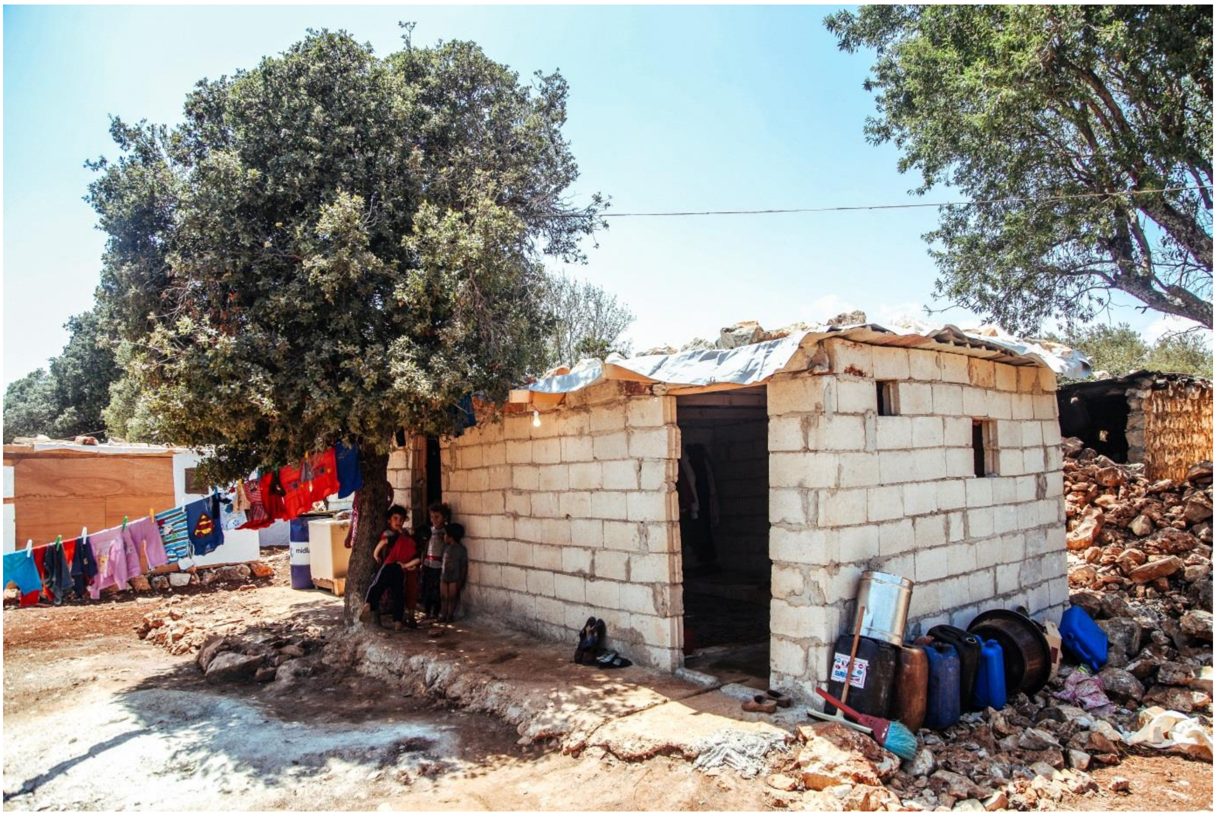
Compiled Summary
Bern, 14.10.2014

Evaluation of the *"Support to Families and Communities Hosting Syrian refugees"* Project, Akkar district, North Lebanon



Introduction

From June 1, 2012 until July, 2014 SDC/HA directly implemented the cash project "Support to Families and Communities hosting Syrian Refugees" in the Akkar District, North Lebanon.

