

Fostering Resilience in the Middle East: A People-Centered Approach to Risk Reduction

10 August 16
Webinar

Questions for Rola

Marissa Germain:

Q: Have any barriers developed from donors in terms of investing in your employees?

A: No barriers at all from investors when it comes to investing in our employees and especially “security” employees, since the investors are aware of the high risk environment in which we operate in Iraq and it is counted for in advance as part of the fund. On the other hand some Investors do put some pre-requisites related to the geographical area of operating their fund or the target segment they would like us to approach.

Deena Burjorjee:

Q: How does Vitas deal with the costs of the additional security protocols?

A: The relatively high investment in security protocols guarantees many high returns: the safety of our staff and customers, the safety of the cash itself, improves our customer service, increases our reliability and credibility thus increases customer retention, it also has a direct role in keeping a high quality wallet and portfolio with consistent PAR of less than 1% throughout our years of operation. As I mentioned, the teller function in the branches (and ditching the lousy and expensive service of the bank) is a risky initiative that came to life because of our high security standards and it is paying back.

Mohammed Kroessin:

Q: Do you use Islamic financing instruments, how do you ensure that they are sharia compliant and what benefits do you see in using murabaha or musharaka in DRR/fragile contexts?

A: We do not offer Islamic financing per se. We have adopted the upfront deducted charges practice. And we have obtained a "fatwa" from the Imam/Al Sayyid "Sistani" who is the highest religious authority in Iraq, which makes our loans acceptable in the context of Sharia.

Questions for Ziad

Mohammed Kroessin:

Q: How do you deal now with the large refugee community, especially in regards to restrictions to business ownership?

A: Currently we are focusing on the host communities, which are not benefiting enough from the relief offered to the refugee communities. We are still waiting to see whether these restrictions to business ownership will ease at some point in time.

Deena Burjorjee:

Q: Can you discuss if any of the new loan products that came out of the crisis became mainstream offerings after?

A: None of the new loan products came out to be a mainstream offering however, we have used them in some other similar crisis, although the events that took place at later stages were not on a nationwide scale.

Q: There are no standard products like reconstruction loans? That can be applied in a range of context

A: We offer a home improvement loan that could be adapted for reconstruction.

Questions for Amer

Mohammed Kroessin:

Q: Do you use Islamic financing instruments, how do you ensure that they are sharia compliant and benefits do you see in using murabaha or musharaka in DRR/fragile contexts?

A: We don't offer any Islamic product; we don't deal with Murabaha or musharaka.

Deena Burjorjee:

Q: Could you talk a bit more about Vitas coordination with humanitarian orgs during immediate relief phase?

A: Because Vitas Palestine is majority owned by Global Communities, we were able to coordinate with the World Food Programme (WFP) through the Global Communities office in Gaza, to distribute food packages to the affected clients. We gave them a list of the names of our clients that were impacted and they gave us the food and relief supply packages to deliver ourselves. It worked to everyone's benefit, because we were able to see our clients face to face and show our support directly, and it freed up WFP staff to make other urgent deliveries.