Cash and Voucher Assistance

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Quick Updates

- The new **SDC Operational Concept Cash and Voucher Assistance 2021-2024** is out! Check out the summary on page 2.

- SDC is the new co-lead of the **Donor Cash Forum**, together with EU/DG ECHO.

- **SHA Cash Pool** was in demand in 2020: 16 cash experts were seconded to eight different organisations, 2 experts went on rapid response missions and 2 were mandated for technical support.

Donor Cash Forum

- Since January, SDC is co-leading the Donor Cash Forum together with EU/DG ECHO. Other members are Germany, Norway, Sweden, UK and the US.

- In 2021, the donor group is planning the further roll-out of the [Common Donor Approach for humanitarian cash programming](#) in Nigeria, Somalia and Ethiopia, the development of guidance on CVA in countries with high inflation, activities related to system interoperability, and other activities.

Grand Bargain Cash Workstream

- The final report of the **Grand Bargain Cash Workstream Webinar Week** is [online](#), including a summary of the sessions on cash and localisation co-facilitated by SDC and [key messages on localisation](#).

Direct Actions

- The external evaluation of SDC/HA emergency cash pilot for earthquake affected households in Albania was [published](#). Findings will be used to strengthen cash assistance and protection in SDC/HA's rapid response activities.

Secondments

- In 2020, 16 CVA Secondments were deployed to a record 8 organisations (WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM, ICRC, IFRC, and CaLP) in Albania, Bangladesh, Colombia, DRC, El Salvador, Haiti, oPt, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Switzerland.

- Experts with mixed profiles (CVA and e.g. Social Protection, Health, WASH, Protection) continue to be in demand.

- Secondments in 2021, so far: WFP Sri Lanka, IOM Turkey, ICRC Geneva, WFP El Salvador, UNFPA Geneva, WFP oPt, CaLP Geneva, IFRC Hungary.

Mandates and deployments in 2020

In 2020, experts of the SHA cash pool undertook the following mandates and missions (besides Secondments):

- Technical backstopping for the design of an agricultural inputs voucher project implemented by SDC Nepal;

- Cash expert as part of the rapid response team for Beirut (port explosion);

- Rapid cash feasibility assessment after hurricanes Eta/Iota in Guatemala;

- SDC Mandate on linking humanitarian cash assistance and social protection in Jordan.

Trainings and Workshops

- The SDC Basic Cash Training will take place from 5—7 July, and the SDC CVA Experience Exchange on 8/9 July. Find more information on the [SHA closed user group](#).

- Feel free to check out CaLP's [e-learnings](#), including a new 30mins-course on [Why Data Rights Matter](#).

Social Protection

- According to The New Humanitarian, linking humanitarian CVA with social protection is one of the [policy trends to watch in 2021](#).

- This year, SHA is offering a new training on linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection, consisting of self-study, e-learning and exchange with experts and practitioners. 20 SHA cash experts registered. [Registration is closed.]

- Check out SDC's updated [Poverty-Wellbeing Shareweb](#) and the sub-page on [Social Protection](#), or subscribe to their [newsletter](#) for regular updates.

SDC Operational Concept Note CVA 2021—2024

The new operational concept note aims to cover SDC/HA's overall approach and priorities towards cash and voucher assistance (CVA). It serves as a framework for the operational and global engagement on CVA of all SDC/HA divisions and offices, and seeks linkages with other SDC fields of activity and priority topics. It is the natural result of the previous concepts from 2015–16 and 2017– 20, while taking into account the changing environment of CVA globally.

Based on its experience and expertise in CVA, and with reference to Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2021–24, the SDC/HA will focus its work on CVA in the next four years on three strategic goals:

- **Systematic consideration**: CVA is systematically considered as a response option.

The SDC/HA works towards achieving the systematic inclusion of CVA in all humanitarian sectors with the goal that CVA is considered as a response option in all contexts and in all phases of a humanitarian response. Only through systematic consideration of CVA alongside other modalities (such as in-kind, service delivery, technical support, etc.) can it be ensured that the most effective mix of response options is chosen, while taking into account the preferences of the affected populations. Achieving systematic consideration requires that programme officers and decision makers in all humanitarian sectors have the mindset, capacity, tools and guidance available to implement CVA and achieve sectoral or multisectoral outcomes.
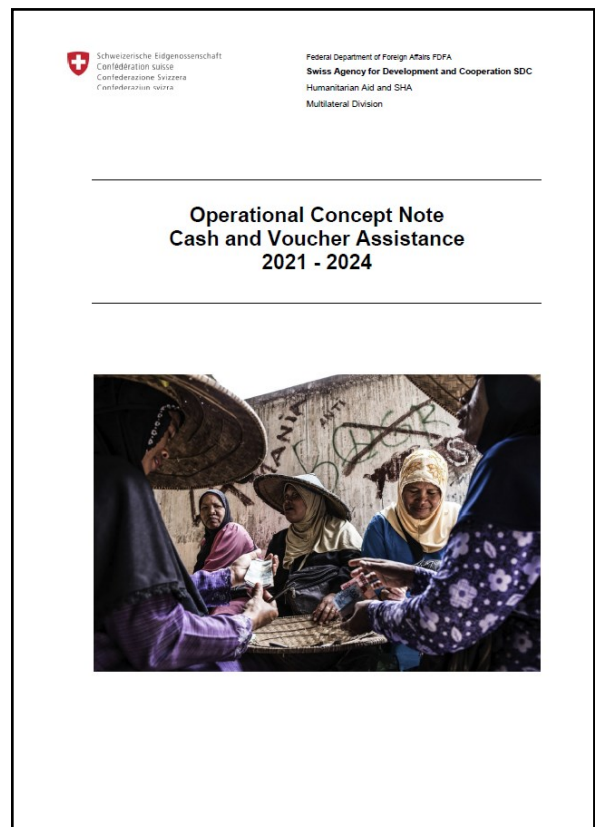
- **Quality programming**: CVA is implemented according to best practice.