The project's initial approach was innovative as it intended to translate the comprehensive aid approach into a concrete project, combined with a strong consideration of CSPM/do-no-harm principles. The cash support aimed at creating a protective host shelter environment for displaced Syrians by relieving the financial burden of the host families as well as establishing medium and longer term development possibilities, i.e. resilience capabilities. The inherent goal was to support an already existing solidarity/coping mechanism and thus to contribute to stability and social cohesion in the selected area. It also positioned SDC as a burden-sharing partner vis-à-vis the Lebanese authorities and it allowed a rapid intervention with visible impact on individual households and the local economy in an under-developed region. The goals were ambitious particularly considering the complexity of the political, socio-economic and cultural context in Northern Lebanon, accentuated by the conflict in neighboring Syria, and the huge influx of refugees.

Having been a SDC flagship project implemented in a complex crisis, in spring 2014 it was decided to do a comprehensive evaluation on the impact and achievements of the project and to deduce lessons learnt and recommendations for future involvement of SDC in cash activities. As outlined in the TOR (see evaluation report), points such as the relevance of the project approach, the effectiveness, the efficiency, the exit strategy as well as the overall impact of the project were to be assessed. Furthermore, the evaluators were to look into elements such as communication, monitoring and risk management, project management, partnerships as well as transversal issues like gender and protection.

Due to the complex nature of the project, and the willingness to have comprehensive analyses (including local and international expertise) SDC decided to commission a mixed evaluation team consisting of an international consultant (with experience in implementation of cash projects as well as community development), a Swiss consultant from the SHA-cash-expert-pool (with expertise in cash approaches and institutional aspects related to SDC) as well as a national consultant (with complementary skills in socio-cultural understanding and context analysis).

Instructed by the TOR and initial briefings, the team went on a field mission to Lebanon from March 12 – 23, 2014 with the goal to produce a concise but comprehensive evaluation report.

Conflicting interpretations of the TOR, diverging evaluation methodologies as well as different point of views resulted in a clash of opinions between the evaluators. In order to reflect all views the outcome document consists of an evaluation report which is complemented by a summary of the principal diverging findings.

In order for the reader to have a concise document outlining the most essential findings (including the diverging points) for the institutional learning, this compiled summary aims at briefly outlining the main findings and recommendations as identified by the evaluators.

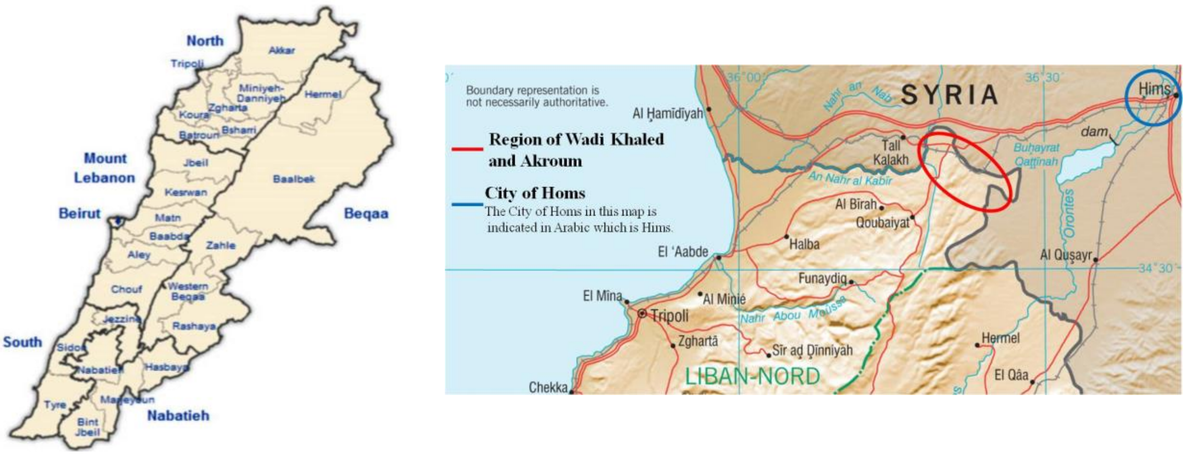
Because of the changing and complex environment and the adaptation of the project to these evolutions, the document also contains a short overview of the project history, to guide the reader through the project and facilitate the overall understanding.

