

Cash and Voucher Assistance

Newsletter # 11

August 2020



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

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Quick Updates

- There has been a significant push for Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) and Social Protection due to COVID-19. In June, The New Humanitarian noted a “significant expansion in cash delivery, not only by aid agencies but also by governments”.
- SDC/HA continues to play an active role in global discussions on CVA, e.g. through the Donor Cash Forum and the Grand Bargain Cash Workstream.
- In 2020, SDC/HA supported 7 organizations with 13 CVA Secondments. Mixed profiles continue to be in demand.

Donor Cash Forum

- In May, Switzerland, alongside EU (DG ECHO), Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the UK and the USA, published a statement on [Humanitarian Cash Transfers in the Response to COVID-19](#).

Grand Bargain Cash Workstream

As co-lead of the Grand Bargain Cash sub-workstream on Cash and Local Partnerships, SDC/HA:

- co-facilitated a session on **Cash and Localization** at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (**HNPW**) in Geneva in February which influenced the workplan of the mentioned sub-workstream.
- co-facilitated two sessions (English/Spanish) with local actors on **Localization and the Future of CVA: Perspectives from Local Actors** at the Grand Bargain Cash Workstream Webinar Week in June. The report of the webinar week is currently being developed. In the meantime, check out the recordings and materials of the entire week [here](#).

Direct Actions

- In response to the earthquake which hit Albania on 26 November 2019, an SDC/HA rapid response team implemented an **emergency cash pilot project**, supporting around 300 households with unconditional, unrestricted cash assistance for two months. An independent evaluation was conducted after the project, which determined that the project “was highly relevant and effective in meeting the immediate needs and short-term priorities of the earthquake-affected population in Albania, notably its timeliness in addressing urgent needs so soon after the earthquake and the dignity and psychosocial support the cash brought.” The management response to the evaluation is currently being developed, and once endorsed, the report and the response will be shared publicly.

Social Protection

- The [Independent Evaluation of SDC’s Performance in Social Protection 2013 – 2017](#), including the Senior Management Response, is online. Implementation of the recommendations of the management response is ongoing. No time to read the whole evaluation? Check out the EvalBrief (2 pages) and Factsheet (1 page) at the end of this newsletter.
- In May, Switzerland together with a collective of UN agencies, INGOs, RCRC Movement and donors developed and signed the 4-pager [Increasing links between humanitarian cash and social protection for an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Secondments in 2020

- In the first six months, SDC/HA supported a record 7 organizations with 13 CVA Secondments. Experts with mixed profiles (CVA and e.g. Health, WASH, Protection, etc.) continue to be in demand.
- Secondments which ended before September 2020: WFP Haiti, WFP DRC, UNHCR Colombia, CaLP Geneva, UNICEF Bangladesh, and UNICEF Albania.
- Ongoing Secondments: ICRC Geneva, WFP Sri Lanka, IFRC Geneva, IOM Turkey, ICRC Geneva, and twice WFP El Salvador.

Cash Training and Workshops

- The Basic Cash Training took place from 22 – 24 June 2020 with 13 participants. The Advanced Cash Workshop took place on 25 and 26 June 2020 with 23 participants, on the first day including representatives of 5 Swiss NGOs. All the presentations are on [CVA Shareweb](#).
- The next Basic Training and Cash Workshops are planned for July 2021. In the meantime, feel free to check out CaLP’s [e-learning](#)s.

Interview with Jacqueline Birrer Institutional CVA Focal Point from 2016 to 2020

After four years as Institutional Cash Focal Point and Desk oPt, Jacqueline Birrer left her role in June. In October, she will be joining the Federal Political Affairs Section, which is attached to the staff of the Directorate, and the hub for dealing with the Federal Council and parliamentary business relating to the SDC. Jacqueline was the SDC/HA Institutional Cash Focal Point since 2016, ensuring continuity in the cash team at SDC/HA HQ. In June, before she went on maternity leave, we asked her to reflect on the developments in CVA in the past years.



Jacqueline, the use of CVA in the humanitarian sector has increased significantly in the past years. As an example, the global spend on CVA has increased from 10.3% in 2016 (USD 2.8 billion) to 17.9% in 2019 (USD 5.6 billion). How do you explain this massive increase in the past years?

