

# SEWING PRODUCTIVE WORKSHOP CASE STUDY

DRC MENA livelihoods learning programme 2017-2019

SYRIA

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The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a humanitarian, non-governmental, non-profit organisation founded in 1956 that works in more than 40 countries throughout the world. DRC fulfils its mandate by providing direct assistance to conflict – affected populations – refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities in the conflict areas of the world and by advocating on their behalf internationally and in Denmark.



*Tamam Haddad, an internally displaced Syrian, received support from DRC and opened his own tailoring workshop in Syria. August, 2017.  
Photo by: Rafel Yasseri/DRC*

## Brief project description

In April 2014, DRC established a Livelihood Unit in the Community Centre (CC) in Dera'a. Over the course of the project, 160 clients were trained in advanced sewing and knitting techniques in line with market needs, and supported to outline a business strategy to compete in the market. The project had both economic and psycho-social objectives.

The Theory of Change / Impact Chain for the sewing productive workshop is briefly outlined below.

This review is based solely on project documents and staff interviews because access to Dera'a CC at the time of the case study was restricted due to the security situation. For the subsequent years of the study, it will be important to find ways of collecting clients' perceptions and opinions.



## Observations and findings

1. A big need for technical vocational skills and for supporting small businesses was identified in Dera'a. Options were limited to training in a community centre, because no official approval was obtained for opening a business incubator centre or for opening a unit for 'heavy' vocational training such as generator maintenance.
2. Insecurity made it difficult for some to access the CC and especially for people living in rural villages.
3. As a formal market assessment was not conducted prior to implementation, the selection of sewing training was built on CC experience, on partner knowledge and other INGOs. DRC staff had the chance to visit sewing workshops that were working with minimum equipment.
4. In the first year (2014), trainers were not available, so DRC conducted a training of trainers (TOT) for ten graduates and hired two of them to provide the training.
5. The production was initially geared to the aid market: the products made by the trainees, for example woollen underwear, were bought by DRC, and then distributed via SARC to collective shelters.
6. It is not clear how the training has affected the livelihoods of the clients. The skills learned have increased self-sufficiency, for example clients became able to fix and recycle their children's clothes and were less dependent on external services. However, there is no evidence about any generated income because the intervention was a one-off, and DRC does not have information on whether the clients found a market for their goods after the project.
7. DRC staff believe that clients benefitted by seeing their products distributed to IDPs in collective shelters, changing their self-perception from recipients of aid to providers of aid.

## DAC criteria assessment

DAC CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
RELEVANCE	The goal of increasing household income is relevant, but it is unclear how relevant and impactful trainings and access to productive workshops are as a strategy for achieving this. Improving psychosocial wellbeing was also a relevant objective, and the project has been more relevant in this respect.
COST-EFFICIENCY	No cost-efficiency analysis has been conducted yet: it was found that the way DRC budgets are structured do not allow an easy cost-efficiency analysis and we would need to put in place a more systematic registration of staff time (and other costs) to be able to draw conclusions.
EFFECTIVENESS & IMPACT	It has proved difficult to conduct follow up or to obtain empirical evidence of business outcomes in Syria. This makes it very difficult to assess the effectiveness of training as a vehicle for improving livelihoods. Two previous graduates were hired as trainers by DRC and are still providing the training. There is no data available regarding the impact of the income on their household economy.
SUSTAINABILITY	The lack of empirical evidence and follow up also makes it difficult to assess the sustainability of the project. It is not clear if skills acquired through training lead to reliable and durable income-generating opportunities.
COVERAGE	Coverage was obviously limited. Using training as a strategy for livelihood improvement inevitably limits coverage, but the opportunity to look for alternatives is constrained in Syria.

## Main take-aways

- It is clear that the assumptions behind the project logic cannot be taken for granted. DRC has to find ways to investigate in much more detail the impact of the project on people's livelihoods – both for those who received training in sewing and those who were trained as trainers.
- DRC has to reflect on the relative importance and relevance of different objectives: increasing self-confidence and a sense of contributing or generating income.