The evaluation report and the summary of diverging findings are annexed.

1. Overview project history:

1.1. Context

Since the onset of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, over 3 million people (August 2014) have fled Syria to seek refuge mainly in neighbouring countries. According to UNHCR statistics, Lebanon has the highest per capita concentration of refugees of any country in recent history, with nearly 230 registered Syrian refugees for every 1,000 Lebanese.
The eastern regions of Akkar, a district within Lebanon´s North Governorate, were the first affected by the displacement of Syrians as the city of Homs, approximately 30 km from the border, was a centre of the uprising. Within the district, the regions of Wadi Khaled and Akroum (approximately 40,000 registered inhabitants in 27 villages) soon became a haven for refugees. This was not only due to the proximity to Syria's city of Homs but also because of the cross-border ties through kinship, acquaintance, labour and business, including a strong tradition of legal or illicit cross-border trade. Religious and clan affiliations are the pillars of the social fabric in Wadi Khaled and Akroum. The majority of the population in this region is Sunni Muslim.



Locations of the Akkar district in Lebanon’s North Governorate and the areas of Wadi Khaled and Akroum.

Given the geographical location and the historically cultural ties, 95% of the settled in Wadi Khaled and Akroum were living in private accommodation or hosted by Lebanese families. Beside the challenge for the accommodation of displaced people, the conflict in the neighbouring country has severely affected the local economy as cross-border trading has come to a standstill and deprived many Lebanese of their livelihood. For Akkar, and especially the Wadi Khaled and Akroum areas, this worsened the already existing poverty. Community leaders expressed their concern regarding the potentially increasing flow of refugees that would affect the existing bad communal infrastructure and the public services. On a household level, the loss of the already scarce source of livelihood combined with the additional costs of hosting has led in the first half of 2012 to expressions of fatigue.
The SDC-HA “Support to Families and Communities Hosting Syrian refugees” –project was launched in Wadi Khaled and Akroum following a rapid needs assessment carried out in March 2012. A decreasing source of income paired with an increasing amount of expenditures and limited public services, has dramatically intensified the vulnerability on an individual and communal level and caused increasing discontent in an already marginalized region of Lebanon. At the time of the SDC-HA assessment, UN institutions and international NGOs were setting their priorities on the Syrian refugees.
Based on the main findings of the assessment, the preconditions for providing assistance through a cash modality were given. There was an existing and accessible market as well as a functioning financial system and the security situation, though volatile, was acceptable to implementing a cash project.

1.2. Project aim

The cash support aimed at creating a protective host shelter environment for displaced Syrians by relieving the financial burden of the host families as well as establishing medium and long term development possibilities, i.e. resilience capabilities. The inherent goal was to support an already existing solidarity/coping mechanism and thus to contribute to stability and social cohesion in the selected area.

1.3. Project design

The project design was drawn up along two action lines directly supporting 1) individual host families and 2) host communities. With regard to eligibility, the cash for hosting project was primarily based on the respect of the strongly rooted cultural and religious tradition of hospitality and not to undermine the obligation of the duty to help people in times of crisis. Thus, before gaining eligibility, a Lebanese family had to have hosted displaced people for at least two months for free, not charging rent and providing access to water, sanitation and electricity.

The cash assistance was granted as a contribution to hosting costs. A Lebanese host household was supported by USD 170/month for accommodating a displaced Syrian family of up to nine members. This amount was calculated on the basic living costs of USD 495/months of a Lebanese household and the real additional hosting costs of USD 195. The amount was customized according to the number of guest members hosted. Host families received the cash payments retroactively every two months. Special attention was given towards the possibility of paying out the cash assistance to women.

In addition, the hosting households received financial support for household development activities. The projects, which were defined by the host family, could include infrastructure (repair of house, access to water, sanitation), livelihood (agriculture activities, livestock farming) and social items (play area for children). The support amount was set at USD 300 per household project and also paid retroactively. This financial contribution to host household development activities were meant as an incentive for the Lebanese family to put up displaced people.

