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An independent evaluation of Concern Worldwide's emergency response in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo Responding to displacement with vouchers and fairs

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Disasters **Emergency Committee**
Working together

 **Irish Aid**
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An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha

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About the Humanitarian Policy Group

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Acronyms

CFW	Cash for Work
CNDP	National Congress for the Defence of the People
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FARCD	Congolese Armed Forces
FC	Francs Congolais
FDLR	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MONUC	United Nations Mission in Congo
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NFI	Non-food Item
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PARECO	Congolese Patriotic Resistance
PEAR	Programme of Expanded Assistance to Returnees
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

In late 2008, escalated fighting among rebels and the Congolese Armed Forces (FARCD) provoked renewed and widespread displacement in North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In response to the unfolding crisis, Concern Worldwide implemented the project *Emergency Assistance to Newly Displaced and Host Families in Masisi Territory* using funding from the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and Irish Aid.

Concern's nine-month emergency project sought to contribute to the livelihood security of displaced and host families in Masisi territory by increasing household access to food, non-food items (NFIs) and water. Concern aimed to: 1) identify and assess the needs of 10,000 vulnerable and newly displaced households;¹ 2) meet emergency NFI needs; 3) improve water access for households in Rubaya; and 4) provide livelihood support for four months for the poorest beneficiaries. A primary activity of the project was creating 'fairs' where beneficiaries could use vouchers to purchase non-food items (e.g. kitchen utensils, *pagnes*),² seeds and tools from vendors, as well as to pay school fees. Concern opted to use fairs and vouchers rather than distributing NFI kits to provide beneficiaries flexibility and choice.

This report is the product of an independent evaluation conducted in August 2009. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the project achieved its objectives, with particular emphasis on the appropriateness of the voucher activities. While the primary intended audience is Concern Worldwide, DEC Member Agencies, the DEC Secretariat and Irish Aid, the evaluation's in-depth look at the voucher and fair methodology is intended also to be useful for other humanitarian agencies engaging in or considering using fairs in their emergency responses.

Voucher activities

The evaluation found that fairs were an appropriate and effective response to the needs created by displacement and return. Assessments

accurately identified priorities among households in the intervention area, which laid most emphasis on the replacement of basic household goods lost when they fled. The basic conditions were in place for implementing fairs – traders could supply critical items, authorities supported the intervention and beneficiaries felt that the fairs would be appropriate way to meet needs and would not put them at risk. Concern organised fairs with the following basic parameters:

- Beneficiaries had \$35 worth of vouchers (in Francs Congolais) and also received two blankets and soap from Concern;
- Traders were pre-selected from intervention areas (as opposed to Goma) in order to contribute to the local economy;
- Articles were pre-selected based on focus group discussions (FGDs) with women (kitchen articles, *pagnes*, haricot/pea seeds, machetes, hoes, headscarves);
- Prices of articles were fixed based on market research and negotiations with traders;
- Primary school fees could be paid to headmasters.

The fairs were also innovative: they provided beneficiaries with access to key goods and services in a way that enabled them to make choices according to their own priorities. Most beneficiaries were highly satisfied with the process. The majority preferred the fairs to receiving pre-packaged NFI kits, cash or vouchers to use in the local markets because the fairs enabled them to pay school fees, provided them with choice and were safer than receiving cash or vouchers to use in the local market.

The option of paying school fees was an especially popular aspect of the intervention. One-fifth of beneficiaries used vouchers to pay school fees and 27% of those beneficiaries paid for more than one child or trimester. For parents with children in primary school, school fees were an expenditure priority that they were having trouble meeting because fighting and displacement had interrupted their livelihoods. The payment of school fees enabled children to continue their studies uninterrupted, as they are often sent home from school when parents fail to pay. The inclusion of school fees tipped many recipients towards preferring fairs compared with receiving in-kind assistance.

¹ The number of beneficiaries has been reduced from 10,000 to an estimated 8,000 as other non-DEC funding initially allocated could not be carried forward beyond 31 December 2008.

² A piece of material used by women as clothing or tailored to make clothing.

Addressing certain issues would have further increased the effectiveness of the fairs. In spite of substantial sensitisation efforts using community members, a small number of beneficiaries simply did not grasp the process. In rare cases, they exchanged all of their vouchers for only one or two items. The prices of certain goods in the fairs were higher than market prices, which meant that beneficiaries accessed less assistance than they would have if prices had been lower. The selection of articles should have been wider and included used clothing, which was in high demand by beneficiaries. There were some cases of articles running out at certain moments; beneficiaries in the fairs when this occurred had reduced selection. The lack of small voucher denominations reduced flexibility because beneficiaries could not pay for articles with precise amounts and traders did not provide change in the form of cash or vouchers. Beneficiaries therefore had to purchase multiple items with one trader or receive change in the form of soap or salt.

In terms of efficiency and cost effectiveness, using vouchers required more planning and was slightly more expensive compared with in-kind distributions, but had the benefit of providing more choice to recipients and supporting local traders. Sensitisation with beneficiaries and traders, combined with the creation of fairs that served around 700 households per day, took more time than the well-established approach of procuring and distributing NFI kits to upwards of 1,000 households per distribution day. The fair approach was marginally more expensive because of savings inherent in bulk purchasing through competitive procurement processes. However, working with local traders directed profits to businesses in the intervention areas as opposed to ones in Goma or outside of Congo. There is also widespread recognition among non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that beneficiaries often sell certain NFI kit items to meet other priorities; the use of vouchers likely discouraged this resale by providing choice and the option of paying school fees.

In targeting the assistance, Concern used a participatory exercise where a committee of community members ranked displaced and returnee households (some of which were hosting displaced households) into categories of 'poor', 'very poor' or 'poorest of the poor'. Concern then targeted assistance to the latter two categories. The result was high levels of understanding, satisfaction and inclusion in Rubaya and Bihambwe, where upwards of 95% of households

were targeted and limited inclusion/exclusion errors were reported. Given that the assistance provided did not vary between the bottom two wealth categories, the targeting process could have been simplified by establishing one set of criteria for inclusion rather than ranking households into three wealth groups. In Matanda, where the 'poorest of the poor' were targeted because remaining resources could serve less than half of the population, the process was complicated by a lack of transparent information on the targeting criteria and the inherent difficulties of targeting assistance to only a portion of the population amid similar levels of need.

Livelihoods support to the poorest and increasing water access

Because of a one-month project suspension following an attack on a Concern base, Concern decided not to implement the activity of providing livelihoods support to the poorest for four months through a monthly cash or voucher transfer. For the water activities, FGDs and key informant interviews confirmed that water access was a problem in Rubaya as taps were open only for two hours each day. Following Concern's linking of a spring with an existing tank, water access has increased significantly. Leaders and focus groups reported that some taps are breaking because of the stronger water pressure in the tank.

Main conclusions and recommendations

The overarching objective of the project was to contribute to livelihood security of displaced and host household families through increased access to food, NFIs and water. While it is difficult to determine impacts on livelihood security, access to NFI goods, agricultural inputs, school fees and water contributed to livelihoods by meeting important basic needs, supporting agricultural livelihoods for those with access to land and reducing household expenditure. There were certainly very positive livelihood impacts for the 17 traders who participated in fairs, who made profits that far exceeded their normal activities. Increasing the value of the voucher would have further augmented support to livelihoods, but at the evident cost of reaching fewer beneficiaries.

Providing choice to recipients was a clear advantage of the fairs compared with more traditional forms of emergency assistance where assistance commodities are distributed. Bringing in more traders would have made choice wider and more consistent, as would have ensuring that

traders brought a broader selection of articles, such as used clothing for men and children. Humanitarian agencies and donors should take note of Concern’s inclusion of school fees in this project: in this setting it was a safe and appropriate way to support education and livelihoods by reducing household expenditure.

High prices of articles in the fairs was far and away the largest complaint of beneficiaries, who saw lowering prices as an important step that Concern should take in future fairs. Prices were higher than ‘normal’ market prices because of a combination of three factors: certain items were of a different quality to those in the local market; traders did not always provide change to beneficiaries at the fairs; and despite Concern’s efforts to set prices at or below market level, prices were not accurate for all items. Taking measures to ensure lower prices in fairs would increase both efficiency and effectiveness. Concern would make funds stretch further, and recipients would meet more of their needs.

The emphasis on participation throughout the project had a number of positive benefits. The thorough sensitisation process using community

members resulted in a general high level of understanding among beneficiaries. To respond to the rare but important exceptions of beneficiaries who did not understand the process, Concern could have instructed sensitisation committee members and local leaders to identify people who might have trouble understanding the process and encourage people to bring a ‘helper’.

Staff showed noteworthy skill and flexibility in quickly adopting a voucher approach, which was new to everyone involved. Concern’s successful implementation of fairs shows that organisations do not need ‘cash and voucher experts’, but rather talented staff who can use their emergency assessment and project management skills to incorporate cash-based responses in their interventions. Having training sessions and centralised resources on cash-based responses readily available to key staff would facilitate this process, as would exchanges with organisations conducting similar interventions. The lessons from this intervention should serve as source of learning within and outside of Concern, including with agencies in the DRC engaged in similar voucher responses.

Recommendations

For Concern	For Concern and agencies considering voucher responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently consider in-kind distributions, cash and vouchers as options to meet needs. • Be clear about the project objective in projects using vouchers or cash; objectives of support to livelihoods should be based on a livelihoods assessment. • Include timeliness and cost effectiveness when considering vouchers (or cash transfers) as an alternative to in-kind distributions. • Ensure that key emergency staff have the skills and resources to consider cash-based responses. • Use the DRC voucher fairs as a source of learning and sharing. • Organise a technical review of the water activities in Rubaya. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient choice in fairs: all recipients should have access to priority items identified in evaluations. • Ensure that beneficiaries who do not understand the process can get assistance on fair days. • Ensure that prices in the fair correspond closely with local market prices. • Include a sufficient number of traders. • Use voucher coupons that have small enough denominations to allow for flexible spending. • Responsibly promote innovation in voucher responses (e.g. through including new goods and services). • Include strong qualitative monitoring. • In areas new to fairs, start with smaller fairs.

1. Introduction

Fighting among rebels and the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), promoted large-scale displacement in late 2008. More than 250,000 people fled their homes, adding to the estimated 1 million already displaced in North and South Kivu. In response to the renewed displacement, Concern Worldwide implemented *Emergency Assistance to Newly Displaced and Host Families with in Masisi Territory*, a project funded by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and Irish Aid. A major element of this project was supporting returnee and displaced families through 'voucher fairs', where beneficiaries could use vouchers to purchase essential non-food items (NFIs), seeds and tools and pay school fees. This report is the product of an independent evaluation of this project.

1.1 Background

The DRC has been the site of devastating conflict, massive displacement and widespread human rights abuses. While the major wars took place between 1996 and 2003, conflict continues, notably in North and South Kivu provinces. Here, the main rebel movements are the FDLR (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda) and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP). The FDLR is often described as the Hutu *genocidaires* behind the 1994 genocide of Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda. The CNDP, supported by Rwanda (and until January 2009 led by Laurent Nkunda), has the stated objective of protecting Congolese Tutsis from the FDLR. The other rebels are mainly local armed groups, like Congolese Patriotic Resistance (PARECO), which are self-designated defence forces often divided along ethnic lines. However, rather than providing protection, they are responsible for taxing, pillaging and even killing the people they claim to protect. All of the armed groups, which form alliances that shift and change over time, have been responsible for brutal attacks against civilians. The vast mineral wealth in the Kivus has provided a significant source of funding and motivation. The FARDC also has an extremely poor track record in protecting civilians and has perpetuated abuses against them. A final key player in this vast equation is the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC). MONUC is the largest peacekeeping force in the world, but it has come under fire for failing to provide adequate

protection to civilians in the face of advancing conflict.

In late 2008, the CNDP made significant military advances towards the provincial capital of Goma, which the FARDC and MONUC were unable to halt. The fighting resulted in the displacement of 250,000 people, adding to the nearly 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) already displaced in the province. The displaced moved to a variety of locations and situations: displacement camps within and outside of DRC; creating informal camp-like settlements; lodging in the empty houses of nearby towns from which people had fled; staying within (or building temporary structures next to) the homes of friends, family or other people who could 'host' them. Concerns have been raised about the disproportionate channelling of aid resources to IDPs in camps, when many live in host situations.³ While fighting among armed groups and attacks on villages provoked displacement, changing political and security situations also encouraged return to certain areas (e.g. Rubaya, Bihambwe) once the areas were under the control of the government or CNDP. This led to a combination of IDPs and recent returnees living side by side in towns and villages.

In November 2008, the DEC launched an appeal for funds to support Member Agencies' programmes in response to the intensification of fighting and exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis that had begun during the previous month. Initially, £5.5 million was raised as a result of the appeal,⁴ and in December 12 Member Agencies were allocated a share for response programmes of up to nine months. Concern Worldwide was allocated £165,000, representing a 3% share of the overall funds raised.

1.2 Concern's project

Concern has been operating in Eastern DRC for 15 years, including implementing a livelihoods programme in Masisi territory in the province of

³ Walter Kalin, Representative of the Secretary General on the Human Rights of IDPs, noted that 'humanitarian assistance is mainly channelled to IDPs living in spontaneous or organised camps. Host communities and families received comparatively little assistance.'

⁴ The figure was subsequently increased to approximately £10 million, which may lead to further support of humanitarian actions.

North Kivu from 2003 to 2007, until the security situation deteriorated significantly, effectively halting programming. Following assessments in early 2008, Concern launched an emergency programme in April 2008 working in newly created IDP camps around Masisi Centre, targeting IDPs with NFI distributions, as well as conducting seed distributions and cash for work (CFW) that included host populations. These activities, based out of Masisi Centre, were periodically suspended owing to insecurity. They did not include Rubaya/Matanda, because of fighting and massive displacement from those areas towards Goma. As of late 2008, the numbers of IDPs and returnees grew around Rubaya and surrounding areas, and Concern secured DEC and Irish Aid funding to address the needs of newly displaced, returnee and host families.

