. The project inception phase was to provide the opportunity to identify and address the varied needs of vulnerable social groups, for example IDPs and PWDs in camps. Community participatory planning has been used as a tool to ensure inclusion of the targeted communities' priorities.

The project is also drawing on the existing indigenous knowledge applied in the traditional management system (with regards to ecosystem and food production) to build resilience of the targeted communities. The project identified engagement, consulting, and dialogue with community as a key lesson learned to understand the existing indigenous knowledge on ecosystem management applicable to the project implementation.

The Results Framework includes gender and social inclusion related target indicators to ensure that the project also monitors the impact on the social aspects of the project. The project has been assigned GEN 2 marker (significant focus on gender/women). The ToC has an emphasis on vulnerable women, men, boys and girls, as well as people with disabilities to increase their access to livelihoods assets as a means to reduce their vulnerability to shocks.

Example of a project that integrates normative principles without explicitly mentioning 'HRBA'

'Do not make me suffer', Reducing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Dugda, Bora, ATJK, Zeway Dugda and SNNPR Tulla sub city, Ethiopia, implemented by Caritas Austria and two partners: the Meki and the Hawassa Social and Development Coordination offices of the Ethiopian Catholic Church

The project is using a focus on human rights, specifically sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, aimed at eradication of FGM. The design and purpose of the project are in line with HRBA.

Specific project elements and project approaches include the HRBA principles – **inclusion, empowerment, gender equality, accountability, participation**. The target groups are primarily girls and women both as victims and as agents for change, but the project is also targeting the cutters in a non-discriminatory way. The project places strong emphasis on participation and has elements such as community conversations where the community at large participates in the discussions around FGM and proposes solutions.

As part of the gender equality component, the project is engaging boys as well in addressing FGM and focuses on FGM as a human rights violation as opposed to an issue related only to women and girls.

Despite having a strong direct focus on human rights, HRBA is not mentioned at all in any of the project documents. Some of the HRBA principles are mentioned and addressed using a different word/terminology. The project is coherent in terms of the ongoing policy and strategy on FGM as well as other previous projects, organisations engaged in addressing FGM issues have been used to double efforts and increase effectiveness.

Example of a human rights focused project in Kosovo

Further Advancing Women's Rights in Kosovo implemented by the Kosovo Women's Network (Project No. 8_8299_002018)

The Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) seeks to continue its positive cooperation with the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), building on prior results, best practices and lessons learned through this project. The foreseen outcome is that women-led civil society organizations (WCOSOs), the Kosovo Lobby for Gender Equality (KLGE), officials, and development partners will have improved capacities to support, protect and promote women's and girls' rights and interests.

KWN will further strengthen the capacities of the Kosovo Lobby for Gender Equality and its members, which include approximately 800 diverse women in politics and civil society, municipal Gender Equality Officers (MGEOs), and men who advocate together for gender equality, tackling inequalities identified at local and national levels. The project will support cross-cutting themes of governance and gender equality by bringing women, including youth, the elderly, disabled, impoverished, marginalized and disadvantaged persons into 'political and social decision-making processes. By strengthening local WCOSOs, KWN enables them to monitor and advocate to governments, encouraging good governance, better implementation of existing policies and improved transparency.

The action will also target development partners in Kosovo who have expressed their needs for tailored support in mainstreaming gender in their programmes, including related to GAP II and SDGs. The project is applying the principles of empowerment, inclusion, participation, gender equality and accountability, thus addressing majority of the HRBA principles.

The anticipated impact will contribute to furthering gender equality, thereby improving the lives of women and men, and will advocate for the implementation of gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) legal frameworks. It contributes to achieving ADA's strategic objectives, including conflict prevention, reducing inequalities, furthering gender equality, promoting good governance and human rights. Evaluation of the project concluded that, the overall satisfaction of KWN member organizations with regards to the Kosovo Women's Fund (KWF) is high, and members' needs are met.

Sustainable changes have been achieved so far, especially law enforcement for marginalized groups in Kosovo, healthcare, inclusion of women with different abilities (WwDA), economic empowerment, and advocacy on the drafting of laws, public policies, and other documents regarding women empowerment.