The community development projects were planned to be implemented in communities which were hosting a substantial number of displaced people. According to the individual community's needs, the project intended to contribute to a development project from which the whole population in the community could profit.

The project was based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of the Republic of Lebanon (represented by the HRC) and SDC. HRC, the High Relief Commission, is directly assigned to the Prime Minister´s Office and had the mandate to respond to the protection and humanitarian issues of displaced Syrians in the north of Lebanon.

SDC-HA implemented the project as a direct action and in cooperation with the Lebanese NGO MADA Association who was seconding national staff to the project managed by SHA Cash Experts.

1.4. Three phases

The project was implemented in three phases, which were in their design adapted to the rapidly changing situation:

Phase I - 1.06 2012 – 31.03. 2013

Due to the rapid increase of the number of refugees and displaced in the area of implementation, SDC-HA already in the first phase adjusted the project regarding the amount of the grants and also the modalities. The cash for hosting amount was reduced from USD 170 to 100 to cover more municipalities within the budget-frame. To simplify the procedures, the financial support for household development activities has become an integrated part of the cash for hosting payments.

The community development projects were suspended. Local authority's primary focus on putting up refugees and displaced limited the capacities and resources for development projects to be planned and implemented with a community-based approach. Also, the support form SDC-HA was limited due to the lack of capacities to coach local authorities for community development projects. SDC-HA instead launched small action projects based on communities' needs.

Phase II - 01.04. – 30.09. 2013
With the constant influx of refugees also the number of aid organizations increased in the region. Due to the fact that more organizations were using the cash modality as aid provision, coordination took place. In order to harmonize and to simplify administrative procedures vis-à-vis sharply increasing refugee numbers, SDC-HA simplified the categories regarding the cash for hosting grants: The financial support was set at USD 100/month for hosting up to 10 and USD 150/month for hosting over 11 Syrian refugees. Household development activities continued unchanged. The community development projects were taken out of the cash project and treated as a separate initiative.

Phase III - 01.10. 2013 – 30.06. 2014
The verification process in November and December 2013 revealed a high 25-percentage of non-eligible cases. In addition, the lists of applying new hosts, established by the municipalities in November 2013, displayed a high number of Lebanese households not entitled to be in the programme. In some municipality-lists over 50% were non-eligible host families, as discovered during the registration process.
In December 2013, further verification revealed a corruptive behaviour of a local staff member, taking money from local families for being included in the beneficiary lists. The staff member was dismissed by the seconding national partner organization MADA.
Due to the irregularities and based on SDC internal rules and regulations, new registrations were suspended in nine municipalities/villages in Wadi Khaled and two in Akroum. Subsequently SDC-HA field staff was threatened and even physically attacked by (expelled) beneficiaries from Wadi Khaled, which lead to a cease of the cash assistance in that area. From then onwards until the end of the project on June 30, 2014, payments were only carried out to eligible host families in Akroum area, supported by strengthened monitoring and verification procedures put in place.
In the first half of 2014 SDC was looking through workshops and potential partners into possibilities on how to envisage community development projects that could build on the comprehensive aid approach and that could assist to a stabilization of the region. It was decided to stay engaged in Northern Lebanon, and also to upkeep the field office in Kobaiat. The follow up direct action "Emergency WASH and Rehabilitation of Schools in Wadi Khaled and Akroum" started in mid-July 2014 as a scaling up of the first phase of the School Rehabilitation project in lower Akkar which started in 2013 and was financed by the Federal Office for Migration.

The scaling up of the emergency WASH rehabilitation of schools in Akkar came as a transition from direct cash assistance for individual host families to a community-support intervention targeting the same communities. In addition, SDC mobilised donors and national authorities to address the region-specific priorities through SDC-facilitated consultations and workshops culminating in a report, "Recovery Framework for Wadi Khaled and Akroum", March 2014.

2. Compiled summary of findings and recommendations

This part consists of a summary of main findings and recommendations (including conflicting views) as identified by the evaluators.

