

SDC FACTSHEET CASH & VOUCHER ASSISTANCE

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

FACTS AND FIGURES

Definition

Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) refers to all programmes where cash transfers or vouchers for goods or services are directly provided to recipients in order for them to meet their varied needs on the local market (food, water, non-food items, rent, access to education and health, or else). Cash and vouchers are transfer modalities which can be provided separately or in combination with other modalities (such as in-kind, service delivery, technical support) and can be used to cover all needs or a set of these, in an emergency, a recovery phase or protracted crisis.

Benefits and risks

CVA make the recipients prime responsible for their recovery, with the flexibility to make the best choices according to their needs, without having to resort to negative coping mechanisms like selling assets or worse. It stimulates the local economy with a multiplier effect on the market and can promote financial inclusion, while allowing for economies of scale for donors.

In a world where needs keep increasing while resources are shrinking, and where humanitarians seek to adequately assist affected populations, based on greater accountability, CVA can help bring more effectiveness and efficiency in humanitarian responses. Linking humanitarian cash assistance and social protection systems can help address underlying poverty, build resilience, speed response and support localisation of humanitarian action.

When it comes to risks related to using CVA, they are often based on perceptions rather than evidence and are similar to risks for in-kind assistance. Years of evidence building have shown that CVA can be successful in highly difficult contexts if well programmed and with risks well mitigated.

SDC and CVA

While it is only in the last 14 years that the use of CVA has significantly increased in the humanitarian response, SDC was a pioneer by using it already in 1998 to ensure affected populations in the Balkans could recover their livelihoods and reconstruct their homes. It later started to lend its cash experts to the largest operational agencies to help build their capacity.

CVA came to the spotlight in 2004 with many pilots in response to the Tsunami in South and South East Asia. Since then, the use of CVA has increased significantly. In 2016, the Secretary General stressed at the World Humanitarian Summit that where feasible "cash should be the preferred and default modality". By 2020, around 19% of global humanitarian assistance was provided through CVA.



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Scope of engagement

SDC Humanitarian Aid (SDC/HA) has been a strong advocate for CVA for many years and engages in different ways:



As a donor, SDC has been financing partners using CVA. Non or light earmarking makes it difficult to estimate how much exactly Switzerland spends on CVA, but this approach is favourable as it leaves the flexibility to partner organisation to choose the best or a combination of the best transfer modalities. For instance, when markets have not yet recovered after a sudden shock, a partner might decide to start with in-kind distributions before switching to CVA a few weeks later as a way to stimulate the recovering market.



As an operational agency, SDC/HA has been using **CVA in its direct projects** since 1998. The projects had very different durations, from a few months to six years. In 2019, SDC/HA provided cash assist within a week to 300 households affected by the earthquake in Albania and in December 2020, SDC worked closely with a local Guatemalan NGO to respond to the hurricanes Iota and Eta.

Switzerland's direct humanitarian action using CVA

1998 → 2021

30 projects
24 years
CHF 66.8 millions



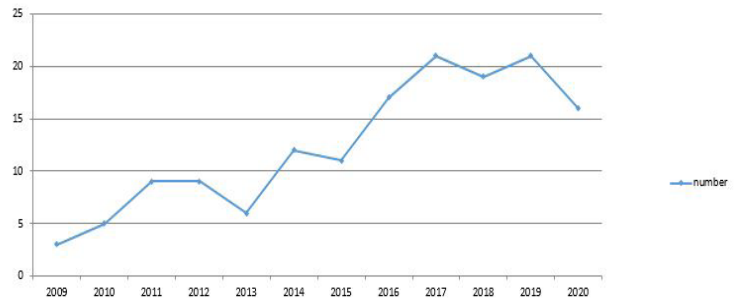
As of 2009, SDC/HA started to share its expertise with others by supporting partner organisations through **secondments of cash experts**. SDC/HA currently has a **pool of approx. 100 cash experts** with solid experience and who are ready for deployment. Persons with CVA skills are still a very demanded resource, hence this pool is of unique value. SDC/HA continues to build the capacity of its pool.