The objective of the nine-month emergency project was ‘to contribute to the livelihood security of displaced and host families in Masisi territory by increasing household access to food, NFIs and water’.

The four results expected of the programme were:

- 10,000 vulnerable and newly displaced households requiring emergency assistance are identified, and their needs verified by end of February 2009.⁵
- Emergency NFI needs of identified beneficiaries are met through support to local markets and voucher schemes or direct NFI provision.
- Improved access to water for 12,000 households.
- The poorest of the beneficiary community receive livelihood support for a period of four months (though a monthly cash or voucher transfer)

A key feature of the project was using ‘fairs’ to enable beneficiaries to access key NFI needs through day-long markets created by Concern. The beneficiaries were given \$35-worth of vouchers, which could be used within the fairs in exchange for items from vendors. Vouchers could also be used to pay school fees to headmasters, who provided a receipt attesting to payment. The vendors and headmasters then redeemed the cash value of these coupons from Concern. The fairs took place in three sites – Rubaya,

⁵ This figure was later revised downwards to 8,000 because additional funding that Concern had could not be spent after December 2008.

Bihambwe and Matanda – between January and May 2009.

1.3 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess to what degree the project has been successful in achieving the established results and specific objective. This report examines the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the project. The evaluation will make recommendations for future interventions and learning for Concern Worldwide, DEC Member Agencies and the DEC Secretariat. The evaluation gives particular focus to the appropriateness of the use of vouchers in comparison with other possible approaches.

1.4 Methodology

The evaluation took place in July and August 2009, with fieldwork in Goma and project sites from 26 July until 7 August. Three of the four project sites were visited (Rubaya, Bihambwe, Matanda). The methodology was primarily qualitative, using a combination of desk-based research, focus group discussions (FGDs) (20), key informant interviews (19) and informal household surveys (see Annex 2 for detailed methodology).

1.5 Report organisation

Section 2 provides a description of the project and assessment process. **Section 3** presents the findings of the evaluation. **Section 4** provides the conclusion and recommendations.

Findings are broadly organised according to the criteria of appropriateness, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and cost effectiveness. For these issues, the broad questions considered were:

Appropriateness: Did assessments correctly identify priority needs? Did the project objectives respond to priority needs? Did recipients prefer the vouchers over other forms of assistance that could have been provided? Were the people targeted those most in need?

Effectiveness and impact: What did people purchase with vouchers? Was the overall amount of the vouchers sufficient to achieve the objectives? Did the fairs offer sufficient choice? Did aid recipients understand the system? Did activities take place in a timely manner? Were there evident impacts in terms of livelihoods security and conflict?

Efficiency and cost effectiveness: How efficient was the use of vouchers in comparison with other potential interventions (e.g. in-kind distributions)?

Did using vouchers require more staff time and resources than comparable in-kind distributions?

2. Project Description

2.1 Assessments and objectives

The decision to support displaced and host families in and around Rubaya, primarily through vouchers and fairs, came about through a series of assessments and internal and interagency discussions on how to respond to the increasing displacement in Masisi territory. Concern was already conducting an emergency operation supporting IDPs in four camps in Masisi. When the CNDP took control of Rubaya in September 2008, both displaced persons and residents began arriving/returning, despite continued insecurity; clashes between PARECO and CNDP forces around Rubaya had resulted in looting and killing in Rubaya town in June and mid-September 2008.

Because of the insecurity and corresponding lack of operational non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the area, there were no pre-existing, detailed assessments on which to base the intervention. Concern consulted with Solidarités and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which are the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) partners and therefore responsible for conducting rapid emergency assessments in North Kivu and implementing NFI responses.⁶ Concern established that NFIs – meaning basic household goods like casseroles, blankets, jerry cans, plastic sheeting and clothing – represented a priority need that was not being met in Rubaya. Concern conducted a basic initial assessment on which to base to the project proposal, then followed up with more detailed assessments to shape the intervention. This meant that the main features of the project – that it would address NFI needs and potentially use vouchers – were decided in advance of the more detailed assessments that shaped the intervention.

A series of assessments were conducted in Rubaya to determine the need for and specific elements of the intervention. Among other issues, Concern found:

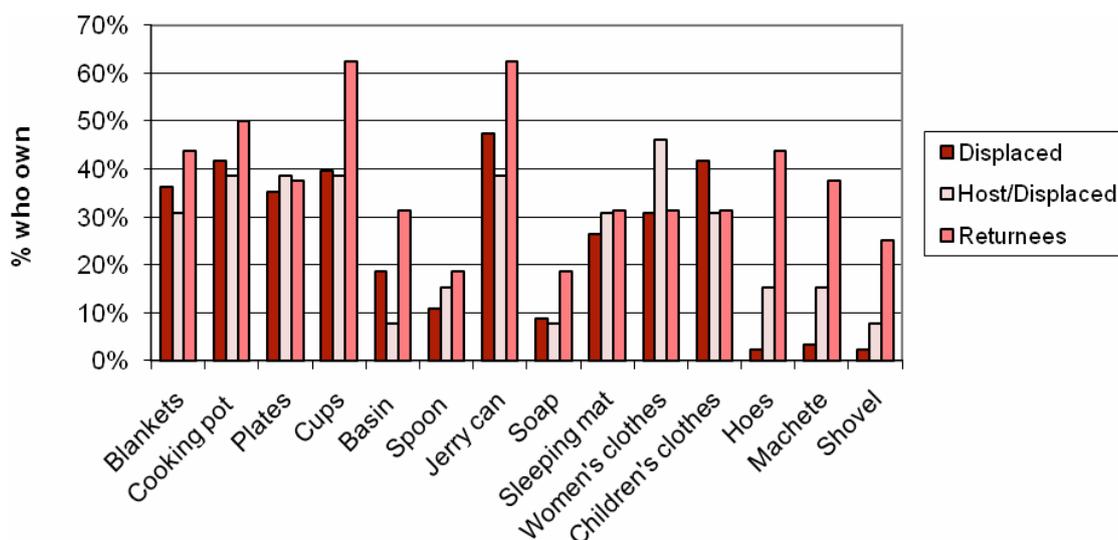
- An absence of humanitarian actors: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Belgium was present but winding down its operations;
- Relatively robust market activity: there are 40+ small shops in Rubaya;
- NFI needs: the need for blankets, cooking pots and plastic sheeting (for shelter) were identified by IDPs;
- Stress on water resources, resulting from the population increase plus fountains running only two hours per day;
- Absence of camps: IDPs were living as two to three households per dwelling; some were renting dwellings for \$5/month; others were living with host families free of charge or in exchange for labour in the fields.

No camps were present in Rubaya. Rather, IDPs were living with or alongside host families, which themselves had recently returned from being displaced as a result of fighting. There were three general categories of households: displaced, returnee not hosting IDPs and returnee hosting IDPs. Many of the displaced were paying rent to their hosts; the displaced were mainly being accommodated in grass-roof structures, whereas host families mainly had iron sheeting on their houses. The CNDP authorities were against plastic sheeting, as they did not want IDPs leaving Rubaya and creating spontaneous IDP camps. Nevertheless, the assessment team addressed with IDPs the question of whether those living in host families should be given plastic sheets. Displaced households expressed the need for better shelter and plastic sheeting:

- Often, they are unable to pay the \$5 rent to stay with a hosting family. If they had a plastic sheet, then they could build an independent shelter;
- Many of the IDPs are currently living in shelters with damaged roofs. They could use plastic sheeting to waterproof their roofs.
- They proposed that they could use the plastic sheeting as flooring or as beds.

⁶ RRM is programme managed by UNICEF and OCHA and implemented through multiple international NGOs who are the focal points of different provinces. The NGOs conduct rapid multi-sectoral assessments in areas of new emergencies. Where no other actors respond, the NGOs deliver responses consisting of NFI, watsan and emergency education as appropriate.

Figure 1. Households owning NFIs in Rubaya



Source: Concern Rubaya NFI assessment surveying 150 households.

A portion of the assessments focused specifically on NFIs. The majority of 150 returnee and IDP households visited had very few NFIs; some had none at all. Blankets, cooking pots, jerry cans and clothing were seen in 30-60% of the households; only 2% had five out of seven ‘essential’ NFIs.⁷ Concern created the below figure to show possession of and gaps in NFIs among the households surveyed.

Other apparent trends were: families often shared NFIs; some households had received NFI distributions in the past but certain items had been pillaged; and returnee households in the sample group typically possessed more tools than the displaced. An RRM assessment conducted by Solidarités in the same area in February 2009 confirmed similar NFI needs in places not yet reached by Concern, finding on average one or two NFIs in households visited. While returnee households had salvaged some seeds from the previous season, most had had their crops destroyed during the clashes, or insecurity had prevented them from harvesting. IDPs had limited access to land but could rent land with cash or through a share-cropping arrangement. Daily labour and charitable help from friends and neighbours were also sources of income and food. The assessments explored protection issues, finding that security had generally improved since the CNDP had taken control of Rubaya, although threats to safety and security remained. Leaders and women interviewed in FGDs felt that the

assistance would not put them at risk. A baseline nutritional survey was attempted, but Concern determined that the results were potentially unreliable because of the methodology and lack of experience of the assessment team. Education emerged as an issue in FGDs, with IDPs expressing that difficulties in paying school fees posed a challenge to enrolling their children in school.

2.1.1 In-kind, vouchers or cash?

Although Concern was distributing NFI kits in other areas of Masisi as part of its emergency activities, Concern looked to the possibility of using vouchers with a view to providing more flexible assistance. Concern ruled out using cash transfers from the beginning because of security concerns with regard to moving cash in the region and protection concerns for beneficiaries who would be in possession of it. Vouchers were explored as an alternative to NFI kits because of:

- Evidence from its own experience and that of other actors in the region that some NFI kit items are sold by beneficiaries in order to meet other needs;
- Possession by households of certain NFIs;
- Pressure from CNDP authorities not to distribute plastic sheeting;
- Concern Worldwide’s global experience with cash transfer programming;
- Growing evidence of the benefits of cash-based responses in emergency settings;
- The presence of trader and market activity in Rubaya;

⁷ The assessment did not indicate which items it designated as ‘essential’.

- The opportunity to support local traders and inject cash locally.

While not cited by project staff as a reason for choosing vouchers for the project, NFI voucher fairs are being undertaken by other actors in DRC, including in North Kivu, by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Solidarités, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and IRC. In fact, DRC is one of the few examples where vouchers are being used for NFIs; globally, cash-based responses remain significantly underutilised in this sector (Bailey et al., 2008). Their use in DRC owes in no small part to UNICEF's efforts to promote the use of vouchers and fairs for NFIs through RRM, the Programme of Expanded Assistance to Returnees (PEAR) and the NFI/Shelter Cluster.

Concern discussed with beneficiaries their preference for fairs or NFI kits. NFI kits, although their content varies depending on the organisation distributing them, are well known. The kits are often distributed in response to displacement in the region. A 'light'⁸ kit endorsed by the NFI/Shelter Cluster contains a jerry can, casserole, two blankets, two mats, four bowls, three cups, cutlery and three bars of soap, with the option of including used clothing (or a *pagne*)⁹ and plastic sheeting. Arguably, the question of preference is tricky to get the bottom of: NFI kits are highly valued, but potential beneficiaries may also try to tailor responses in support of whatever intervention the aid agency has in mind. Even during this evaluation questions of preference were sometimes met with the response 'it's for the organisation to decide'. To describe the fair methodology and explore preference, Concern used sample vouchers and even drawings. When asked about potential voucher amounts, the issue of 'letting the organisation decide' did arise but, with regard to the fairs themselves, IDPs and returnees responded favourably. They underlined the advantage of being able to select articles as an alternative to receiving kits.

A rapid market assessment was conducted based on conditions laid out in Oxfam's *Cash Transfer Programming in Emergencies* (Creti and Jaspars, 2006). Discussions with traders established that they had the capacity to provide commodities,

⁸ 'Light' kits are distributed when households are in possession of some NFI articles. A 'standard' kit endorsed by the NFI Cluster contains more of certain items (e.g. blankets, mats, kitchen articles) as well as additional items (e.g. plastic basin, hoe).

⁹ A piece of material used by women as clothing or tailored to make clothing.

although building their confidence in the system required efforts on Concern's part as traders were worried about purchasing large quantities of stock that could remain unsold. Meetings were held with local leadership and CNDP officials to determine that vouchers would be an acceptable approach. FGDs were also held with women in order to determine their priority NFI needs; these discussions provided the basis for Concern's communications to the traders on what goods to supply. The items cited in the FGDs were ones commonly found in kits, but they also included seeds and tools. Concern also used FGDs to discuss whether fairs would increase risks to aid recipients, and determined that they would not.

2.2 Fair design

Concern opted to use vouchers to meet the identified needs, recognising that some of the needs identified in assessments (e.g. renting land) could not be met through them but that they could include NFIs, seeds/tools and school fees. The decision to use vouchers brought with it the need to determine the parameters of activity: the value of the vouchers, the denominations of the individual coupons, which articles would be included in the fairs, whether traders would be selected in advance and whether prices would be fixed or negotiable between traders and beneficiaries. The below table summarises the main parameters of the fairs and their justification.

2.3 Targeting

After discussion on whether to conduct blanket targeting (on the assumption that the entire population was in need of assistance) or more targeted assistance, Concern opted for the latter in an effort to direct assistance to those most in need. The targeting was done on the basis of a participatory wealth-ranking exercise meant to identify those in greatest need. Concern had *nyumba kumi* ('chiefs of ten houses') conduct a census of their areas, which were compiled into a master list. In one site, Concern worked with a local NGO to conduct a house-by-house verification of all registered households. In the others, Concern verified 10% of the households to save on time. Concern then undertook a participatory targeting and wealth-ranking exercise, using a group of community members to classify households as 'poor', 'very poor' or 'poorest of the poor' based on criteria developed through FGDs and agreed on by the community selection committee. The intervention then targeted the latter two categories. Concern did not

indicate in advance which categories would be targeted, with the objective of reducing inclusion errors. The lists were publicly posted to provide an opportunity for people to raise concerns about the

classifications. The result was that the vast majority of people were targeted (upwards of 95% in Rubaya and Bihambwe).