2.1. Key findings of the evaluation

Overall: The cash for hosting in combination with the unconditional cash for household development grants have successfully encouraged longer term provision of better quality shelter for over 18'000 Syrian refugees. This remains a substantial achievement and all further discussion is aimed at improving institutional learning for future programming, based on a number of weaknesses that have been identified.

A. Relevance of the project approach and project design

- Linking relief and early recovery priorities with fostering development is adequate in the context. The cash for hosting and the cash for household development in combination with community development projects is a justified approach. However the project was too ambitious and too optimistic concerning human resources and professional knowledge.

- The cash support for hosting refugees is highly relevant in terms of economic input into the area, boosting household economy and the provision of shelter for Syrian refugees.

- The project is in line with the comprehensive aid approach (CAA) which asks to ensure coherency, coordination and complementarity of humanitarian and development assistance.

- The implementation of the project in Wadi Khaled and Akroum, close to the Syrian border is justified as these areas are hosting proportionally the highest number of refugees.

As there were differing opinions on the targeted audience, the positions of the evaluation team are presented in this summary along the three components of the project:

Component 1 → Cash for hosting

Evaluation report	Diverging opinion
The targeting of Lebanese host families is justified as it contributes to host families´ additional expenditures for hosting refugees and encourages their traditional hospitality, which is directly linked with an improved protective shelter environment for Syrian refugees.	*The targeting of Lebanese host families is a flawed rationale as the underlying reasoning of the project was to support Lebanese hosts and not meeting the basic needs of Syrian refugees. Primary beneficiaries should have been the Syrian refugees and only secondarily economically vulnerable Lebanese hosting households.*
The approach to support hosting households strongly affected by the crisis in neighbouring Syria, helps to reduce possible tensions between Lebanese residents and the Syrian refugees (burden sharing).	*The approach to support the host is acceptable when refugees were not able to freely and safely access payment services and markets. Thus the hosts could act as intermediary cash recipients who should pass on the money to the Syrian beneficiary.*

Component 2 → Cash for hosting household development

Evaluation report	Diverging opinion
The approach to reduce the impact of the crisis with unconditional cash support for the economic wellbeing is innovative and complementary to the cash for hosting component, both enhancing the provision of decent shelter for the Syrian refugees.	*The hosting households should have been treated as secondary beneficiaries through improvements in their housing conditions and properties.*

Both evaluators have a critical view on the selection process within this component, as the cash was paid to all qualifying hosting households irrespective to the need for income generation or livelihood support.	

Component 3 → Community development

The community development component is compelling and innovative in being complementary in a project with a comprehensive approach. Support on community level in cash projects expresses the recognition for public services provided for residents and refugees. The implementation of this component was unsuccessful due to lack of resources and expertise in the development sector as well as to the time frame.

B. Re-Programming

A number of re-programmings had to be undertaken to react to the changing context and other evolutions in the project.
The first re-programming in early 2013 was adequate reflecting the context changes. Adhering to the 1st phase budget-frame, it allowed increasing the number of beneficiaries in reducing the monthly contributions. Furthermore due to the massive increase of the number of Syrian refugees and the lack of human resources, the streamlining to a flat rate for cash contributions covering component 1 and 2 was appropriate.

The first re-programming did not take into consideration a switch to distributing cash to refugee families.

The re-programming of the community development component into small-actions was a feasible alternative that permitted to maintain the basic idea recognizing communities in their efforts to host.

The first re-programming is reflecting an extensively negotiated institutional compromise as there were differing opinions at all levels (headquarters, programme office Beirut and cash project management) on the necessity of adaptations.

The second re-programming was adequate and essential for security reasons as it was necessary due to false beneficiary lists, misuse of contribution and embezzlement by one of the staff with the involvement of some municipality representatives in Wadi Khaled.

C. National Project Partner MADA

SDC´s cooperation with the national partner MADA who seconded employees to the cash for hosting project was well intended and promising but unsatisfactory for both sides. On one side, MADA could not second staff with sufficient contextual knowledge of the area of implementation, neither experienced staff in the humanitarian aid sector. On the other side, SDC could fulfil expectations of a know-how transfer regarding cash transfer programming in training the seconded staff on the job, but there is no evidence for capacity building on MADA´s strategic and institutional level.