This is very positive news. It means that the advantages of the CVA modality have prevailed over the initial scepticism, myths and early criticism. However, comparing the figures with in-kind assistance, of course, there is still important potential to increase the use of CVA.

Besides the obvious quantitative changes. What other significant changes do you see in relation to CVA?

The most important change I see, is the change of mind-set with humanitarian actors. People start realizing that, if we truly want to empower the people we serve, we need to overcome our paternalistic approach. Why should we continue to decide what we deem best for people? CVA is a powerful tool that gives people a real choice. It is so much more dignified to be able to decide how to best spend the money according to my needs than to receive goods that I might not need.

This sounds very positive. Quite some advancements have been made. Are there any challenges left?

Yes, challenges remain. I see that despite the obvious advantages of CVA and the evidence that supports this approach, scepticism remains. CVA is under bigger scrutiny than traditional humanitarian assistance. I, however, also see this as a positive challenge to improve our programming and advocacy even further. Ideally the scrutiny on the CVA modality will also result in a new and improved way of looking at in-kind programming.

SDC was a pioneer in using CVA, an early adopter of the modality and a donor "showing early support" for the use of CVA. In the last years however, other organizations such as WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, and International NGOs have mainstreamed cash, built capacity of their staff and set-up the cash teams. Where do you see SDC/HA's role in this new environment?

Our early support has been crucial and I'm convinced that with our support we were able to significantly contribute to the advancement of CVA. I'm positively surprised by the advancement of our partner organizations in the area of CVA and proud that SDC, mainly through its highly skilled and knowledgeable experts, could contribute to these achievements.

SDC's role in CVA has also evolved and that's good. Today, we continue playing an important role in the global donor discussions, on important and sensitive issues such as data protection where the Swiss voice remains important. The Swiss voice is unique because we're at the same time a donor, a government agency that implements own programmes and that disposes of a strong pool of experts.

What do these changes mean for the pool of SHA cash experts?

It means that we need to continue adapting to new realities. Our cash experts have always shown an important capacity to adapt. They have worked in different organizations and field realities and have developed important skills. Today, we are able to provide our partner organizations with much needed so-called "mixed profiles". Experts that know the CVA modality well but who are, for instance, at the same time also protection, WASH DRR or Shelter experts.

You will be joining the Federal Political Affairs Section, a hub for dealing with all the Federal Council and parliamentary business relating to the SDC. Will CVA be a part of that business?

CVA will remain part of my future work. Digitalization and innovation are important topics in the new international cooperation strategy 2021-2024. The CVA modality is an interesting instrument that is at the center of the digitalization and innovation agenda. Finally, we will increasingly be asked to show that we spend funds most efficiently and effectively. CVA aims to achieve both: a more efficient and effective assistance.

Cash and Voucher Assistance, Social Protection and COVID-19

There has been a significant push for CVA and Social Protection due to COVID-19. In June, [The New Humanitarian](#) noted a "significant expansion in cash delivery, not only by aid agencies but also by governments".

- In response to COVID-19, 200 countries/territories have planned or put in place 1,055 social protection measures, including unemployment pay, grants, cash top-ups, and poverty safety nets. Nearly 30% of these measures are cash-based transfers. Check out the World Bank's real time review of [every country's measures](#).
- CalP put together a collection of resources on [CVA and COVID-19](#), including a live CVA and COVID-19 guidance available in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- DFID and GIZ are hosting the Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 - expert advice helpline ([SPACE](#))
- Grand Bargain's 2-pager on [The Importance of Acting on Grand Bargain commitments for a meaningful focus on Gender in CVA Responses to COVID-19](#)

Links to useful CVA documents, webinars and e-learnings

General CVA

- CaLP published the second [State of the World's Cash Report](#), a must read for anyone interested in CVA. It includes chapters on risks, quality, localization, social protection, evidence, and many more.
- Podcast: CaLP, Ground Truth Solutions, ACAPS and GSMA discuss "[What does the future of financial assistance mean for your work today](#)".