In addition to the many achievements of KWN with ADA support, in particular the FAWR project, KWN's success in gender mainstreaming of other organizations (members and donors) in Kosovo and regionally have also been praised.

Example of a partner's integration of HRBA, disability and gender quality in inclusive education

MY RIGHT – Inclusive Education in Armenia and Kosovo implemented by Caritas Austria and Caritas Kosovo (Project No. 6_8108_012019)

The project contributes to an inclusive and equitable quality education for all, through increased inclusiveness in 22 educational institutions in Shirak region (Armenia) and Prizren region (Kosovo) [12 in Armenia; 10 in Kosovo]. At the core of the project is the human rights model of disability. The proposed activities seek to provide higher-quality social services for children with disabilities in the selected municipalities, facilitate their inclusion through a transition plan (individual plan) which will include all components such as agreements with schools where children would be enrolled, ensuring teaching assistance, and individual development reports for children.

It also contributes to strengthening the capacities of educators/teachers in preschool and elementary schools and the sustainability of an Early Childhood Education centre (ECEC) as a Community Based Rehabilitation centre for children with disabilities. At the core of the project are inclusion and participation principles, and there is extensive reference to these principles in the project documents reviewed, and they have been applied at the design and operational stages.

Some specific activities implemented within the project also increase the human rights focus and applicability with the HRBA. During the inception phase for instance, parents of children with disabilities, school representatives/staff of preschool and lower secondary schools, including teachers and Caritas programme management staff were engaged in a workshop to analyse problems associated with disability in Kosovo making the joint analysis a basis for the intervention plans.

There is also a focus on other categories of inclusion in the project with a multi-ethnic approach being another strategy for inclusion complementary to HRBA. For instance, the existing ECE Centre in Prizren is open to all ethnic groups and (religious) minorities living in Prizren and suburban areas such as Boshniak, RAE (Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians) and Turkish communities. The ECE staff within the project has knowledge and capacities to provide support in their mother tongue. Several schools selected in the project are officially part of the multi-language education system.

Addressing the gender dimensions of disability, gender analysis has been carried out during the inception phase which aimed at understanding specific challenges and barriers to the education system and the communities in the project regions which might affect girls and boys with disabilities differently. Topics of special interest were for example the uneven gender distribution among girls and boys with disabilities: significantly more boys than girls are diagnosed as living with a disability.

6. Recommendations

1. Increase understanding and knowledge among ADA and Coordination Office programme staff regarding how HRBA is implemented in practice by drawing on the existing wealth of knowledge and expertise both internally and through partners.

Conclusions: A — B — D — F — G

Action for	ADA	Timeframe	Medium-term
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164. Rationale: There is an experience and perception (A) of a deficit of knowledge among ADA staff and some partners on how HRBA can be implemented in practice across the full range of ADC projects and programmes (D). Yet at the same time there are highly qualified and experienced staff and partners implementing very technical responses, in terms of both applying normative principles and implementing diverse human rights focused interventions. The exposure to this variation of implementation among ADA staff and partners is, however, limited due to the specific and separate responsibilities of each person in their respective position. The kind of knowledge that is in demand is technical and context specific to support project implementation rather than generic learning about human rights broadly. Therefore, there are missed opportunities for compiling and sharing learning across ADC's approaches to HRBA. Learning and capacity can be built by strengthening knowledge management within ADA particularly, and through its work with partners (F). This would strengthen understanding and reinforce ADC's commitment to HRBA (B). Focussing on existing good practices would also demonstrate the varied ways that both HRBA and gender equality are effectively prioritised and implemented (G).

2. Strengthen and make more visible the alignment between policy dialogue and interventions (projects and programmes).

Conclusions: E — F

Action for	ADC (MFA and ADA jointly)	Timeframe	Long-term
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165. Rationale: ADC has the potential to take a convening role to facilitate a joint (MFA and ADA) process to emphasise and demonstrate where there are shared human rights objectives between the priorities of programme implementation and policy dialogue. There is an opportunity for this, particularly at the country level through the process of implementing the country strategies on an ongoing basis. This would have the potential to strengthen the relationships with partners further (E) through working on shared objectives and increasing the opportunities for dialogue with and between partners (F).