MADA´s role in the project was limited to recruitment and administering staff for implementation. Although based on a detailed memorandum of understanding, the partnership was not clear enough and provoked differing expectations.

The project failed to capitalize on the added value that MADA could have given in terms of improving community mobilisation, methods and communications, as well as around grassroots project identification and gender.

D. Effectiveness of the project

The cash for hosting project had strong effects and contributed directly to an overall improvement of host families´ well-being, substantially increased host households economy and positively affected local markets.

It achieved the goal of enlarging the time span of hosting refugees throughout all three phases. 77% of the hosting families and the accommodated refugees remained for over one and a half years in the project. Beside the length of stay the project has been able to improve living conditions and to encourage better shelter standards for Syrian refugees.

The implementation of development activities on household level is not achieved as only a small part of the cash contribution was used with sustainable effects on hosting household improvement. Also on community level development activities could not be initiated due to lack of human resources and professional knowledge of the project staff in the initial phase. The implementation of small-actions instead had an effect in terms of goodwill.

Giving money to the hosts left refugees without the economic power to make the right and safe decisions for their household. With regard to protection, vulnerable individuals may not have the freedom to move away from substandard dangerous or socially unacceptable conditions. The overall approach of supporting Lebanese households to host refugees had left the refugees voiceless, powerless and frightened to speak.
The project did not include gender criteria, target women and had no indicators to monitor gender or vulnerability.

E. Efficiency of project management and implementation

The highly efficient SDC cash programming strategy, with 88% of the project costs going to hosting beneficiaries, is very positive in an emergency intervention. However the management and project staff set up was not considered to have the resources and the capacities to achieve the objectives of all three components (cash for hosting, cash for hosting household development and host community development).

The turn-over of three project managers during the two years project duration caused instability and uncertainty among the young national employees. These frequent changes and discrepancies in establishing team spirit, internal communication, knowledge sharing and effective leadership have weakened internal control and increased the risk of malpractices.

The "light" project set up in terms of staffing was as a contributing factor to the high number of households found to be ineligible as well as to allegations of fraud and embezzlement.

F. Monitoring and Risk Management

The project used a light standard for comprehensive progress and process monitoring, complemented by an internal review based on evaluations standards. It is a weakness that the project lacks an initial research (baseline) and that it missed to install a context monitoring.

G. Overall impact

The cash for hosting in combination with unconditional cash for household development grants have successfully encouraged longer term provision of better quality shelter for Syrian refugees in Wadi Khaled and Akroum in Lebanon's Akkar district.

The project supported at its peak in September 2013 2,850 Lebanese host families that were accommodating 19,000 Syrian refugees.

There is evidence that the cash for hosting project contributed directly to an overall improvement of host families´ well-being, a substantial increase of their household economy and positive effects on the local market.

The financial support to Lebanese households partially compensated the effect of additional expenses by hosting Syrian refugees. The contributions for household development activities were mainly used to cover host families basic needs. Some hosting households spent part of the support on sewage cleaning, kitchen equipment and rehabilitation work.
The variety of spending priorities of the grants confirms the flexibility of the cash aid-modality covering a wide range of needs of hosting households.

2.2. Recommendations and lessons learned

Relevance of the project approach and project design

- Make use of this unique experience for further developing Comprehensive Aid Approach (CAA) linking emergency responses for refugees with early recovery and rehabilitation activities for local population in a coherent manner.
- Base any design for emergency aid on scenarios that evaluate potential changes of crisis. Evaluate related implication for the project and assess required measures for adjusting project activities and if needed for the project goals.
- *A project design with Syrian refugees as primary beneficiaries gives the refugees the freedom to make informed choices about how to meet basic needs and the economic power to get out of shelter conditions that are sub-standard or where protection issues are faced.*

Lessons learned:

- SDC's standard cash risk analyses used in cash projects are mostly of good quality but they do not cover context dynamics sufficiently. It's important that the risks identified comprise perceptions and sceptics of targeted groups, authorities and local partners.
- Scenarios in volatile contexts: Every humanitarian aid assessment should conceive future changes and possible dynamics based on 3-4 scenarios, e.g. best case / most likely / worst case, displayed in a timeline with greater uncertainty.
- Check feasibility of targeted objectives on the operational level by specifying e.g. human resources and special knowledge needed, estimated time per activity as usually done in construction projects.
- Base the cash project design on SDC's experiences. A number of cash for host families projects demonstrate quite clearly that only additional small projects at community and interest group level are only feasible if based on evidence-based Standard Operation Procedures.
- Plan community-based livelihoods with an appropriate approach, schedule a 2 years' time horizon and don't start without experienced staff especially in culturally complex contexts.

- Echelon any different project components in terms of start, time, budget and allocated staff. Keep in mind that relief components require different management approaches, like e.g. livelihood and recovery components where early implication of partners and representatives of beneficiary groups is a must.

Re-programming

- For future project design, take into account SDC's recommendations of flat rate contributions in order to avoid misuse. The bigger the numbers of beneficiaries and the more volatile the contexts are, the less verification and clarification of doubtful cases can be done properly, binding too much time and energy. Detailed, tailor-made targeting is only appropriate for social welfare projects with perfectly documented beneficiaries.
- Make maximum use of SDC's cash competencies and expertise, also for re-programming. Consider to send an independent cash expert in an early stage to assess the situation and clarify the different views constructively.
- *Where displacement is ongoing and continues for longer periods of time, it can be considered to shift the cash-contributions to hosts towards direct payments to refugees, unless there are specifically identified reasons to justify otherwise.*
- With regard to the early closing down of the project in Wadi Khaled, maintain the contact with the local authorities and nourish discussion on various small municipality supports financed with the remaining funds as foreseen and promised. This will calm disappointed people and show SDC's esteem for what these communities do for refugees living in their area.

Lessons learned:
- Elaborate scenarios during assessment mission. This will facilitate re-programming and exchanges between project, Programme Office and HQ, as well as quicker and easier decision making in case of important changes of the context. Each scenario should highlight expected implications for the project and propose mitigation measures.
- *A strategic re-examination of the project design would have been preferable to the light review with programme modifications.*

National project partner MADA

- Base any partnership and cooperation on an institutional assessment. In order to negotiate profile and capacity of seconded staff and operational tasks as defined in the terms of references.
- Choose only partner organisations which have the needed competencies for cash projects and the willingness to bring in knowledge lacking for the implementation. If a cash project needs a partner it is recommendation to consult SDC's cash focal point beforehand.
- Involving a local partner requires institutional capacity building with an adequate budget.
- Abstain from secondment arrangements with national NGO, for providing staff. Make use of SDC's experiences of directly hiring required staff. Use basic professional profiles as prepared in SDC's toolbox / Cash Working Book. This ensures a direct line of command, clear tasks and responsibilities assigned.

Lessons learned:
- Knowhow transfer to a national partner: Generally spoken, if the objective is institutional capacity building of a NGO and not only capacity building of seconded

staff, an analysis of organisational capacities, potential and market is indispensable. Based on this common assessment, SDC could then decide the level of cash and management knowhow transfer to be planned. In several countries SDC had satisfying experiences with limited cooperation on subcontracting for specific tasks as e.g. verification and monitoring.

Effectiveness of the project

- Don't overload a project set-up, especially in an emergency phase, with secondary additional goals like e.g. institutional capacity building for a national partner or with development components.
- Disbursement mechanisms should be based on SDC's standards and beneficiaries' priorities. Security first! Cross-check the criteria identified for best disbursement in focus group discussions. Main topics usually are access, security concerns, time and cost for collecting, accessibility to disbursement, and transfer modalities as cash, voucher, check, bank-card, bank account, postal services, or mobile phone.