Table 1. Key parameters of fairs

Issue	Decision	Justification
Total value of vouchers	\$35	The cost of the average of different 'bundles' of goods cited in FGDs ¹⁰
Voucher denominations	Francs Congolais in denominations of 2,000FC and 3,000FC ¹¹ (later changed to only 2,000FC)	FGDs established that FC would be better understood than dollars (also used in DRC) Denominations of 2,000/3,000FC were seen as manageable for counting while small enough for flexible spending Following the first fair, changed to only 2,000FC because of confusion among recipients about different values
Traders	Only use traders from project sites (as opposed to Goma) Pre-selected through a tendering process	To contribute to the local economy To ensure that pre-selected articles of standard quality were bought in sufficient quantities Traders could be trained in Concern's protection standards and codes of conduct Concern could control prices by agreeing them with traders
Articles in fairs	Casseroles (cooking pots), plastic jerry can, <i>pagnes</i> (wax quality), seeds (beans, peas), machetes, hoes, plastic tubs, head scarves, plates	Articles most cited in FGDs with women
Services in fairs	Payment of school fees	Cited as a barrier to accessing education and expenditure priority in assessments Testing if payment of school fees would work in the voucher/fair format (promoting innovation)
Distribution of certain NFIs in-kind	Soap and blankets to be distributed by Concern.	Blankets donated by Irish Aid. Hygiene promotion (soap)
Beneficiaries per fair day	1,000 (later revised to approximately 700)	Enable large numbers of recipients per fair day for efficiency. Revised to 700 after first fair as 1,000 proved challenging to manage
Prices	Fixed, based on prices in local market	Prevent traders from raising prices/ensure that recipients pay at or below market value for articles
Payments to traders	For amounts over \$200, payments made in Goma	Avoids taking large amounts of cash to project sites
Sensitisation	Primarily done by community women trained in the methodology	Involve local community members Increase the amount of sensitisation compared with using only Concern staff

¹⁰ Team members asked the different groups what essential items they would buy in the fairs. The groups agreed on a set of items and then calculated the total cost. The results varied between focus groups, but \$35 was the average.

¹¹ At the time of the fairs, the exchange rate was 800 FC to 1 USD

Issue	Decision	Justification
Monitoring	Done the day of the fair as people exited, using surveys Post-fair monitoring done approximately two weeks after fairs	Enable Concern to receive real-time feedback on fairs and make changes as necessary

3. Evaluation Findings

This section details the evaluation findings based on the criteria of appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, focusing primarily on the voucher activities. The section aims to present a comprehensive picture in a logical manner, recognising that some findings relate to multiple criteria. For example, cost effectiveness is an element of appropriateness, and how well people understood the fairs relates to both their appropriateness and their effectiveness.

3.1 Appropriateness

To determine the appropriateness of the response, the evaluation looked at whether the assessments correctly identified priority needs, whether the project objectives responded to these priorities and whether the intervention targeted those most in need.

3.1.1 Did the project address the right problems?

Having written an initial project proposal based on limited assessments, a key question is whether the project objectives and activities addressed the priority needs resulting from the displacement and return. The assessments were relatively thorough, covered multiple sectors and captured essential information for Concern to confirm their initial determination that NFIs were a priority need among displaced persons and returnees. Extremely poor road conditions and lack of safe lodgings in which to spend the night in the field constrained the time that could be spent conducting assessments to a few hours per day. This limited the amount of detail on certain issues, such as more specific information related to agricultural seasons. Concern consulted with a range of stakeholders, including displaced and returnee households, other NGOs, local leaders and CNDP authorities, overall creating a participative assessment process that accurately identified the key priorities in areas not being reached by other NGOs, despite logistical challenges in reaching the intervention areas.

While the overarching objective of the project was to contribute to the livelihood security of *displaced* and *host* families, the assessments did not focus much on the relationship between displaced and host families. Rather, they considered the needs of displaced persons and returnees (only some of whom were hosting IDPs)

across the board. While slightly shifting the objective, this seems logical and appropriate: as villages had completely emptied during the fighting, every household in the project sites fell into the categories of 'IDP' or 'returnee'. Returnees had also lost most possessions because of looting, even if assessments suggested that they were marginally better off than IDPs in terms of access to resources (e.g. land). Making a distinction between returnee households that were hosting IDPs in their homes and ones that were not would have missed the larger picture that both groups had significant needs. Given assessments showed that some IDPs had reciprocal arrangements of contributing rent or labour to host families, it is also not entirely clear that host families are by default more vulnerable than other returnees.

Nor did the assessments delve substantially into livelihoods, which is essential to justify an objective of *contributing to livelihood security*, such as determining different seed varieties appropriate for different planting seasons, exploring the role of livestock in livelihoods or better understanding issues around access to land and non-agricultural livelihoods. Investigating options to promote the inclusion of small-scale traders in the eventual fairs could have led to supporting their livelihoods. By touching on livelihood assets, strategies and challenges in assessments (e.g. access to agricultural inputs and expenditure patterns), Concern did expand beyond the initial focus on NFIs to include seeds, tools and school fees, thus shaping the activities in light of the information obtained in the field. However, the intervention logic hovered in an area somewhere between a more 'standard' humanitarian response meeting basic needs and one focused on supporting livelihoods. Determining a clearer-cut vision (including how the project would contribute to livelihoods) would have enabled staff to shape the fairs more easily according to project objectives, as questions like which articles to include and the value of vouchers are intrinsically linked to what the project is looking to achieve.

For example, Jaspars and Maxwell (2009) categorise livelihoods interventions into three basic groups: livelihoods provisioning (meeting basic needs through providing access to goods and services); livelihoods protection (protecting

assets and preventing negative outcomes); and livelihoods promotion (improving strategies and assets). The fairs included elements of the first two categories by providing access to basic needs, reducing expenditure and protecting assets through access to seeds and tools. Concern could have emphasised livelihoods in assessments and then framed the activities in terms of their support to livelihoods. If Concern wanted to make a significant contribution to livelihood recovery, then the assistance would need to be more generous.

The evaluation found that NFIs were unmistakably of central importance to recently displaced and returned households: evaluation focus groups and survey respondents consistently ranked NFIs and household goods as a pressing need immediately following their displacement or return, as they had been lost or looted. NFIs were by and large their first priority; this is a trend common enough in North Kivu that RRM partners distribute them regularly amid the periodic displacement resulting from fighting and attacks on villages.

NFI needs had not changed in the period between initial displacement/return and the intervention because households lacked the resources to buy the articles. Rather, they continued their tactics of sharing and other creative (and often cumbersome) strategies, like using one casserole to prepare separate meal components consecutively. Most focus group respondents were meeting basic needs through some form of daily labour, typically working in the fields or transporting goods for traders, and sometimes through charitable help from friends and neighbours. Some farmed their own land or rented land from others. Daily labour usually pays 500-1,000FC/day. This enables spending on food and setting aside a small amount for school fees (for families with children in school), but not the purchase of more expensive household goods lost or looted during displacement. Clothing, kitchen utensils and plastic sheeting (for shelter) were most often cited by respondents; other needs that came out less strongly were tools, drinking water and food.

Concern did flag shelter issues in the assessments, but plastic sheeting and shelter needs came out more strongly in the evaluation fieldwork than in Concern's assessments. One possible reason for this is that, having received other items through the fairs, but not plastic sheeting, IDPs and returnees viewed plastic sheeting as an unmet need at the time of the

evaluation. In the case of displaced households, the increase in IDP and returnee households in the project sites since the intervention has also decreased the amount of empty houses available for lodging (or renting). A final possibility is that, while Concern judged the shelter situation not to be a pressing need, displaced and returnee households did not agree. Concern eventually decided not to include plastic sheeting in the intervention for several reasons: the CNDP's staunch opposition to plastic sheeting; Concern's own judgement that lack of overcrowding and availability of empty houses did not make shelter a significant problem; a desire not to encourage the creation of spontaneous camps; and the fact that plastic sheeting donated by Irish Aid was determined by the Goma NFI/Shelter Cluster to be suitable for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities (e.g. construction of latrines) but not for shelter. The plastic sheeting was consequently donated to other NGOs for use in WASH interventions.

Based on the information Concern gathered about the availability of traders to supply goods, beneficiary preferences, security and needs, vouchers were an appropriate way forward. Perhaps an unexpected advantage of leaning towards voucher-based assistance from the project's inception is that it left the Concern emergency staff tasked with starting the project with a fairly supple framework in terms of shaping the activities and deciding what to include in the fairs

3.1.2 Incorporating a conflict analysis into programme design

While not conducting a specific risk or conflict analysis, a number of issues were taken into account in the programming design. Concern put particular emphasis on protection, determining through focus groups and discussions with leaders that fairs would not increase risks of theft or violence. Traders were paid in Goma in order to avoid having large amounts of cash transported by vehicles or present at the fair sites. Concern opted against distributing cash because of the potential risks to staff and beneficiaries. Eliminating the option of distributing cash transfers appears to have been a wise decision regarding safety and protection: NGO lodgings were subsequently attacked in the operational area and the vast majority of women interviewed for the evaluation felt that cash could have been stolen or simply lost.

3.1.3 Livelihoods support to poorest and water access

The third objective of the project was supporting livelihoods of the poorest through a monthly cash or voucher transfer for four months. In the absence of information about the livelihood strategies of the intended beneficiaries, the extent to which increased cash or vouchers could address livelihood obstacles (e.g. lack of household labour), what goods and services beneficiaries would have had access to, their expenditure priorities, the value of the cash or vouchers and the acceptance of non-beneficiaries and authorities of this type of assistance, it is nearly impossible to determine whether this objective and its accompanying activities would have been appropriate (it was abandoned for security reasons; see below).

The final expected outcome was to improve water access for approximately 12,000 households (the estimated population of Rubaya) through diverting a spring to existing water structures. In Rubaya, FGDs confirmed that access to clean water was a problem when they arrived, as village taps were open for only two hours each day. The pre-existence of infrastructure in Rubaya provided an entry point for Concern, particularly as Concern does not have major experience with water interventions in the area. The larger number of people living in Rubaya compared with neighbouring villages made it a logical choice in terms of reach.

3.1.4 Did the project target those in most need?

The decision to use participative targeting – rather than categorical targeting (e.g. IDPs) or blanket targeting – was based on Concern's goal of reaching the neediest and avoiding provision of assistance to the minority who were better off. With most households having lost assets, the result of the participative process was that a significant portion of the population was targeted – upwards of 95% in Rubaya and Bihambwe. In Kibabi, Concern targeted only returnees, as Solidarités was assisting displaced households through RRM. In Matanda, the final site of the project, Concern assisted only households classified as 'poorest of the poor' because the remaining resources would cover only less than half of the approximately 3,500 households.

There was much satisfaction with the targeting process in the sites where the vast majority of IDPs

and returnees were targeted (Rubaya and Bihambwe). Respondents felt that the exclusion error was negligible, with limited inclusion error owing to certain *nyumba kumi* replacing legitimate beneficiaries with 'fake' households. It is difficult to say precisely how great the inclusion error was, but it was likely small: in Rubaya focus groups expressed that almost none occurred; in Bihambwe there appear to be cases involving specific *nyumba kumi*. In Rubaya, respondents thought that Concern's verification and complaints processes limited trickery that might have otherwise occurred. In both sites, a handful of examples were given in focus groups of people who claimed to have been registered but did not receive assistance. Possible explanations are that the people arrived on the wrong fair day (this was the case for one woman), that their name were mistakenly left off the master list, that there was deception by *nyumba kumi* or that they mistook the census for being the actual registration.

Only people who arrived prior to census and targeting were included in the registration. The cut-off date inevitably excluded people who otherwise would have met the criteria but arrived after. Ideally, a contingency mechanism should have been created to include needy people who arrived after the cut-off date. However, having rolling registrations between the initial census and the fair would have been operationally difficult, unless Concern either undertook a second round of verification and participative targeting or trusted the local authorities and targeting committees to add names. Those who arrived afterwards were aware that they had missed the cut-off date for registration and therefore would not receive assistance.

Compared with the satisfaction with the targeting process in Rubaya and Bihambwe, a vastly different picture emerged in Matanda, where a much smaller portion of those on the census list ended up benefiting from assistance. Matanda was also the last fair site. Even though a more targeted process was required there than in other sites, the targeting was carried out in less time in order to deliver the assistance promptly and finish the project on time. Former staff noted that the demanding pace of activities had taken a toll on team energy and morale at this stage. Targeting in Matanda had flaws: the beneficiary lists were not made public in advance of the fairs, so all of the people whose names had been taken in the census showed up on the days of the fairs; people were unaware of the selection criteria that separated out beneficiaries from non-

beneficiaries; and local leaders stated that they were under the impression that most of the village would be targeted (as they had been in neighbouring sites). Concern attempted to deter manipulation of the process by not indicating which wealth groups would be targeted, but the result was confusion rather than accuracy. Focus groups and leaders consistently expressed a lack of understanding as to why certain people received assistance and others did not. Both beneficiary and non-beneficiary respondents indicated that the voucher recipients were not always the poorest/most vulnerable households, although all were poor and vulnerable. Whether through deliberate manipulation by the selection committee or ineffectiveness, the wealth ranking did not work. It is also possible that local chiefs and the selection committee prioritised Matanda residents over IDPs in the 'poorest' category. Concern's monitoring indicates that displaced households accounted for only 6% of beneficiaries, as opposed to 42% in Bihambwe (although, without knowing the overall proportion of displaced in Matanda, this is theoretical).