Coordination and Collaboration

- CaLP [Cash Coordination Tip Sheet](#), is intended to support field actors in ensuring effective coordination of CVA, providing tips and resources on critical issues.
- UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP published their guidance for [Collaborative Procurement in Humanitarian Cash Transfers](#), calling it a key piece of work under the December 2018 [UN Common Cash Statement](#).

Protection, GBV and Gender

- [Cash for Protection Outcomes](#) (Global Protection Cluster), available in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish
- [How to promote Gender Equality in Humanitarian CVA](#) (UN Women)
- The Gender and Cash sub-workstream of the Grand Bargain's Cash Workstream organized a series of webinars on CVA and Gender-Based Violence Webinar. Find all recordings [here](#).
- COVID-19 Pandemic CVA for Protection Considerations ([English](#) / [French](#))

Sector-specific CVA

- "Introduction to Market-based Programming in Emergency WASH" (Pro-Wash, GWC, CaLP): [Summary](#) and webinar recordings in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Arabic](#)
- [Examples and Good Practices on the Use of Multi-purpose Cash in the Food Security Sector](#) (gFSC)
- Multi-purpose Cash Transfers and Health among vulnerable Syrian refugees in [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#) and [Turkey](#)

Social Protection

- High-level Briefing Paper on [Linking Social Protection and Humanitarian CVA: Humanitarian Outcomes](#)
- [10 things you wish you'd always knew about shock-responsive social protection](#) (WFP)
- Ugo Gentilini's [Social Protection Summer Reading List](#) covers topics such as COVID-19, Education, Gender, Food Security and Nutrition, etc.

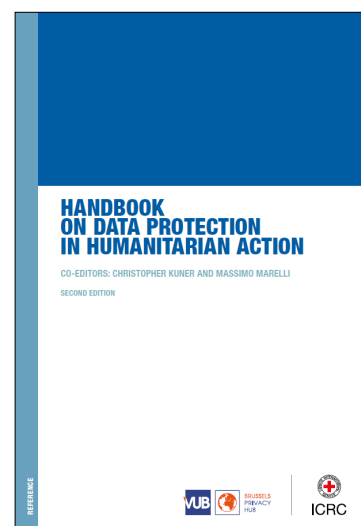
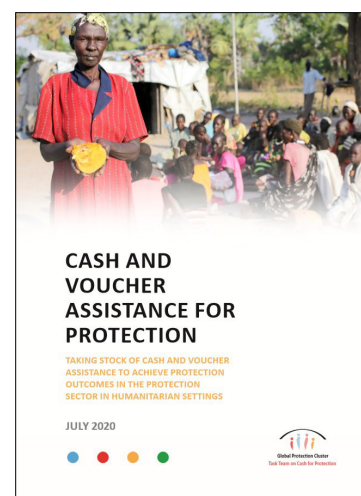
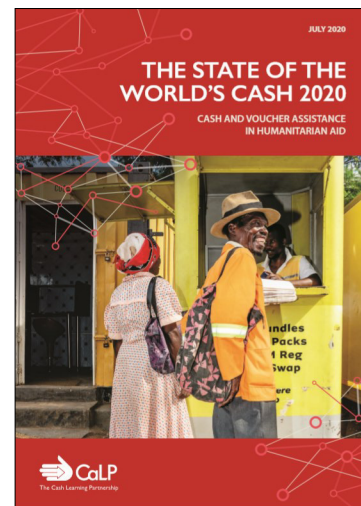
Data Protection

- Podcast: "[Is informed consent possible in CVA?](#)", CVA experts discuss data responsibility, informed consent and legitimate interest.
- ICRC published the second edition of its "Handbook on Data Protection in Humanitarian Action". This [website](#) contains a summary and some short videos.

E-Learning

- WFP published a new online course (English/French) on the **Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)** which provides the basis for understanding the topic. The course is accessible through WFP's [Essential Needs-page](#).

For more and/or for country-specific resources, check out the [CaLP library](#).



Social Protection

The SDC's engagement in social protection was evaluated by an independent evaluation team that assessed performance, operational instruments and institutional processes delivered and used between 2013 and 2017.