Lessons learned:

- Cash projects in (potential) emergency should abstain from sophisticated scaling of financial contribution to beneficiaries. This is more adequate in stable recovery phases and for social assistance. SDC's experiences show, the longer the duration of project in an emergency phase, the more difficulties arise for registration and verifications. Simultaneously various tensions emerge as beneficiaries compare with other aid agencies' contributions and start developing inacceptable strategies to get as much as possible.
- *Cash for household development activities requires a needs based targeting and it should be ensured that the project set-up is modified accordingly for more livelihood types of approaches.*
- *Early recovery or livelihoods projects are feasible alongside emergency grants but require a different level and type of communication, community mobilisation and staff expertise.*

Efficiency of the project

- Stick to SDC's experiences in emergency with cash projects advising direct implementation in order to keep full control on funds, staff and reprogramming whenever needed. Go for flat rates and keep project structure as light as possible.
- Go on with direct implementations in emergencies and make use of SDC's comparative advantages like flexibility, lean management and structures.
- Capacity building of a national NGO for cash implementing requires more time, training and coaching, based on previous analysis of potentials. Building-up partners capacities is easier in a development context rather than in a volatile emergency context.
- Continue the development of a SDC standard database for cash projects. It was initiated by PM in February 2014 during an IT support mission. It should help to avoid that every new cash project develops its own database. A modular database system, including standard administrative work, will offer missing modules for monitoring, external data exchange, effective evaluation, GPS mapping, and standard reports of gender and vulnerability disaggregation.
- *The commendable 'light' staff and resources approach generally adopted within SDC cash projects to gain maximum efficiency and ensure the maximum cash to beneficiary versus operational cost ratio, may need to be reconsidered in more*

complex cash programmes where multiple objectives are sought and particularly where cash is intended to stimulate livelihoods or early recovery.

Monitoring and Risk Management

- Provide trainings to SDC cash experts, using tools for progress monitoring and reporting in complex situations. Explore experiences with community based monitoring and evaluation system (CBME) as reference for complementary monitoring.
- *Initiate more qualitative post distribution monitoring to allow early identification, resolution and adaptation of project approaches to ensure early compliance with project intended outcomes.*
- Improve internal controlling with stricter measures and ensure that the verifier staff is rotating.
- Develop a more careful approach in contexts where there are community relation challenges and high likelihood of potential misuse.
- Plan the exit of cash for host families early by taking into account: the increasing risk of fraud with time, overloads to hosting communities and dynamic changes in the aid and support landscape. Therefore, be prepared for re-allocating funds to other priority activities urgently needed in volatile context.
- Use GPS for independent verifications to reduce reliance on local partners. With GPS data, one disposes of maps for unannounced local controls, or in combination with the database they can be used for referrals to other NGO as e.g. health or women organisations.
- Search for informal information channels rather than depend entirely on formal information channels. After the Rwanda genocide, SDC developed MERV as a tool for early recognition of invisible context and atmosphere changes at national level. This might be a tool to be adapted for project purposes. Further-more, in other contexts, “coffee drinkers” act as informal contact persons being familiar in the villages and inform on changes, implications, tensions and irregularities in an early stage.

Lessons learned:

- The longer a cash project last the higher is the risks for misuse and frauds. Especially in volatile con-texts and rapid extension of project areas and number of beneficiaries, widespread expectations arise for becoming a beneficiary. To cope with such situations a cash project has to reduce dependency from external partners potentially biased and rely mainly on own registration and verification.
- Concerning the way how the project manager has handled the organised fraud, this case could be seen as an example of responsible and accountable project management.
- Use the checklist of measures for avoiding fraud and misuse in cash trainings. This is in SDC’s tradition as learning organisation to improve standards, procedures and tools experience-based.
- Preventing misuse remains a big challenge for all cash project managers. The challenge is to find a balance between confidence in local staff and local partners, and careful use of control mechanisms. Usually, suspicions of false registration appear in an early stage. Strict and unannounced verifications help to screen the list of potential beneficiaries.