In Kibabi, where Concern used a list created by Solidarités, the census and verification activities carried out by Concern produced 300 households fewer than that carried out by Solidarités. Kibabi was not visited for this evaluation, so no information was obtained on-site about why this discrepancy occurred. Staff from Solidarités reported that the shortfall subsequently caused households to approach them in Kibabi to complain about being registered but not being assisted; staff from Concern noted that they had registered all those present and cannot explain why they arrived at 300 fewer households.

Targeting is without a doubt a very tricky issue in these areas. To paint a picture of the sensitivities surrounding it, in Bihambwe one focus group described how some business women had arranged with a *nyumba kumi* to purchase names on the registration list. A woman who did not benefit on the day of the fair, even though she had been registered, was arrested after she hit the *nyumba kumi*. She spent a night in jail, but was released the next day and the *nyumba kumi* was then arrested for selling spots in the fair. In Matanda, local chiefs felt much betrayed as they saw Concern as having 'decided' who would benefit from the vast list of names they had submitted for the census. A chief who has since fallen ill was rumoured to have been poisoned because of the process; women on the selection committee have reportedly been threatened. All of

the leaders felt that the process would have been smoother and more accurate if Concern had been honest about not having enough resources to assist more than half of the village.

The issues in Matanda highlight the difficulties inherent in targeting a small proportion of the population in a situation where needs are similar across households. Leaders interviewed emphasised that Concern needed to help 'everyone' because it should be 'everyone or no one'. Had the criteria for inclusion and beneficiary lists been widely communicated in advance of the fair, along with the opportunity for people to raise objections about the targeting, the process may have been more accurate. However, even a more transparent targeting process would not have changed dissatisfaction over the fact that only some of the population was targeted in Matanda.

3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness considers whether or not the project achieved its objectives. For the fairs, the evaluation examined effectiveness with regard to whether people's needs were met in a timely fashion: what people purchased, why and how they used their purchases; whether the voucher value and selection of articles were sufficient; the timeliness of activities; and what type of assistance they would have preferred in hindsight. Because human resources are a key factor in the success of an intervention and insecurity a key obstacle, these issues are explored first.

3.2.1 Insecurity and security management

The prevailing insecurity in Masisi territory which prompted the intervention naturally affected its implementation, with the project sites as close as 6km to the frontline. In the beginning of the project, this meant limited time in the field. A minimal 'base' was then established in Matanda to enable staff to spend the night. During the project's lifecycle, security dynamics shifted dramatically: the CNDP signed a peace agreement with the DRC government, the CNDP leader Laurent Nkunda was arrested and the CNDP and FARDC joined forces with the Rwandan army in an offensive against the FDLR. Throughout the intervention, banditry posed a serious threat.

The base established in Matanda, and the Catholic Mission located 300m away, were attacked on the evening of 22 February by seven armed men. Field activities were suspended for one month following

the attack to enable Concern to assess and improve its security measures.

3.2.2 Human resources and management

Human resources proved a challenge in terms of quick hiring of qualified expatriate and local staff. Several local hires either failed to show up or quit within days: out of eight programme staff initially recruited only two accepted full-time employment. This was not the fault of Concern but a reflection of the hiring environment. The sudden increase in funding and humanitarian activities in North Kivu meant that numerous NGOs in Goma were vying for the local pool of people with appropriate experience. Insecurity also had an impact on the retention of local programming staff.

When examining Concern's human resources capacity to undertake the response, it is important to keep in mind that finding staff with all of the 'right' skills – French, conflict/emergency programming, DRC experience and familiarity with cash-based responses – would have been unrealistic. Overall, the team had, or acquired, the necessary skills to undertake the programme. There were some gaps in skills and experience that would have made the process smoother and potentially more effective. The temporary programme manager sent from the Emergency Response Team in Dublin did not speak French,¹² limiting the ability to perform certain functions, like engaging with humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

No one in the team had previous experience with designing and implementing voucher interventions. This did not pose any real problems; rather, it confirms that cash and vouchers are tools that can be employed by emergency programmers provided they have a certain amount of guidance. Staff got up to speed on the basics of cash-based responses chiefly by using literature like the guides from Oxfam (Creti and Jaspars, 2006) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2007). Having key cash/voucher resources available in a centralised format through Concern – or having received some training on cash-based responses in advance – would have made this task easier and less time consuming.

¹² A Concern Emergency Response employee who did speak French was initially slated to start up the activities but was replaced when she was unable to go because of personal circumstances.

3.2.3 Timeliness

The displacement peaked in September and the first fairs took place in January. The bulk of the three-month lag time between the displacement and response was caused by a need for time to get the project up and running in terms of assessments, vehicles and staff, as well as poor road conditions. The newness of the vouchers concept caused minor delays in comparison with the other factors; once human resources, communications and vehicles were in place, the targeting, verification, community sensitisation and trader selection took three weeks for the first set of fairs in Rubaya (minus a delay for evacuation). Concern did not have pre-positioned NFI kits, and programme staff felt that in-kind distributions would have been only marginally faster in light of the logistical and human resources challenges. When the Matanda base was attacked, activities were subsequently suspended for one month, meaning that the final fairs did not occur until April and May. The project suspension appears to be justified given that Concern staff were targeted and Concern needed to take measures to ensure their safety in the field.

Factors impacting timeliness were:

- Difficulties recruiting qualified local and expatriate staff;
- Lack of basic and critical project resources (e.g. vehicles);
- Poor road conditions,¹³ requiring more time to undertake assessments and meetings with authorities;
- Insecurity (brief staff evacuation from Goma; one-month suspension of programme);
- Christmas holidays/office closure;
- 'Newness' of voucher methodology: learning for staff, sensitisation of beneficiaries.

3.2.4 What recipients purchased at the fairs

What beneficiaries purchased is a question at the heart of the evaluation. Concern conducted FGDs in advance of the fairs to determine which articles to include. The resulting items were: *pagnes*, casseroles, jerry cans, plates, basins (plastic tubs), soap, headscarves,¹⁴ machetes, hoes and seeds. The seeds were an 'improved' variety from Rwanda as the focus groups indicated a preference for these. Two blankets and soap were also distributed to each household. Blankets had

¹⁴ Not in all of the fairs.

been donated by Irish Aid, and the soap was meant to order to promote hygiene. School fees could be paid (\$5/trimester) to the headmasters of local primary schools.

Concern did not track what items were sold, so determining a precise breakdown of total expenditures is not possible. What is clear is that:

- The vast majority bought at least one *pagne* (81% according to Concern's monitoring; 97% based on evaluation data);
- The majority bought at least one casserole (62% according to Concern's monitoring, 67% based on evaluation data);
- One-fifth of households paid school fees;
- Approximately one-third of households purchased seeds;¹⁵
- 85% of vouchers were spent on NFIs/tools, 11% on seeds and 4% on school fees.

Given the flexibility of the fair format, what people purchased varied. To give a sense of what people could purchase with the \$35, a typical basket of goods was:

- *Pagne*, casserole, trimester school fees, hoe, jerry can and a machete;
- *Pagne*, two casseroles, seeds, machete and salt;
- Two *pagnes*, two trimesters of school fees, plates and jerry can.

Were people able to purchase the goods and services they needed? The answer is 'mostly'. What people purchased was a function of what was available in the markets when they entered. What people did not access were:

- Items that had not come out strongly in Concern's FGDs and were not included in the fairs (e.g. used clothing for men and children);
- Items that Concern deliberately decided not to include even though they had been cited in FGDs (e.g. plastic sheeting);
- Items that were temporarily unavailable as traders had run out of stock that day or were in the process of restocking;
- Items outside of the scope of Concern's activities (e.g. medicines, animals).

In the first category, there was an unambiguous message from beneficiary respondents that children's and men's clothing were priorities that

they had not been able to meet during the fairs. This message also came out in Concern's own monitoring, although less robustly, with about one-fourth of respondents exiting the fairs stating that children and men's clothing were articles that they needed but did not find. An advantage of fairs is that, compared with in-kind assistance, they can be more easily modified during project implementation. Having traders include used clothing for men and children would have been an important adjustment. New traders could also have been brought on board if necessary.

Recipients also did not access plastic sheeting, which Concern deliberately left out even though it emerged in FGDs as a priority. As we have seen, this was a carefully thought-out decision on Concern's part, and one which was logical given the opposition of the CNDP authorities. However, there are larger questions about the appropriateness of not distributing or making available plastic sheeting to displaced households in hosting situations on the grounds of 'not encouraging camps', particularly when it is expressed as a need in assessments. Several NGO staff interviewed in Goma felt that plastic sheeting should not be distributed to the displaced in non-camp settings in North Kivu on this basis and because it is a commonly sold item following NFI distributions. However, displaced households interviewed for this evaluation expressed a different point of view, focusing on the drawbacks of living in close quarters with other families and the financial burden of paying rent. They see creating independent structures – next to existing homes, in small groups or in areas near the villages – as a preferable option. Some are living in structures with grass roofs, which leak in the rainy season. Plastic sheets are also seen as useful in times of flight, since they can provide shelter in the bush.

Choice was also limited when traders ran out of certain items. Concern ensured that the traders had the capacity to supply adequate amounts of the agreed-on items, but not all of the items were available at all moments of the fair. In the earliest fairs, there was an issue of trader confidence – they were not convinced that they would sell all of their commodities. Making the first fairs small – perhaps 300-500 beneficiaries rather than 1,000 – would likely have built trader confidence in the system while ensuring that the first beneficiaries had adequate choice.

In later fairs, the shortfall appears to be a function of the stocking systems that traders were using.

¹⁵ An estimate based on amount of seed sold, monitoring data and evaluation informal surveys.

Rather than bringing all of their wares into the fair at once, they brought the commodities into the market in stages.¹⁶ Beneficiaries felt that people who arrived later in the day had less choice than those who were let in earlier. Most beneficiaries did not see this as a substantial problem: fair articles were in adequate supply most of the time. The minority whose choice was limited felt that they lost out. For a few women in FGDs, their dissatisfaction was substantial enough that they would have preferred receiving an NFI kit. Having more traders and the option of adding new traders throughout the fairs would have improved competition and perhaps resolved the stocking issue.

Finally, some recipients would like to have purchased (or at least have had the option of purchasing): small animals, medicines, *tole* (metal sheeting used for roofing), school uniforms/school supplies and cups. Mattresses were also cited, but when the respondents took into account the fact that they would have to have spent a significant portion of their vouchers (mattresses cost \$15-35), most said that they would have bought them only if the overall voucher value was increased. Mattresses and *tole* were popular items in a CRS study (Bailey and Walsh, 2007) and fairs done through PEAR and RRM. However, these fairs had a higher overall voucher value than the Concern fairs (CRS, UNICEF: pers. comm.).

Concern distributed soap and blankets respectively to promote hygiene and because blankets were donated by Irish Aid. Focus groups for this evaluation indicated that the blankets were important given the cold climate; a few people indicated that they did share or trade one of their blankets with households who did not benefit from the distribution.

3.2.5 Prices

What people could purchase was also a function of the prices of goods within the market. Concern attempted to ensure that the prices were the same as (or less than) prices in the local market, verifying prices in the markets at the project sites and negotiating the prices with traders who participated in the fairs. The result was imperfect. More than any other aspect of the fairs, *prices of commodities* were the single critique among those

who benefited. All focus groups (even non-beneficiaries) expressed that the prices were too high in the fairs. Not knowing that Concern had fixed the prices, some had fairly hostile feelings towards the traders. As one woman stated, 'I prefer the market to a *colis* [NFI kit], but don't send traders who will steal our money'.

The evaluation did not try to verify the prices in the local market because a precise comparison with the quality/type of goods from the fairs would have required locating sample items; also, prices have changed, given that the evaluation took place in the dry season (when transporting merchandise is easier and cheaper than it is during the rainy season). Also, if local Concern staff had trouble getting accurate estimates, the evaluation team in all probability would have faced the same problem. The determination that beneficiaries paid prices that were higher than market ones is based on the consistency of information about prices from FGDs, key informant interviews and household interviews.

Concern project staff consulted for this evaluation were surprised at the price problem, given their efforts to fix them fairly. Issues with prices did not come up as a major issue in monitoring: one-quarter felt that the prices were too expensive; 44% felt that they were very reasonable; the rest thought that they were average. Nearly all respondents felt they were too expensive during the evaluation. Why the difference? Perhaps recipients, who overall were satisfied with the intervention, became more critical of certain aspects given time to think about and discuss them (as opposed to when they were exiting the fair with their bundle of goods).

It appears that recipients paid more than market prices for a combination of reasons. Some articles were not accurately priced by Concern (i.e. local traders gave inflated prices during assessments). Some articles were of a higher quality in the fair than in the market or had to be brought in specifically for the fair, which made them comparatively more expensive. There were cases of traders rounding up and keeping change (i.e. taking a 2,000FC voucher for an item that cost 1,500FC). Concern staff noted that prices at the time of the evaluation were lower than during the fairs, so recipients might be using current prices as the point of comparison; this possible explanation came once the fieldwork had finished so was not discussed with recipients.

¹⁶ The traders formed their own collective so that they could pool stocks. Many would take only enough stock at a time to ensure that they would sell it before taking more goods from their collective stock.

Table 2. Fair prices and market prices according to beneficiary focus groups (FC)

Article	Market prices (from FGDs)	Prices paid at fairs (from FGDs)	Price Concern set with traders	Difference between prices paid and market price
Casserole	1,500-4,000	3,000-6,000	2,400-6500	1,500-2,000
Plate	100	400	400	300
Plastic jerry can	3,000	4,000	4,000	1,000
Plastic tub	1,200-1,500	2,000-4,000	N/A	800-2,500
<i>Pagne</i>	7,000 ^a -8,000	8,000	8,000	0-1,000
5kg of haricot seeds ^b	4,000	8,000	8,000	4,000
Machete	1,200-1,500	1,500-2,000	1,500	300-500
Hoe	2,500-3,000	3,500-4,000	3,500	1,000-1,500

^a. Recipients were generally satisfied with the price of *pagnes*. However, some wax *pagnes* are valued more highly than others. Ones that are ‘city colours’ (light colours like yellows and pinks) are not as valued by local women as those that are ‘village colours’ (dark blues, browns). The former are sometimes cheaper, so some of the ‘city colour’ *pagnes* were seen as more expensive than they should have been.