SDC engagement

Strengths

Complementary

The SDC uses social protection as an effective means to contribute to reducing poverty and global risks and to foster links between different sectors, therefore strengthening and maximising their outcomes.

Innovative

The SDC's approaches to social protection are considered to have a strong innovative potential – particularly with respect to the lab-approach of testing different options at local level before scaling up.

Social insurances

The SDC has long-standing experience and expertise in a range of social protection mechanisms, especially in social insurance.

Collaboration with the private sector

The SDC has a strong focus on the engagement with the private sector and local delivery mechanisms. This includes a strong role for private actors – such as insurance partners in micro-insurance-schemes.

Recommendations

→ Strategy and priorities

The SDC has no systematic approach to social protection. It is advised to elaborate one and identify priority themes taking the 2030 Agenda and the principle to "Leave no one behind" into consideration.

→ Monitoring

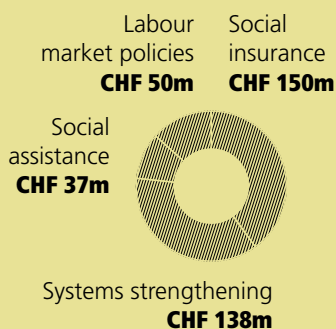
The SDC should develop a set of basic social protection indicators to measure progress in this field.

→ Guidance documents

The development of a conceptual and strategic framework is key to ensure a more structured engagement by the SDC in social protection efforts.

CHF 370m

were dedicated to social protection between 2013 and 2017.



Integrated

Social protection is integrated in the SDC's projects across priority themes.

Governance **25%**

Food security and agriculture **21%**

Health **17%**

Employment and economic development **15%**

Migration **8%**

Climate change **7%**

Other themes **7%**

87

projects

contained a social protection focus and were commissioned in 34 countries.



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE SDC'S PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL PROTECTION 2013-17

Social protection is an economic investment – it plays a key role in mitigating economic and social crises and shocks, and combating poverty, inequality and exclusion. An independent evaluation of the SDC's performance in social protection concludes that the SDC uses social protection as an effective and relevant modality to contribute to its core mandate of reducing poverty and inequalities, strengthening economic growth, tackling global risks, alleviating suffering, and promoting peace and stability. However, the report states that the SDC lacks an integrated and systemic approach to social protection, which reduces the impact and sustainability of its activities.

The purpose of this evaluation was backward and forward-looking. The evaluation included a performance assessment of the SDC's social protection related portfolio of actions, during the period 2013-17. This was used as the basis to provide evidence-based inputs to propose a 'theory of change' and a narrative to conceptually define and support the positioning of the SDC and its Swiss partners in social protection. The evaluation additionally included recommendations on whether and how the SDC's approaches can be strengthened from a strategic and an operational point of view.

Social protection is defined as the collective set of measures aimed at protecting people against social and economic risks/vulnerabilities that adversely affect people's well-being and maintenance of sustainable livelihoods across the life-cycle¹.

KEY MESSAGES

- The SDC is utilising social protection as an effective and relevant modality to reducing poverty and inequalities.
- Social protection issues have been addressed by the SDC within the

context of projects across many of its priority themes, as a complementary policy field that enhances project thematic outcomes.

- The SDC's long-term presence in countries and its simultaneous way of working at local and national level are very well placed to create long-term impact.
- Measuring progress on social protection often appears to be coincidental rather than systematic, as the SDC lacks an integrated and coherent approach.

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Fostering links and strengthening outcomes

While social protection is not considered a priority theme or topic at the SDC, social protection issues have been addressed within the context of the SDC's portfolio across many of the SDC's priority themes – most notably Governance, Food Security and Agriculture, Health, Employment and Economic Development. Social protection within the SDC may therefore best be conceptualised as an important complementary policy field

that enhances and fosters links with other sectors, thereby strengthening and maximising their outcomes. Such a multi-sectoral approach implies working across sectors and taking an integrated and systemic approach to social protection. Whilst the SDC has developed internal papers reviewing and reflecting on its engagement in the area, the findings of the evaluation indicate that the SDC lacks a coherent and systematic approach to social protection to date. For the majority of the projects the issue of social protection is not the principal focus but is a part of the overall measures that are being carried out aiming at a broader development goal.