Examples of current missions: a CVA expert is strengthening **ICRC** delegations' preparedness and capacity to use CVA worldwide; a CVA expert is working on the linkages between CVA and social protection for **WFP** in Sri Lanka; a CVA expert is supporting **IOM's** response in Turkey and Syria; a member of the SHA is supporting **IFRC** in Hungary at regional and country level, and strengthening National Societies to deliver predictable, quality and scalable humanitarian CVA responses.

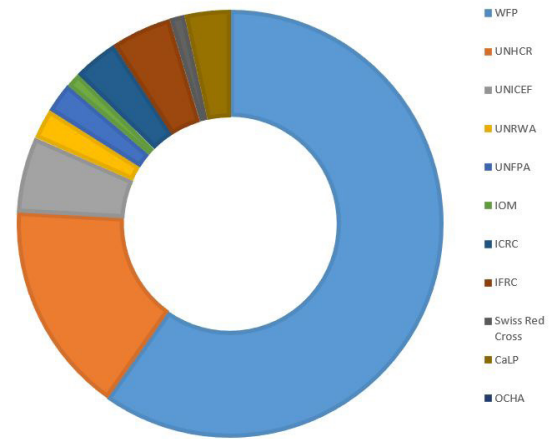


SDC/HA plays an active role in **global discussions on CVA ensuring that the capacities of partner organisations** in the area of CVA is built and that CVA becomes a systematically considered response option. It has been actively involved in the Grand Bargain cash workstream since its launch in 2016 and has been a supporter of the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), a global partnership of actors engaged in policy, practice and research within CVA. In 2019, Switzerland and a group of likeminded donors (EU, Germany, Norway, Sweden, UK and US) lay out a vision for the use of cash in humanitarian action, defined general guiding principles to guide programming for evidence-building, capacity-building and advocacy on CVA, and adopted the 'Joint Donor Statement on Humanitarian Cash Transfers' and the 'Common Donor Approach for hu-

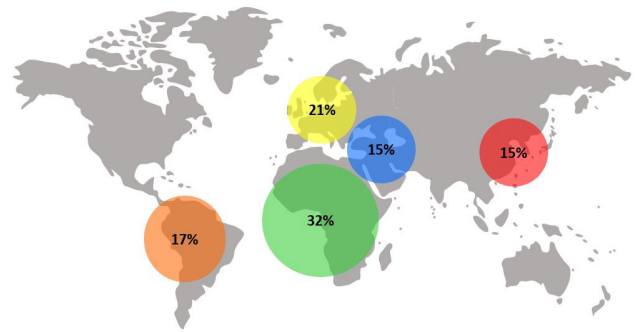
Number of secondments per year



87 SECONDMENTS, 13 YEARS, 10 ORGANISATIONS



Geographical spread of secondments



A look back - Cash in emergencies

Context: On 26 November 2019, Albania was hit by a large earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4, causing 51 people to lose their lives and injuring 913 people. Out of 202,291 people affected by the earthquake, a total 47,365 people were directly affected. The epicentre was 10km north of Durres, the second largest city in Albania, located approximately 30km east of the capital, Tirana. An earthquake had previously hit the same region in September.

In response to the earthquake, **SDC implemented an 'Emergency Cash Pilot for Families Affected By Earthquake in Bubq, Albania', with the support of 'Bashkti të Forta'** (Strong Municipalities, BtF) project, implemented through local partner Helvetas and the Swiss Embassy in Albania, within the first 7-10 days of the emergency response. The project targeted 340 earthquake-affected households with unconditional and unrestricted cash across eight villages in Bubq administrative unit. In December 2019 and January 2020, two cash transfers allowed the families to cover their most urgent basic needs, including preparing for winter months, improving temporary shelters or renting other accommodation. **Almost 1500 people were supported.**

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