^b. This large differential was a function of quality: the seeds were not the same variety available locally.

Table 3. Explanations for price differences

Reason for higher price	Articles affected	Way to mitigate in future
Prices were inaccurately set higher than the market prices	Casseroles, hoes, machetes, plates, plastic tubs, tools	In addition to triangulating prices from different traders, confirm prices with beneficiaries in FGDs prior to fairs.
Articles of different quality than those available locally	Seeds, jerry cans, tools	If prices are higher for certain quality items, explain in sensitisation why this is the case (e.g. higher quality than local articles, items being brought in only for activity). Have goods of varying types/qualities available for purchase (particularly for seeds).
Traders did not give change	Articles with prices correspond precisely to voucher values	Reinforce in sensitisation that traders should be providing change in vouchers. Provide vouchers with smaller denominations to enable recipients to pay exact price

There did seem to be a certain amount of trickery on the part of the traders. Given that several recipients quoted fair prices that were higher than the ones set by Concern, it appears that traders sometimes rounded up rather than giving change. Traders were supposed to give change – in cash – according to the system that Concern set up. This proved impractical; the traders did not do it. While understandable for the first fairs, as the traders could not be expected to have enough cash on hand to be providing change, for subsequent fairs they chose to use their own system of giving salt and soap as change, even though they received cash payments from Concern after each fair. While useful items, beneficiary respondents would have preferred a different system whereby traders did not effectively control the balance of their funds. They felt that the traders sometimes took advantage by giving them less than the correct value and by requiring them to take certain items.

Having small denominations of vouchers would have better enabled recipients to pay exact prices and for traders to provide change in vouchers, although this would have also required more time to count the vouchers at the end of fair days. Recipients also thought that Concern should exert more control over the fair activities, such as by having staff next to the traders to make sure that they give the right change.

That issues with prices did not come out clearly in Concern’s monitoring indicates a weakness with the monitoring system. The monitoring system also did not capture what items were sold in the fairs. The individual surveys done as people exited the fairs covered basic ground that enabled Concern to get a general picture of levels of satisfaction and understanding, as well as to make certain changes. More qualitative and in-depth monitoring, such as with focus groups a few days

after the fairs, would have provided more explanations: why some people did not understand the process and what could be done to help them; why some felt that prices were high and for which items; how recipients were interacting with traders; what suggestions recipients had for improving the fairs.

3.2.6 Value of voucher

Determining whether the overall voucher value was sufficient is less straightforward when evaluating Concern's fairs in comparison with interventions that aim to meet a more clearly identifiable gap (e.g. calculating whether the voucher was of sufficient value to meet missing food entitlements). The project objectives fell in a middle ground between providing essential NFIs and contributing towards livelihood security, and Concern set the value of the voucher based on discussions in focus groups about bundles of goods that people would likely purchase. As Concern distributed blankets, these were not taken into account when calculating the voucher.

The voucher value of \$35 was sufficient to provide households access to key items, but less than the total items of a standard NFI kit, which would have cost around \$40-55 (not including the blankets). With many recipients also buying seeds, tools and school fees, the result was that vouchers had to be spread across these multiple priorities. If Concern had increased the overall value of the vouchers, the assistance would have had more impact for the households that benefited and gone further in the direction of contributing towards livelihood security. However, fewer households would have benefited, which would have left out households needing humanitarian assistance. Other agencies implementing fairs have been using vouchers of higher value; in CRS and Solidarités fairs the value is often double that in Concern fairs.

Discussions on the voucher value with recipients were inconclusive: they see it as up to agencies to determine how much they can give. They view their needs as numerous, but many respondents stated that Concern was not there to solve all of their problems, and that whatever the agency gave – how little or how much – was critical. Most recipients thought that Concern should focus on lowering prices rather than raising the value of the voucher, since they would be able to purchase more items if the prices were 'right'.

3.2.7 School fees

School fees were an extremely popular and successful aspect of the fairs. The fairs resulted in \$12,149 being paid to schools. One-fifth of beneficiaries paid for school fees; of these, 27% paid for more than one child or trimester. For parents of children in primary school, school fees were an expenditure priority that the fair was able to meet. Education is important as it is seen as the only way for children to have a better life than their parents. Several focus group participants commented that the evaluation team members would not be writing down notes and interviewing them if they had not been to school. Education is also a way to prevent children from joining the army or militias, or becoming *maibobo* (street children).

The \$5 per trimester fee is not an easy one for parents to pay, given that daily wages are often less than \$1. When the parents fail to pay the full amount of school fees, their children are 'chased' from school or they are not allowed to sit their exams. As other reports have noted the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation in Eastern DRC, including engaging in sex in exchange for school fees (Haver, 2009), it is possible that the payment of school fees also has positive benefits regarding protection.

The timing of the fair activities fell at an apt moment for paying school fees. Focus groups indicated that the first trimester (beginning in September) is the least problematic to pay as it follows the harvest, when households generally have more money because of crops or labour. By the second and third trimesters, payments are harder to make. Some parents who were in debt with the headmasters used the fair to pay these back or to pay the balance on payments already made. The evaluation respondents viewed lack of money to pay school fees as the largest challenge in sending their children to school. The facility to pay school fees did not prompt parents to enrol children who were not already enrolled in primary school.

To give a sense of the popularity of school fees, in one fair a local school had unintentionally been left out of the fair. Some beneficiaries who had children in that school saved their vouchers, sought out the headmaster and gave him the vouchers to pay the school fees. The headmaster approached Concern staff at the next fair to follow through with the payment. Once Concern verified the school and headmaster, they paid him for the

vouchers. School fees were also the *most cited reason* for preferring the fair format over NFI kits. As one woman explained, ‘when you open a kit you do not find school fees inside’. In describing her preference for the fairs compared with receiving \$35 in cash, another woman added that ‘if you gave me cash, my husband would not give me \$15 to spend on school fees’.

For Concern staff, the headmasters were easy to work with. The evaluation found no cases of parents being asked to pay school fees again. Regarding how the money was spent (i.e. if the teachers were paid), only one teacher was located during the evaluation.¹⁷ He expressed that the fairs were very valuable for the schools and that he had received his salary. Focus groups offered loose evidence that the teachers had been paid. This included that:

- They saw the teachers smiling in the villages now;
- Two teachers were drinking Primus the night after the fair and normally they would be drinking a local beer;
- Teachers’ wives were buying meat.

3.2.8 Level of understanding

Concern put substantial effort into sensitisation to promote understanding of the fair methodology because of the high levels of illiteracy and innumeracy. Concern trained groups of women who then conducted sensitisation activities prior to the fair, going house to house to explain how the fairs would work. The result was positive. Most recipients understood the basic functioning of the fair and how to access items. Using local women further involved the community. A shortcoming was that most focus groups were not aware of which items were going to be included in the fairs, which limited their ability to plan in advance what they would purchase. Many had heard that school fees would be included, but others had not. Concern took steps to improve understanding during the fairs, having the local sensitisation committee present at the fairs and eliminating the 3,000FC voucher when it was determined to be a source of confusion.

A small number of women – focus groups could normally identify two or three – did not understand the process. The groups did not find much fault with the sensitisation (although some

felt the women who conducted it were too proud!) As one woman said, ‘there are always people who will not understand even if you tell them many times’. They said that, in rare cases, recipients exchanged all of their coupons but received only one or two items. While the number of instances appears to be small, the consequences were very serious for the few who did not understand the process, as they were unable to access the full value of the assistance. It is possible that women who are unable to grasp the process might also be among the most vulnerable. There were also a few women who broadly understood the process but felt that the traders took advantage of them by taking too many coupons.

The large amount of sensitisation was therefore adequate and necessary, but there need to be ways to reach those who have trouble understanding the process in spite of the sensitisation. This could be done by advising recipients to bring their spouse, child or friend if they are concerned about understanding the process. Local leaders and sensitisation committee members could identify recipients who might have trouble with the fair methodology to ensure that they have assistance.

3.2.9 Preference for fairs, NFI kits or cash

While respondents had different opinions regarding preference, the majority preferred fairs. The most commonly cited reason was that they could pay school fees; choice was also cited as a great advantage. A minority – about one-fifth of focus group respondents – would have preferred receiving NFI kits because they contain essential items, they are less confusing and some items can be sold to meet other needs. While NGOs might dislike aid recipients selling items from NFI kits and the transaction is an inefficient one, aid recipients themselves see no problem with receiving a bundle of NFIs and selling certain articles.

A few women preferred cash because they could use it to invest in trading activities. Most came out against cash because they felt that the money would have been controlled by their husbands, potentially wasted and put them at risk of theft. Focus groups of men came out more strongly in favour of cash: they thought that cash would have enabled more flexible spending in comparison with the fairs. Vouchers that could be used in the local markets were viewed by some as an alternative to the fairs as they would offer more

¹⁷ The evaluation was conducted in August when teachers were on holiday.

choice, but only six people in focus groups preferred this option.

Table 4. Advantages and disadvantages of vouchers, kits and cash transfers according to focus groups

Type of assistance	Advantages	Disadvantages
Concern's fairs	Can pay school fees Choice of articles Ensures that money spent on important things (in comparison with receiving cash)	Prices too high Articles sometimes ran out Time consuming Confusing for some Certain items missing (e.g. plastic sheeting)
NFI kits	Has useful items ('everything we need') Not confusing Everyone gets the same thing (fair) Value of items in kit higher than \$35 Can sell item(s) to meet other needs	Cannot pay school fees No choice
Cash	Can use to invest in small business activities Can pay rent	Husband will control money Can be stolen Might be wasted (e.g. on alcohol)
Vouchers to use in local market	More choice of items Could spend over time	Traders might take advantage of recipients Vouchers could be lost/stolen

Prices of items in the fairs often came up in discussions around preference. For a few, the high fair prices tipped them in favour of preferring kits. Respondents who preferred the fairs often used statements like, 'I preferred the market even though the prices were too high' or 'Concern should do markets, but make sure that traders use the right prices'.

3.2.10 Objective 3: Access to water

The evaluation did not include a technical assessment of Concern's water activities, which captured and diverted a spring 1,300m to a pre-existing tank in Rubaya. Focus groups and leaders indicated that the water supply in Rubaya has increased substantially because of these activities. Water is now available at all times of the day rather than only for two hours, therefore it appears that Concern achieved this objective. There does seem to be an issue with the taps used as part of the rehabilitation, as some of them have broken. The former administrator of Rubaya signalled that increased water in the tank has subsequently increased the water pressure and that the taps used are not the most appropriate given the increased water pressure. It was also reported to the evaluation team that people from surrounding villages are now coming in larger numbers to get water in Rubaya, increasing the waiting time for Rubaya residents but also increasing the number of people who have benefited from this activity.

The local water committee was not trained in maintenance of the pipes because of a conflict with the local health centre resident nurse. The nurse would not provide access to the water management committee for the training unless Concern went to Karuchi to discuss the training with the health centre there. Concern staff deduced that the office wanted some financial incentive, such as per diems, for the task to be completed. Concern instead opted to train the local construction team which had completed the water activities, which included some water management committee members. While this was a solution to their problem with the nurse, there is an obvious risk in that the construction committee has no real role in the maintenance of the water system.

3.2.11 Objective 4: Support to poorest

The objective to provide livelihoods support to the poorest in the communities through a monthly cash transfer was not achieved. The one-month suspension of the programme because of insecurity led Concern to determine that carrying out the fourth objective was no longer feasible. Given the time and security constraints, the decision to eliminate the fourth objective appears to be justified.

3.3 Impacts

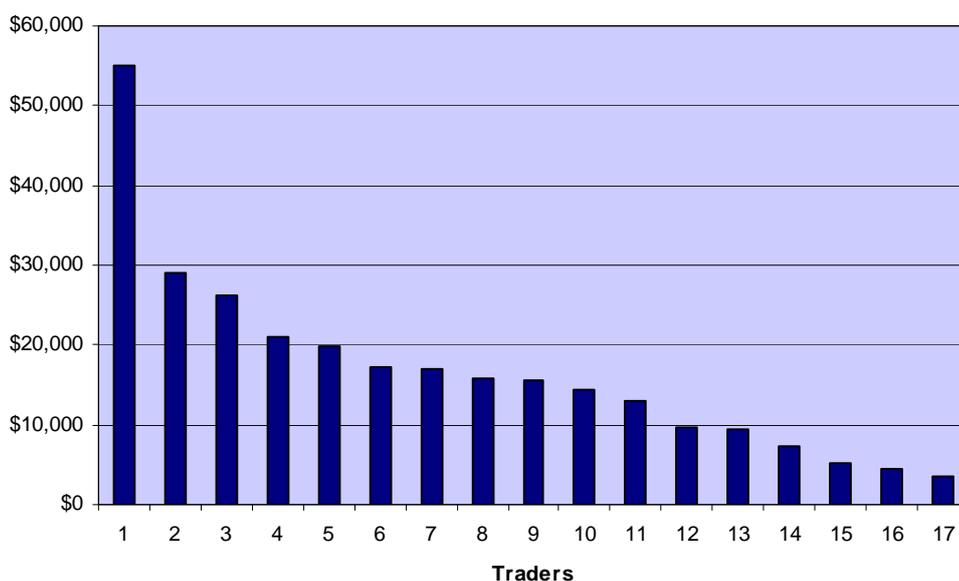
3.3.1 Traders and local economy

The evaluation did not endeavour to determine the impact of the fairs on the local economy because attributing impact would have been a time-consuming task given the overall time available for the evaluation. The project paid out \$293,266, with approximately \$281,000 going to the 17 traders who participated in the fairs. The traders made between \$3,445 and \$55,141. All of the traders were based in Rubaya and Bihambwe, as

Concern wanted the cash injection to support the local economy.