2. Innovative and efficient Swiss approach

The SDC's approach at country or regional level is commonly based on a parallel 'sandwich approach' that combines work at the national, policy and regulatory level, alongside interventions at the local level to strengthen service-delivery and citizen's access at the grassroots. The evaluators note that this mixed approach is highly efficient while at the same time providing good value

¹ These include life-cycle attributes (e.g. old age, disability, invalidity, or maternity and child), health risks (e.g. illness, accident, or

epidemics), economic risks (e.g. unemployment, injury, exclusion, or price shocks), and natural or ecological/climate-related hazards

(e.g. drought, flooding, earthquakes, or cyclones).

for money, especially for a small donor like the SDC. The approach of testing different delivery options at local level before proceeding to the scaling up of results ensures projects have strong innovative potential.

3. Swiss expertise remains hidden

The evaluation confirms that the SDC has a solid basis in social protection both in terms of presence in the field and know-how and expertise which it can build and expand upon. The SDC's know-how however often remains hidden in sectors and themes, as it is not strategically made available.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance the SDC's engagement in social protection: the evaluation presents three scenarios for the SDC to consider, linked to an enhanced engagement in social protection: a) leave it the way it is (with some slight changes), b) making it more important without turning it into a priority theme, c) make it a priority theme.

2. Develop guidance documents and capacity development for social protection: the development of a social protection framework that summarises and sets out the SDC's understanding of social protection is key to providing conceptual and strategic guidance for a more structured engagement by the SDC in social protection. A capacity development and learning package is needed, including via anchoring social protection within the SDC as a thematic network or unit where project officers can seek technical advice in order to be able to better integrate the topic of social protection into their work and create productive synergies with other themes.

3. Develop a nexus in social protection: enhance the existing internal dialogue between Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid with the aim of developing a common vision on how to better link and

strengthen long-term and short-term approaches in the context of an adaptive social protection approach.

4. Seek more pro-active partnerships in social protection: in order to strengthen social protection as a theme within the SDC, a more systematic and active engagement in international initiatives and partnerships on social protection is recommended.

5. More balanced use of SDC tools: the SDC's engagement in social protection has a strong focus on technical assistance. A more balanced use of the SDC's tool box of instruments, for example a stronger engagement in policy dialogue or public private development partnerships (PPDP) may help to enhance the impact and sustainability of the SDC's intervention in social protection.

6. Monitoring for results in social protection: the SDC should develop a set of basic social protection indicators that allow to measure progress and consistently report on them. Improved monitoring will allow the SDC to better highlight the results of social protection and its contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda, reaching the goal of leaving no one behind (LNOB) and providing value for money.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The SDC senior management appreciates the quality of the evaluation report and finds that it provides a timely and useful assessment of the SDC's performance in social protection.

It took position in the Management Response where **nine out of ten recommendations** were either **fully or partly agreed with**. Only one was disagreed with. This shows a high level of convergence with the evaluation findings and that the SDC agrees to seize the opportunity to improve its results by the means of social protection.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted by GOPA Consultants, with an international team consisting of Shawn Webb (team leader), Barbara Rohregger, Christine Bosch and Jonas Kaufmann.

The evaluation included a staff e-survey, interviews with SDC staff and partners, focus group discussions, analysis of eight case studies, two field visits (Albania, Zimbabwe (Southern African Region)) as well as a performance assessment (quantitative and qualitative data) of 87 identified projects/programmes relevant for this evaluation. The evaluation process was conducted in close coordination with the Core Learning Partnership (CLP).

The SDC senior management considers social protection as a most relevant modality to achieve the goal of LNOB and is gratified by the fact that various social protection components are currently being successfully implemented in different SDC programmes.

The SDC's senior management is in favour of improving the agency's engagement in social protection. It concurs with the evaluation findings that this modality can enhance the SDC's impact on poverty and resilience through more systematic work and exchanges within an SDC community of practice. By committing itself to incorporating social protection more systematically within ongoing operations, the SDC's senior management aims to support, build up knowledge and anchor social protection more effectively in the institution through existing structures.