The SDC/HA promotes quality programming and supports the development of standards for CVA in line with the Joint Donor Statement on Humanitarian Cash Transfers and the Common Donor Approach for humanitarian cash programming. Whenever possible, humanitarian CVA should be linked and aligned with (shock-responsive) social protection specifically, and to development cooperation more broadly. The SDC/HA prioritises a people-centred approach to CVA that seeks, shares and acts upon feedback from recipients. It also prioritises CVA work that maximises accountability to affected people, mainstreams protection and upholds the safety, dignity and preferences of the recipients. In relation to this, the SDC/HA supports CVA activities that take into account the specific needs of vulnerable groups. In addition, it contributes to and promotes localisation in CVA.

- **Digitalisation and innovation**: Innovation increases the quality of CVA and accountability to affected populations.

The SDC/HA promotes the use of (innovative) technology to i) increase the efficiency and effectiveness of CVA programmes, ii) overcome digital divide, iii) improve accountability to affected populations, iv) step up the use of feedback mechanisms and v) provide more opportunities for beneficiaries to influence programme design. The SDC/HA acknowledges the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation and innovation, and supports the testing of new and innovative approaches and programming in diverse environments. Taking into account potential risks and data responsibility, the SDC/HA prioritises the protection, dignity and privacy of beneficiaries over technological advancements.

These priorities reflect the CVA teams' continuous analysis of the evolving environment around the use of CVA, the modality's advantages, as well as the SDC/HA's unique position as a donor, implementer, and UN standby partner. Find more information on instruments and planned activities in the SDC Operational Concept Note CVA 2021—2024.

CVA and Localisation — Why is it important?

Although CVA implementation has increased significantly in the past years, local and national humanitarian actors have been on the side-lines of funding flows. They are often financed through two or even more intermediary organisations. At the same time, local actors are providing the overwhelming majority of humanitarian assistance today.

By working in partnership with local actors, CVA programmes can be adapted to local realities, provide timely responses and amplify the voice of communities in highly vulnerable situations. This, however, requires recognizing the value of all actors and shifting the narrative from 'capacity building' to 'capacity sharing' between international and local actors.

Current structures of engaging in humanitarian action largely favour international organisations, leaving local actors little direct funding and humanitarian space. Addressing this power imbalance requires changing ways of working, developing equitable partnerships and adapting tools and systems to the context. Finally, risks are often transferred to local actors instead of taking a partnership approach to share and mitigate risks collectively.

The Grand Bargain Cash sub-workstream on cash and localisation, co-led by SDC, is working on addressing some of these challenges. Check out the sub-workstream's webpage for more information on their work, and resources on CVA and localisation.

Useful CVA resources

General CVA

- The New Humanitarian offers a [deep dive into 25 years of data in the humanitarian sector](). Check out the impressive graphs on cash assistance.

- The Center for Global Development makes the [Case for Cash]() and looks at opportunities of cash transfers as a means of advancing global development projects.

- The World Bank's Ugo Gentili offers [Six reflections on COVID-19 and the future of cash transfers]()

- CaLP held a five-part [Webinar Series on Minimum Expenditure Baskets]().

Coordination and Collaboration

- UN Common Cash Statement (UNCCS) - [Q&A]()

Protection, GBV and Gender

- Better Gender Outcomes in Food Assistance through Complementary and Multi-Modal Programming ([report](), [tip sheet]()).

- Videos on [How Cash Transfers Can Benefit Survivors of Gender-Based Violence]() ([Spanish](), [French]()).

- Cash and GBV Compendium In-Person Training Package ([English](), [French](), [Spanish](), [Arabic]()).

- WRC and Plan International published a technical resource on the [Use of CVA for the Protection, Education, and Well-Being of Adolescents in Crisis]() ([Exec Summary]()).

Sector-specific CVA

- The Global Shelter Cluster published a series of documents on [Rental Market Interventions]().

- IFRC published a [step-by-step guide for rental assistance to people affected by crises]().

- The Global Nutrition Cluster issued an [Evidence and Guidance Note on the Use of CVA for Nutrition Outcomes in Emergencies](), which was co-financed by SDC.

- USAID/Care looked into [Cash plus and nutrition outcomes]().

Social Protection

- Tip sheet on [Supporting the Linkages between Humanitarian CVA and National Social Protection Systems]().

- CaLP hosted a podcast on [How to link social protection and CVA: What do we really know and where to start]().

- ICRC blog on [Humanitarian engagement in social protection]() and its implications for principled humanitarian action.

Data Responsibility

- CaLP launched the [Data Responsibility Toolkit]() for CVA.

- The OCHA Centre for Humanitarian Data published a new [Guidance Note on Data Responsibility in CVA]().

- ICRC launched the [DigitHarium](), a global forum to discuss and debate digital transformation within the humanitarian sector, also covering CVA and social protection.

E-Learning

- New CaLP/Oxfam course on [Why Data Rights Matter]() (also in [French](), [Spanish](), [Arabic]()).

- New micro-course on [Social Protection Programmes]().

For more and/or for context-specific resources, check out the [CaLP library]() or the World Bank's round-up [key cash transfers papers for 2020]() .