The traders were initially sceptical about the system. However, the process went from an initial ‘crisis of confidence’ on the part of the traders that they would actually make money through their endeavour, to something that more closely resembled winning the lottery. Traders interviewed said that they sold more items at fairs than they would have sold in a year or two.

Figure 2. Breakdown of payments to traders



Traders interviewed for the evaluation did not give a precise breakdown of how they spent their profits. They indicated that they spent earnings on debt repayment and investing in their local businesses. Other community members reported that traders were also renting land and had purchased vehicles. As the traders were all based in Rubaya and Bihambwe, it is reasonable to assume that the cash injection had more of an impact on the local economy than if the project had used traders based in Goma, even if it is not possible to determine the extent of that impact.

3.3.2 Livelihood security

Other than the 17 traders, impacts on livelihood security are mainly through the items and school fees that people purchased with the vouchers. In some cases, the provision of vouchers for certain items freed up income that could be invested in income-generating activities. This could potentially be one of the most viable and safe

ways of indirectly supporting livelihoods in a protracted conflict situation. Households put the extra funds towards productive and non-productive assets. Some of the examples given to the evaluation team were:

- A woman saving money to pay school fees for her five children was able to spend the money she had saved on trading activities;
- A household saving money to buy the wife a *pagne* spent the money on a pair of trousers for the husband;
- A woman used money she was going to use for school fees in order to purchase ingredients for making local beverages.

Seeds and tools also made certain contributions to livelihoods. Those with access to land reported being able to plant more than they would have otherwise. Some displaced persons and returnees without access to land were able to pursue daily agricultural labour as they had purchased tools.

However, the main result of the fairs lay in providing access to household articles that people needed as they had lost them during displacement. By taking steps to ensure that more and smaller vendors could have been included, Concern could have supported the livelihoods of more traders.

3.3.3 Security and protection

In Rubaya and Bihambwe, the intervention did not cause conflict within or among households. In Matanda, where less than half of the households benefited, the activities caused tensions. As we have seen, several residents felt that a local chief's illness was a result of him being poisoned by someone who did not benefit from the fair.¹⁸ An additional constraint was that a local priest, who had played a liaison role and normally would have been present at the fair, left just before the intervention after another priest was stabbed. Concern left the 400 remaining blankets with the Catholic Mission for them to distribute and explain why Concern was unable to assist more people. The blankets were distributed, but the mission did not link them to Concern or the shortfall of recipients in the fairs. Concern should have explained the resource constraints to leaders and the community prior to the activity, even if this would have meant more time to make sure that the targeting reached the most vulnerable. By not indicating that only a portion would be targeted, Concern raised expectations and created more difficulties, as all of the displaced and returnees showed up to benefit from the intervention.

3.4 Gender

Except in the case of widowed men, women were the recipients of the vouchers. Concern took this decision to encourage women's empowerment and to help ensure that expenditures corresponded to household needs. Men interviewed for this evaluation did not express any problems with the vouchers being directed towards women, although it is unlikely that they would have admitted such feelings to the evaluation team. While perhaps not overwhelmingly empowering, women were generally satisfied about being able to select articles and pick out their own *pagnes*. For the minority who had trouble navigating the fair

process, the result was disempowerment rather than empowerment.

The inclusion of high-quality wax *pagnes*, rather than the less expensive *pagnes*, was important to women. Organisations might be tempted to opt for the cheaper *pagnes* on the grounds that wax *pagnes* are a luxury rather than a necessity, but this would be a rash move. Higher-quality *pagnes* are more durable, which is extremely important for women who only own one or two. They are also a source of pride. As the women have undergone the trauma of multiple displacements (and, in many cases, sexual violence), the dignity provided by a high-quality *pagne* is important for her and her husband.

Focus groups felt that men's needs were not adequately taken into account because men's clothing was not available in the fairs. In rare cases, men took their wife's *pagnes* in order to make themselves shirts or fighting occurred within the household.

3.4.1 Efficiency and cost effectiveness

Efficiency is often cited as an advantage of cash-based responses because recipients can directly access goods and services rather than going through agencies providing them. The reality is more complex than this, particularly for vouchers. Voucher activities by and large require more planning than in-kind distributions, and have a greater administrative burden than cash transfers because systems need to be put in place with traders. Agencies avoid certain transport and shipping costs associated with in-kind distributions, but do not benefit from savings from purchasing in bulk. Finally, it is difficult to place a value on the benefits of choice and cash injections associated with vouchers. In examining the criteria of efficiency and cost effectiveness, the evaluation mainly compared the use of fairs/vouchers with distributing these items in-kind, as this would have been the primary alternative given that cash transfers were ruled out because of concerns about protection and safety.

The prices that recipients paid in the market were greater than if Concern had procured these items in Goma, even when transporting them to the project site is taken into account. Table 5 provides a very basic cost comparison looking only at NFIs and tools. It does not include blankets and soap as these were distributed alongside the fairs and therefore would act as a constant variable in a cost

¹⁸ While not downplaying this issue, it is worth noting that blaming illnesses and deaths on witchcraft or harm caused by another person is not uncommon.

comparison. The fairs were more expensive for this bundle of goods (approximately \$3.81 per beneficiary household) as the costs of items in fairs exceeded the cost of procuring and distributing them directly. The importance of

having lower prices in the fairs is therefore one linked to efficiency and effectiveness: Concern is able to make funds stretch further, and recipients can meet more of their needs.

Table 5. Comparison of sample costs between procuring NFI items and fairs

NFI item	Price if procured by Concern	Price in fair	Difference	Difference for 8,406 HH
Jerry can (20 litres)	\$3.60	\$5.00	\$1.40	\$11,768
2 casseroles	\$13.70	\$15.13	\$1.43	\$12,021
<i>Pagne</i> (wax)	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Machete	\$1.88	\$1.88	\$0.00	\$0.00
Hoe	\$3.40	\$4.38	\$0.98	\$8,196
<i>Cost per beneficiary</i>	<i>\$32.58</i>	<i>\$36.38</i>	<i>\$3.81</i>	
Increase in cost compared with procurement by Concern				\$31,985
Cost of transport if distributed in-kind				\$11,600
Total difference vouchers/procurement for these items				\$20,385

* This is an estimate based on a set of six casseroles being 10% more expensive than the total cost of the six casseroles that were in the Concern fair.

While the blankets were ‘free’ to Concern as they were donated by Irish Aid, blankets are available in Goma and Concern has used them in past NFI distributions. Receiving cash from Irish Aid, increasing the voucher value and having local traders include blankets would have been a more efficient process than shipping blankets from Ireland. It would also have enabled beneficiaries to choose whether to include a blanket in their purchases. However, as Concern was offered the blankets in lieu of cash, this was not necessarily an option.

Using vouchers required marginally more time (and therefore human resources costs) than in-kind distributions would have. NGOs are often well-oiled machines when it comes to conducting emergency in-kind distributions; Concern is no exception. Concern staff did not think that the amount of time and resources required to implement the project was significantly greater than would have been required for an in-kind response. It did shift where they focused their efforts: the logistics department did not have nearly the level of involvement it would have for in-kind distributions; the finance department had a larger role because it had to pay the traders who came to Goma; programming staff dedicated more time to assessments, sensitisation and negotiations with traders than they would have with in-kind distributions. All of this also had the benefit of increasing Concern’s capacity for future voucher interventions in DRC. That Concern was able to implement fairs on a similar scale

compared with in-kind assistance, as opposed to something more resembling a pilot, contributed significantly to the overall efficiency of the intervention.

There was no evidence that recipients were selling articles that they had purchased through the fairs to buy other things. As selling one or two articles from NFI kits is a common trend (according to NGOs who distribute them), the use of vouchers likely discouraged this resale. They also enabled the direct payment of school fees, which are an expenditure priority that kit items might be sold to meet.¹⁹ It is unclear if any of the distributed blankets or soap were sold; Concern staff did note that the same type of soap was seen in the local markets. Focus groups indicated that they did not sell distributed items. However, this is conceivably not something that they would have admitted to with the evaluation team.

Unlike cash transfers, which cut out middlemen by allowing recipients to purchase goods and services directly on the open market, vouchers deliberately include middlemen in the form of participating traders. This is less efficient, but allowed Concern to minimise risks associated with cash and to direct the cash injection into the local economy rather than towards larger traders in Goma. In-kind distributions would not have had the same impacts in terms of local investment and

¹⁹ This is a hypothesis – the evaluation did ask recipients of NFI kits why they sold items.

providing recipients with choice. The only approach that likely would have been more efficient and cost effective in terms of achieving the same outputs as the fairs would have been cash transfers. However, these would not have been more appropriate than vouchers, given considerations related to security, gender and beneficiary preference.

Concern changed from originally printing the vouchers in Rwanda (out of fears of potential fraud) to printing them in Goma to save time. Agencies can always add their own identifying marker to vouchers (e.g. a stamping) to guard against fraud when printing vouchers locally.

Efficiency could have been improved by including more varieties of seeds in the fairs. Some people ate a portion of the 'improved' variety that was available, when seeds more appropriate for consumption would have cost about half as much. As it is almost inevitable that some households with pressing food needs will eat some of the seeds, providing cheaper ones – or food products – would have enabled them to purchase more or spend the extra money on other goods.

A final efficiency issue relates to knowledge sharing. Given the experience of other agencies in undertaking similar fairs in DRC, Concern staff should have done more to draw on these resources. They might, for instance, have found out that other agencies have successfully used smaller denominations of coupons which enabled more flexible spending by recipients.

3.4.2 Adherence to Principles of Conduct

The Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to which agencies conducting humanitarian action should adhere include: priority of the humanitarian imperative; giving assistance on the basis on need; not proselytising; not acting as a foreign agent; respecting local culture; building on local capacities; involving beneficiaries; reducing vulnerability; being accountable to donors and beneficiaries; and respecting disaster victims. Evidence indicates that Concern adhered to this code of conduct by choosing the intervention area based on needs and lack of coverage by other NGOs; including a high level of participation in assessment design, sensitisation and targeting through consultations and involvement of community members and local leadership; creating a targeting system based on needs; choosing a methodology where recipients could prioritise their own needs; training traders on Concern's code of conduct and standards; and using traders from the affected areas to support the local economy. There is no evidence that aid was used to further political or religious standpoints. Concern's accountability systems enabled them to catch and fix certain issues along the way, with the exception of activities in Matanda, where the targeting and implementation process needed to be more accountable and to better ensure that assistance reached those most in need. The use of vouchers in particular promotes the dignity of disaster victims and respects their ability to make choices that respond to their own priorities.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation indicate that Concern's fairs were an appropriate, effective and innovative response that enabled recipients to tailor assistance to their own priorities. The exceptions are the rare but important cases of a small number of recipients who had trouble navigating the process. Having the local sensitisation team emphasise that people with difficulties understanding the process should bring a friend or family member might have minimised these instances. The impacts on the livelihood security of voucher recipients are relatively ambiguous, but access to NFI goods, agricultural inputs and payment of school fees contributed to livelihoods by meeting important basic needs and reducing household expenditure (particularly on school fees). There were certainly very positive livelihood impacts for the 17 participating traders, who made profits that far exceeded those of their normal business activities.

The intervention was highly valued by those who benefited: that most recipients preferred fairs when comparing them with other possible forms of assistance is indicative of their satisfaction. A minority of a number of people would still have preferred NFI kits as they felt that kits are less confusing and that they would have received more. This indicates that the preference for fairs is somewhat fragile: when people receive much less than they do in in-kind assistance, do not understand the process or feel that they do not have a variety of articles to choose from, the advantages of choice cease to be overwhelming. For women, the inclusion of school fees, even more so than the ability to choose among articles, was the most key factor in preference for fairs.

Concern did not achieve its objective to support the livelihoods of the poorest through a more regular transfer. Given the delays encountered by security, directing resources towards finishing the implementation of the fairs was justifiable. However, more robust security measures might have reduced the time and energy required to reinforce security following the attack on the team's lodgings in Rubaya. While the evaluation did not conduct a technical assessment of the water activities, these appear to have increased water access significantly in Rubaya, although there are reports that some taps are breaking

because of the increased water pressure in the holding tank.

The inclusion of school fees was a prominent success of the intervention. School fees were an expenditure priority for parents with children in school, and difficulties paying them were resulting in their children being sent home from school. Paying school fees allowed children to continue their study without interruption, with parents planning on paying the following semester with money made in the harvest season. Parents will undoubtedly continue to struggle with the burden of paying school fees, but as displacement and return disrupted their livelihoods, the temporary support with school fees was extremely important and timely.

That cash-based responses like vouchers enable choice has been cited repeatedly as one of their primary advantages over in-kind assistance in proposals, reports and evaluations. The advantages of choice are fully realised when recipients are able to spend the assistance to meet their priority needs. For Concern, limiting choice to predetermined articles through agreements with traders was done to ensure that priority needs identified in assessments were met with quality items. It did achieve this: recipients were very satisfied with the overall quality of items; they saw choosing articles themselves as a significant advantage of the fair methodology; and respondents agreed that the articles generally met their top priorities, with the notable exceptions of used clothing and plastic sheeting. This made assistance much more flexible than a pre-packaged kit would have been.

Creating a system where traders brought a wider variety of articles – like medicines, mattresses and *toles* – would have further increased choice and enabled more flexibility for beneficiaries, as well as providing more ways to support livelihoods. Small animals (e.g. chickens) could also have been included if a conflict and risk assessment determined them to be appropriate. Including more articles would have meant less quality control on the part of Concern; rather, it would rely more on recipients to choose to purchase items or not. As Concern's intervention was a hybrid between a voucher alternative to emergency NFI kits and livelihoods support, the extent to which it should have included these additional items is up

for debate – Concern was new to fairs and found a system that provided most priority items and could look to expand choice in future voucher activities. In hindsight, Concern should have at least included articles like men’s/children’s used clothing and cups, which were in demand by beneficiaries, and found ways to ensure that traders kept all goods available in the market at all times. Given that plastic sheeting was cited by recipients as a priority Concern was unable to meet, finding a way to include shelter quality sheeting in the fairs (i.e. by locating traders who could supply it) in a manner acceptable to local authorities would have provided beneficiaries with a much-desired opportunity to purchase plastic sheeting with their vouchers.