3. Increase generation and access to a diverse range and state-of-the art formats of tools, guidance and resources for ADA and Coordination Office programme staff to implement normative principles and technical human rights interventions.

Conclusions: B — D — F — G

Action for	MFA and ADA	Timeframe	Long-term
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166. Rationale: There was inconsistency among stakeholders internal to ADC and among partners regarding the extent they reported being inducted into and exposed to the existing materials on HRBA (B). A number of resources are generated internally by ADA staff including handbooks and focus papers. And yet there continues to be a keenly felt appetite for more technical learning (D). This recommendation is complementary to recommendation 1 but emphasises more self-directed learning among staff to increase their knowledge through greater access to a variety of resources. There has been a proliferation in online materials and resources over the past 12 months during the COVID-19 pandemic as universities have expanded or opened up their online courses. In addition, UN agencies frequently provide courses and resources (e.g. UNICEF’s Agora). Nevertheless, there remains a need for internally generated resources as well, in order to communicate ADC’s specific understanding or approaches in certain areas to new staff joining the organisation and to partners (F). An example would be how ADC approaches both HRBA and gender equality in ways that are complementary or mutually reinforcing (G).

4. Create a visible direction and focal point for human rights that both promotes and brings together the combined levels of ADC’s HRBA: policy dialogue, normative principles and human rights interventions.

Conclusions: A — B — C — E — F

Action for	MFA with ADA	Timeframe	Long-term
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167. Rationale: There is an opportunity for re-imagining ADC’s leadership in human rights in a way that creates a much stronger direction for human rights across both MFA and ADA (A and B). This recommendation is complementary to recommendation 2. The latter focuses more on how to reinforce the links between policy dialogue and interventions (projects and programmes) at the country level, while this recommendation considers how the links between the two can take place at a more strategic level and more internationally, drawing on the experience and operations of ADA and partners. Such a focal point would promote the direction of work across all human rights channels, facilitating the connections between Austria’s human rights work from multilateral to operational levels (E and F). The aim is to send a strong message externally and internally on what Austria is aiming to achieve through its commitment to human rights (B), and one that builds on its legitimate legacy and history for example in the lead up to the 30th anniversary of the 1993 Vienna World Conference (C).

5. Promote greater access to technical advice and create space for programme managers and partners to engage with that technical advice to achieve a more systematic investment and commitment to integrating HRBA into all projects.

Conclusions: E — F

Action for	ADA	Timeframe	Long-term
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168. Rationale: The single advisor position in ADA covering three important technical areas creates a more or less impossible task for the person in the role to take a more strategic overview of the human rights work that is taking place within ADC. But similarly, the programme managers are in the same position, with their time spent on reacting to requirements and not having time for strategic conversations with their colleagues or the partners. The programme managers also see a need for more ‘space’ for dialogue on human rights implementation and there is a demand from partners for the same (E and F). In this regard, ADA should build on the recommendation from the 2019 EGSIM evaluation to “skew towards collaboration” to increase dialogue for human rights prioritisation and implementation.

6. Use the opportunity of this evaluation to engage with a wider range of internal and external stakeholders regarding ADC’s HRBA.

Conclusions: ALL

Action for	ADC Coordination Offices/Embassies, MFA and ADA	Timeframe	Medium term
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169. Rationale: The history of ADC’s HRBA is long and unique (C), but the focused attention on bringing all three levels together is infrequent, and this strategic evaluation is the first that aims to do this. The recommendation goes beyond disseminating the findings of the evaluation, but proposes that the dissemination is strategized with a purpose to more broadly engage a wider range of audiences and stakeholders (A). It speaks to the normative principle of participation and the opportunity presents to take this forward in multiple creative ways and by different parts of the organisations of ADA and MFA for example: engage ADA and MFA staff explicitly in dialogue on HRBA (D and G); create opportunities to dialogue with existing civil society partners in Austria and in the 11 priority countries (E and F); use the evaluation findings to promote conversations and inquiry into the links between implementation and policy dialogue (F); increase participation of external stakeholders in strategic evaluation processes (H); demonstrate Austria’s commitment to and leadership in human rights by engaging new partners in dialogue including in Austria (educators, journalists, politicians, rights advocates) and through development and human rights networks internationally (B).