While the project likely would have been more efficient if the Concern DRC office had previous experience and established systems in place to implement voucher interventions, this did not prove to be a hurdle. Establishing the necessary financial and programming systems will also increase the efficiency of future voucher interventions. Distributing goods in-kind would have been less costly but would not have enabled choice; it also has been long observed in the region that recipients sell certain portions of NFI kits to meet other needs. The project would have been more cost effective if the prices of articles in the fair had been lower: not only would this have decreased the gap between what Concern would have paid for goods through procurement compared with what they (indirectly) paid for them in fairs, the vouchers would have gone further for beneficiaries.

The overarching objective of the project was to contribute to the livelihood security of displaced and host household families through increased access to food, NFIs and water. The project did succeed in meeting key priority needs for 8,406 households. Given ambiguous impacts on livelihoods, the intervention did not go the full distance in terms of supporting livelihood security: it hovered in a grey area between an emergency response providing basic needs and one focused more on supporting livelihoods. While this ‘grey area’ was appropriate, the fairs could have more broadly supported livelihoods by including more and smaller traders and more productive assets (e.g. more seed varieties), and having higher voucher values which would enable recipients to purchase more articles. However, increasing the voucher value would have reduced the total number of people being assisted, given budget constraints, creating a trade-off between providing

less assistance to more households or more assistance to fewer households. Findings indicate that the level of assistance provided was enough for people to meet key basic needs, although households with more children in primary school had less money to spend on NFIs, seeds and tools because they spent a portion of their vouchers on school fees.

Given the high level of inclusion in Rubaya and Bihambwe, a question should be raised as to whether a blanket approach (i.e. providing assistance to all households in the area) would have been easier or more appropriate than a targeting process that resulted in such a high proportion of the population being included. The participatory process certainly had advantages: it was transparent and also served as way of reverifying the households registered in the census. Concern also did not know in advance how many households the process would end up targeting, and targeting avoided directing assistance to the small minority who did not need it. Even blanket targeting would require a robust (and ideally participatory) verification system, and likely would have been only slightly faster. Concern’s approach was therefore a sensible one to reach those in need of assistance. It could have been simplified: given that the ‘bottom two’ wealth groups were targeted, there was not a real need to separate them out in the first place, since they received the same assistance. In the case of Matanda, classification of households into the ‘poorest’ and ‘very poor’ categories did not appear to be accurate. Concern could have therefore used a single set of criteria that encompassed those two wealth groups.

A final important point is that staff showed enviable skill and flexibility in quickly adopting a voucher approach, which was new to everyone involved. That organisations do not need ‘cash and voucher experts’, but rather competent managers who can integrate cash and vouchers into humanitarian programming, is an argument that has been made in reports on cash-based responses (Bailey et al., 2008; Harvey, 2007). Concern should find ways to maximise the value of the intervention within the organisation by using it as a source of learning and exchange on cash-based responses in emergencies.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 For Concern

Consistently consider in-kind distributions, cash and vouchers as options to meet needs. By considering cash and vouchers along with in-kind assistance, Concern could provide flexible and appropriate assistance to beneficiaries. Concern should make sure its assessment processes without fail ask the question ‘what is the best way to meet needs?’ Vouchers were more appropriate than cash transfers in this context, but the opposite may be true in other settings. In emergency settings where Concern can more quickly procure items than organise vouchers, in-kind assistance may be more appropriate.

Include timeliness and cost effectiveness when considering vouchers (or cash transfers) as an alternative to in-kind distributions. These did not feature in Concern’s programme design process. For timeliness, this entails mapping out timelines for different approaches that take into account procurement, planning, sensitisation and implementation (including any differences in the number of beneficiaries served per activity day). Differences in timeliness should be communicated to potential beneficiaries during assessments as part of discussions on preference for vouchers, in-kind distributions or cash transfers. For cost effectiveness, a very basic calculation can be done looking at prices, storage and transport costs for a sample basket of in-kind relief goods purchased in bulk, compared with the cost of these items on local markets, taking into account any obvious differences in terms of human resources required to implement the activities. If vouchers are appropriate but certain items have a substantial price differential, Concern can either encourage larger traders to bring them to the fairs (for a cheaper price than the local market) or act as a vendor by procuring the items in bulk. This recommendation does not mean to imply that timeliness and cost effectiveness should be the overarching factors when deciding whether or not to implement a voucher approach, but that they should be included along with the broader criteria of determining the most appropriate response.

Be clear about the objective in projects using vouchers or cash. Determining the parameters of cash-based assistance (e.g. value of vouchers, selection of goods and services, types and number of traders) is a direct function of the intervention objective. If it is to provide basic needs in an

emergency response, the value should reflect the cost of articles and services that are most needed, and the project might give less priority to including smaller traders and more to identifying traders who can supply the necessary items in sufficient quantity. If the objective is to promote livelihoods, the items available to recipients and the value of the transfer or voucher would likely be different. Supporting smaller traders also would be more of a priority (Annex 4). Objectives should be based on the assessments and revised in light of further assessments if necessary, and objectives of supporting livelihoods should be based on a livelihoods assessment.

Ensure that key emergency staff have the skills and resources to consider cash-based responses.

Concern Worldwide should use the findings of this evaluation and other sources of learning in Concern (e.g. cash transfer programming in Nairobi) to determine the best way to support emergency staff to assess and implement cash-based responses. Options include trainings, adapting existing emergency sectoral and livelihoods assessments to include the consideration of cash-based responses, promoting exchange between staff and creating a database of useful resources and guidelines.

Use this experience as a source of learning and sharing.

Concern DRC should exchange lessons with other NGOs implementing and supporting vouchers and fairs. CRS, NRC, CARE, IRC, Solidarités and UNICEF are all engaged in vouchers or fairs in Eastern DRC. There is no perfect method of implementing voucher interventions, given the many variables that can be modified to achieve different results. Exchanges could focus on practical issues, even as basic as how to count vouchers quickly at the end of a fair day. Exchanges also address more programmatic questions, like when including education vouchers is appropriate, and whether a similar approach could be tried with other basic services.

Organise a technical review of the water activities in Rubaya.

As this evaluation did not undertake a technical assessment of the water activities, Concern DRC should organise one, potentially with the WASH Cluster in Goma. The review should follow up on the issue of water pressure and broken taps, as well as on whether any members of the water committee or construction committee are still present and utilising their training to undertake repairs.

4.2.2 Future voucher interventions (for Concern and other agencies)

All recipients should have access to priority items identified in evaluations. Vouchers and cash transfers work well only when recipients can access what they need. The best way to accomplish this is up for debate. Some agencies, like CRS, do not pre-select traders or articles and rely on the vouchers to create a free market setting whereby competing traders provide the goods most in demand. Others, like Solidarités and Concern, select articles in advance to ensure that priority items are present. Creating competition among traders is important. Potential solutions are:

- Including more traders (i.e. create more competition) and providing them with information about key items in demand by recipients;
- Allow new traders to join throughout the process. Given that news travels fast, the number of traders will likely increase fair by fair;
- If certain items run out of stock, allow beneficiaries to return later in the day or to another fair. If this proves impractical, providing beneficiaries with the cash amount for the article could also be considered;
- Act as a 'provider of last resort'. If certain high-quality relief items are not available locally in sufficient quantities, agencies can act as a vendor or facilitate the inclusion of a supplier who does have them.

Ensure that those who do not understand the process can get assistance the day of the fair. This is crucial to make sure that people do not lose out on assistance because they fail to grasp the process. People involved in sensitisation – whether a local committee or project staff – should emphasise that recipients can bring someone if they are worried that they will have difficulties. Local leaders and sensitisation committee members should identify people who might not understand the methodology. These people can be let into the fairs prior to others with a helper of their choice.

Prices in the fair should correspond closely with local market prices. Having prices that are equal to or less than local market prices will allow beneficiaries to purchase the maximum goods and services with their vouchers. Beneficiaries in this evaluation also had an acute sense of fairness

regarding prices. Even if the vouchers are not real currency, they do not see that as an excuse for prices being higher than in the local market. Much like ensuring adequate supply and choice, there are different options for making sure that prices are 'fair', with no consensus on the best tactic:

- Fix prices in advance with vendors. As Concern did this based on its own market assessments and the result was imperfect, community focus groups should be used to triangulate the accuracy of prices. Any justifiable price differentials between local and fair prices should be explained to recipients as part of the sensitisation.
- Do not fix prices in advance, but allow recipients to bargain with vendors. This would likely be appropriate in livelihoods-oriented fairs with a large number of vendors and significant selection of goods of varying qualities, such as if Concern did fairs that included more varieties of seeds, animals and other articles. In fairs with predetermined articles, fixing prices is generally more appropriate since the desired end result of price negotiation between recipients and vendors would likely be the market price anyway. Exceptions might be articles like used clothing, which vary according to the quality of the piece.
- Find ways to make prices well known to recipients. If they are predetermined, they should be communicated through pre-fair sensitisation and posted in public places in advance and during the fair (Concern did the latter). Given high levels of illiteracy, posting prices cannot be the only step. Staff and sensitisation committees should circulate and monitor traders during the fairs to make sure that they give correct change. They should encourage recipients to approach staff and 'sensitisers' with any problems about getting change.
- Traders should be told in advance of the fairs that anyone caught not giving the correct amount of change or taking more vouchers than the agreed-on price of an article will be ejected and banned from participating in future fairs.

Include more traders. That the traders formed a collective and controlled the market undermined competition in Concern's fairs. Encouraging the participation of smaller vendors could be done by not having a minimum quantity of articles and not requiring that traders receive training in advance of the fairs. Organisations can register traders the

day prior to the fair. More traders should be able to participate once the intervention is underway (i.e. even if they were not at the first fair).

Use voucher coupons of small enough denominations to enable flexible spending. Using only 2,000FC vouchers limited flexibility of spending for Concern's recipients, as traders did not provide change in the form of cash or vouchers. Different and smaller denominations should be made available. Other agencies have used vouchers of varying denominations and made a *bureau d'échange* available to recipients at the fair. Smaller denominations require more time for counting but, as other agencies have been using smaller vouchers for similar activities, this problem can undoubtedly be addressed.

Responsibly promote innovation. While interventions should not lose sight of the need to meet people's needs in the most appropriate manner, cash and vouchers provide a notable opportunity to promote innovation. Concern's inclusion of school fees proved an extremely successful and innovative aspect of the project, as did broadening the fairs to cover multiple sectors rather than simply NFIs or seeds and tools. Future activities could look for ways for vouchers to meet priorities that might not necessarily have been included otherwise. An example is allowing beneficiaries to exchange vouchers for cash in

order to pay rent or meet other financial responsibilities (although this would need careful consideration if cash transfers were not deemed more appropriate than vouchers).

Include strong qualitative monitoring. While surveying beneficiaries as they exit the fairs can be useful to identify broad trends and problems, more qualitative monitoring is necessary to catch nuanced issues related to the functioning of the fairs. Using a format like focus groups, the monitoring should cover issues about understanding, prices, choice, voucher denominations, any problems with traders and suggestions for improving the fairs. There is a danger of setting fairs on 'auto-pilot', when sensitisation, prices, article selection and the number of traders can be modified along the way.

In areas new to fairs, start small. The first fair of an intervention has a natural learning curve for staff and vendors. There is also a chance that the first fairs will have fewer articles if traders are not entirely convinced that they will be paid. Starting the intervention with a small fair and allowing a few days before the next one will help ensure that recipients can get what they need and staff can make necessary modifications to improve the process. As more and more fairs are being held in North Kivu, there are some areas where traders may already be familiar with the methodology.

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Annex 1: Terms of Reference of Evaluation

Terms of Reference: Independent Evaluation of Concern Worldwide's Emergency Response North Kivu

Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC] has a history of armed conflict extending back many years. The eastern provinces of North and South Kivu have been most significantly affected, witnessing continued conflict and human rights abuses since the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

The CNDP²⁰, Congolese Tutsi rebels under the leadership of self styled General Laurent Nkunda, have, since 1994, sought to rout out Hutus responsible for the genocide, who fled into the forest. In August 2008, this protracted conflict escalated as the CNDP forces moved closer to the provincial capital of North Kivu, Goma. Despite the attempts to halt the advance by MONUC²¹ and the national army, the FARDC²², the CNDP made considerable ground including taking the western part of Goma. In the wake of the fighting, 250,000 of the population became newly displaced, adding to the almost one million who had previously fled their homes.

The displaced families moved to a variety of locations; IDP camps within DRC, Uganda and a small number to Rwanda; lodging with relatives and friends within DRC; whilst others clustered together in informal groups rather than organised camps. Identified needs included shelter; food and non-food items, including clothes; supply of clean water; health, including care for victims of gender based violence and psycho-social support; education services for children; protection and socio-economic assistance.

In November 2008, the Disasters Emergency Committee [DEC] launched an appeal for funds to support Member Agencies' programmes in response to an intensification of fighting and exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis that had begun during the previous month.

£5.5 million was initially raised as a result of the appeal²³ and in December twelve Member Agencies were allocated a share for response programmes of up to 9 months. Concern Worldwide was allocated a £165,000, representing a 3% share of the overall funds raised for a 9 month cash voucher and NFI distribution programme.

Concern's history in North Kivu

Concern has been operational in DRC since 1994, focusing on three main sectors of intervention – livelihoods; nutrition and WatSan, whilst also undertaking humanitarian relief work. Concern is operational in three main programme areas; North Kivu, South Maniema and North Eastern Katanga.

In August 2007, Concern suspended the livelihoods programme in North Kivu indefinitely due to increased and prolonged insecurity in the area. The programme was due to continue until December 2007 and a second, three year phase was due to begin in January 2008. However the prevailing security situation which led to massive displacement meant that the development programme could not continue in the area.

Concern undertook assessments from February- March 2008, and an emergency programme was launched in April. The programme concentrates on the area between Lushebere and Masisi town. The intervention targets displaced people in four camps with essential Non Food Items (NFI); host

²⁰ CNDP – Congrès national pour la défense du peuple - National Council for the Defence of the People

²¹ MONUC - Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo. – United Nations Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo

²² FARDC - Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo – DR Congo Government armed forces

²³ The figure was subsequently increased to approximately £10 m, which may lead to further support of humanitarian actions.

communities with seeds and tools and targets both the IDP's and host communities with Cash for Work (CFW). This programme is now entering its second year.

In the previous development programme Concern had a wider geographical focus which encompassed the current 'Masisi' operational area along with Matanda and surrounding villages such as Rubaya. This area was not included in 2008 programming, as originally there was massive displacement from these areas to the camps around Goma. The security situation was precarious given that there was regular fighting between CNDP and government forces for control of the Matanda/Rubaya area. Additionally, at the time of assessment and when the programme was initiated, the needs in Masisi were far greater given the amount of IDP's who had arrived in the area. Therefore the decision was taken to focus on the Northern Axe (Lushebere-Masisi) of the previous operational area.

However the heightened insecurity described above, lead to not only increased population movement, but changes in trends. The area around Rubaye was visited by Solidarite, and Internally Displaced People (IDP) as well as returning people were noted, with both groups in needs of humanitarian assistance. A subsequent visit by a Concern team confirmed these findings and the level of vulnerability of the population. It was therefore decided to focus this emergency response initially on Rubaye, and then move to outlying areas as the situation developed and according to assessment of need.

Concern's response in summary (proposal to be provided):

Programme Title: Emergency Assistance to newly displaced and host families with in Masisi territory.

Specific Objective: To contribute to the livelihood security of displaced and host families in Masisi territory by increasing household access to food, non-food items and water.

The four results expected of the programme are as follows:

1. 10,000²⁴ vulnerable and newly displaced households requiring emergency assistance are identified, and their needs verified by end of February 2009.
2. Emergency NFI needs of identified beneficiaries are met through support to local markets and voucher schemes or direct NFI provision.
3. Improved access to water for 12,000 Households
4. The poorest of the beneficiary community receive livelihood support for a period of 4 months.

The programme was implemented directly by Concern however a local partner ASOD was involved in the initial phases of the programme such as beneficiary selection, registration and sensitisation.

Purpose of the Independent evaluation:

In order to evaluate the overall response, the DEC secretariat, in agreement with the Member Agencies, requires that an independent evaluation of each member's response takes place. The Member Agencies commission the independent evaluations in accordance with the DEC Secretariat's conditions.

For Concern, the intention of the evaluation is to assess to what degree the programme and methodology have been successful in achieving the established results and specific objective. Information gained will be used in order to establish better practice and help formulate new interventions. Additionally, the DEC will use the evaluation in order to:

²⁴ The number of beneficiaries has been reduced from 10,000 to an estimated 8,000 as other non-DEC funding initially allocated could not be carried forward beyond 31 Dec 2008

1. Inform the DEC Board of Trustees so it can fulfil its governance responsibilities by providing an independent overview on how DEC Appeal money has been spent and to what effect.
2. Enable the DEC to fulfil its commitment to public accountability through publication of the evaluation report to the DEC Board together with the DEC Board decisions and actions resulting from findings.
3. Facilitate lesson learning among Members and to improve ongoing and future emergency responses.

Evaluation focus:

The purpose of this evaluation is to evaluate the actions and to provide lessons learned and examples of best practice for all Member Agencies and the DEC Secretariat. To this end, the evaluator will:

- Assess the level of community involvement in the programme from design through to implementation.
- Assess Concern’s adherence to key international standards including The Red Cross Code of Conduct Evaluate whether the objectives were met within the stated timeframe.
- Evaluate the efficiency of implementation in terms of approach chosen and resources available and used.
- Examine the effectiveness of the response.
- Evaluate the wider impact of the response in terms of the direct beneficiaries, wider communities and markets.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of the response.
- Assess whether Concern’s actions added value in a cost effective manner to the broader response.
- Examine the appropriateness of such a response for future interventions and make recommendations for further actions.
- Draw conclusions/recommendations for learning in terms of the programme for Concern Worldwide, the Member Agencies and the DEC Secretariat.

Evaluation methodology:

It is envisaged that the methodology will be finalised with the evaluator in advance of the evaluation exercise. However it is expected that there will be a multi-faceted methodology which will include:

Desk Based research/preparation:

The evaluator will review all relevant programme related documents such as the programme proposal, assessments, market procedure reports, and the final internal programme report.

In the field:

In the field, discussions with a sample of programme participants and non-participants will take place (individual interviews and/or focus group discussions). Interviews with other key stakeholders, including market traders and local authority figures, will also provide an insight as to programme implementation.

Programme and support staff will also be useful sources of information regarding processes employed during the course of the initiative and will provide insight as to perceived in relation to some of the successes and challenges faced.

Outputs:

An evaluation report will be prepared by the evaluator which will focus on key themes:

- How appropriate was the intervention in addressing the identified humanitarian needs.
- The efficiency of the organisation in addressing humanitarian needs through the intervention
- The effectiveness of the programme in achieving the stated results and the specific objective.

- The evaluation will assess particularly the appropriateness of the cash voucher methodology as opposed to more direct distribution methodologies, and critically appraise the choice and approach used within the programme. This will include any added value that the approach offers for the beneficiaries and the wider community.
- This report will also provide clear recommendations for improving future responses, and how voucher mechanisms could be appropriately adopted in other humanitarian initiatives.

Evaluation Report: A draft report will be submitted to the senior management team within 14 days of the field work. Feedback will be provided within 7 days, and the final report submitted to Concern senior management within a further 7 days. This timeline could be subject to change if key staff are unavailable (e.g. travelling, on leave) to provide comments within the timeframe.

Learning Document: A learning document (approx 4 pages) will also be produced in partnership with Concern. This document will highlight key findings of the evaluation, innovative aspects of the project and situate them within the broader context of other cash transfer programming issues.

Timeframe:

The fieldwork will begin the week of July 26th.

Preparation of methodology and tools	2 days
Desk review of programme documents and briefing	2 days
Travel to and from Programme area	1 day
Field work, focus group discussion, beneficiary and stakeholder interviews	5 days
Feedback session and report preparation	8 days
Finalisation of report post feedback	2 days
Preparation of learning document	1 day
Trip to Dublin to discuss findings	1 day

Annex 2: Methodology

Desk-based research: The consultant reviewed project and related documents (such as project proposals; assessments; market reports, monitoring data; and internal and donor reports). Documents from agencies undertaking similar activities within and outside of DRC were also reviewed.

Focus group discussions: FGDs were a primary form of data collection. 20 FGDs, comprising 254 people, were conducted. Focus groups were formed on the basis of multiple (and overlapping) categories: male/female; IDP/returnee; beneficiary/non-beneficiary. The groups were formed not in advance, but rather spontaneously while walking through project sites. As women were the primary beneficiaries of the project, more focus groups were done with women than men. A semi-structured questionnaire developed by the consultant was used.

Focus group discussion participants

Category	#	%
Women	200	79
Men	54	21
IDPs	111	44
Returnees	143	56
Beneficiaries	206	81
Non-beneficiaries	48	19
Total	254	100

Key informant interviews: Key informant interviews were held with government officials in each of the three sites. A total of 12 *nyumba kumi* ('chiefs of ten houses') were also interviewed in small groups. Interviews were conducted with UNICEF, CARE and Solidarités in Goma, which support and implement voucher-based activities and have (mainly second-hand) knowledge of Concern's project. Finally, interviews were conducted with current and former Concern staff.

Informal household surveys: 80 households were selected for household interviews, covering questions of items purchased in fairs, priority needs, ease of understanding and preferences. The purpose of the household surveys was to triangulate information from other sources and not to establish quantitative data trends.

The evaluation was led by an external consultant who engaged six national staff in Goma (who had no affiliations with Concern) to assist with the data collection, conducting focus group discussions in pairs and household interviews. Doing this work externally to Concern ensured that the team could operate and produce findings independently. However, using only an external team meant that the team did not have first-hand knowledge of the project. In order to triangulate the findings of the external team, generate buy-in for the evaluation findings from Concern and maximise learning, five former Concern staff members from the project were brought in to participate in the fieldwork by conducting FGDs over two days. To ensure that their presence did not influence the findings of the external team, the latter carried out data collection in the project sites prior to and separately from the Concern team. The key findings of the Concern team did not vary from those of the external team.

Limitations of methodology

The evaluation methodology had certain limitations. While qualitative data collection was most appropriate to obtain in-depth information in a short period of time, it does not provide quantifiable data, for example a precise breakdown of how vouchers were spent, nor is such a specific breakdown available through monitoring data collected by Concern. However, given certain questions on expenditure patterns asked by Concern and during this evaluation, it is possible to produce conclusions on key trends.

A second limitation was the time spent in the field. Ongoing security concerns without a safe place to lodge the field team in the evenings near the project sites meant that the field visits were done on a daily round-trip basis from Goma, taking approximately two hours in each direction. In order to be able to return prior to nightfall, the team needed to leave the sites at 3pm. Overall, this limited the amount of time that could be spent at sites.

Finally, the team had hoped to speak with teachers and headmasters regarding the payment of school fees through the fairs. As schools were on break for the summer, most were not in the villages at the time of the evaluation (only one teacher was located).

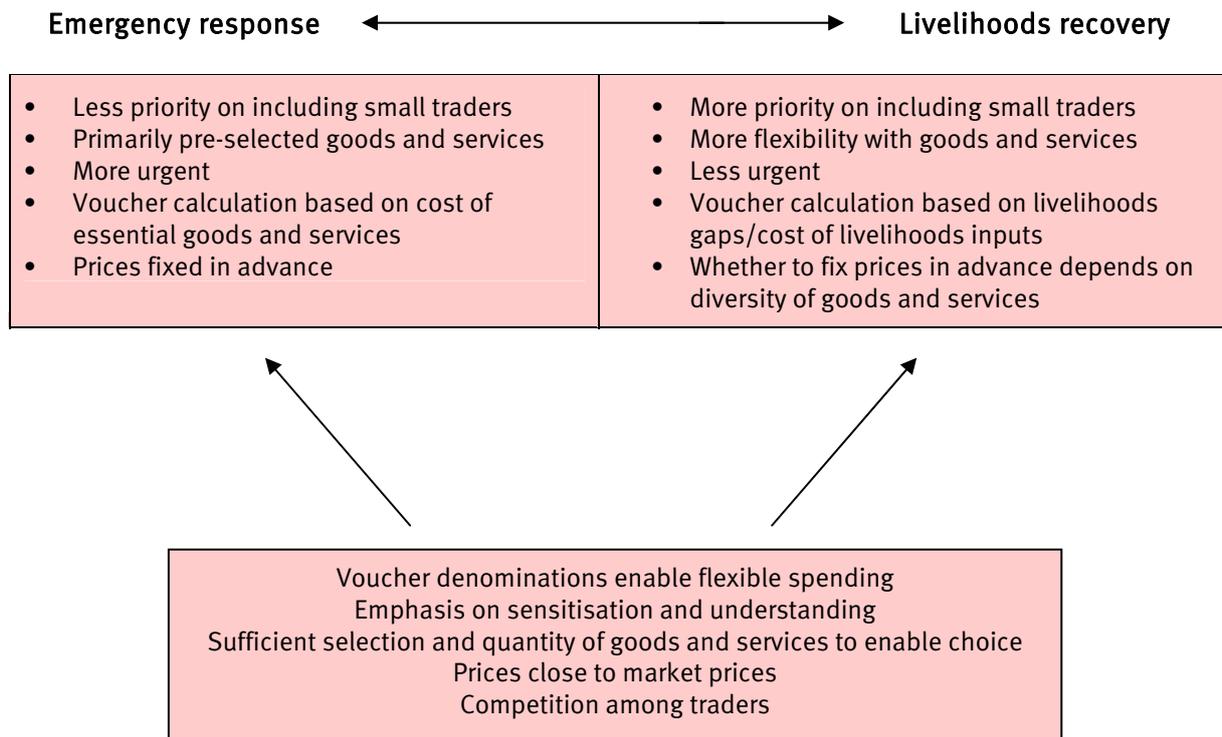
Annex 3: List of Key Informants

Name	Organisation	Title
<i>Concern</i>		
Fergus Thomas	Concern – DRC	Area Coordinator
Peter McNichol	Concern – DRC	Country Director
Muhindo Madirisha	Concern – DRC	Assistant Accountant
Djani Zadi	Concern – DRC	Logistics/Administration Coordination
Amanda McClelland	Concern Worldwide	Emergency Response Team Coordinator
Kokoevi Sosouvi	Concern – DRC	Programme Manager
<i>NGO/UN</i>		
Angela Rouse	CARE	
Marie Leduc	Solidarités	Responsable de RRM – North Kivu
Steven Michel	UNICEF	Emergency Project Officer
Amanda Ree	CRS	Emergency Programme Manager
<i>Government</i>		
Emile Ndirebeye Ntabwiko	Government	Chef de Poste ²⁵ Rubaya (former)
Bindu Nyabuhoro	Government	Secretary of Bihambwe
Safari Lupfutso	Government	Chef de Groupement of Matanda

In addition, five participating traders were interviewed in Rubaya and 12 *nyumba kumi* ('chiefs of ten houses') were interviewed through focus group formats.

²⁵ Replaced during the evaluation.

Annex 4: Issues to Consider When Using Vouchers/Fairs for Emergency Response and Livelihoods Recovery





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