

Evaluation of Concern Worldwide's Emergency Response in Masisi, North Kivu, DRC (2012-2013)

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About the author

Sarah Bailey is an independent consultant on humanitarian practice, policy and evaluation. She has designed, managed and evaluated cash transfer programmes and has written widely on this topic.

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The views expressed in this report are the author's alone and the author accepts sole responsibility for any factual inaccuracies.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
1. Introduction	8
Context.....	8
Concern’s emergency programme.....	9
Purpose and scope of evaluation.....	10
Methodology.....	10
Organisation of report	11
2. Programme description	12
Evolution of Concern’s emergency programming in Masisi (2008-2012)	12
Concern’s emergency programme 2012-2013	14
3. Evaluation findings.....	16
Appropriateness.....	16
Effectiveness	22
Impact	29
Protection and gender	31
Efficiency	34
4. Conclusions and recommendations.....	35
Recommendations	38
References	41
Annex 1: Focus groups and people consulted	42
Annex 2: Documents reviewed	43



Source: OCHA

Executive Summary

Populations in eastern DRC have faced serious humanitarian consequences resulting from years of conflict and instability. In Masisi territory in the province of North Kivu, Concern Worldwide has provided emergency assistance since 2008 in order to respond to humanitarian needs created by cycles of displacement and return. From August 2012 to August 2013, Concern provided three types of cash-based assistance – vouchers that could be exchanged for a wide variety of household goods, seeds and school fees; unconditional cash transfers; and cash for work (CFW).

This report is the result of an OFDA-funded evaluation of the emergency assistance provided in 2012/13. The evaluation focused on understanding the results of the intervention and generating lessons to inform Concern's programming in Masisi and beyond. It sought to assess the appropriateness / relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the project; identify lessons learned and provide practical recommendations to Concern for future programming; and support the organisation's commitments to accountability to donors, government, public, and beneficiaries. The evaluation was led by an independent consultant who worked with staff from Concern and its Masisi partner organisation to undertake fieldwork in August 2013.

Programme description

Concern has undertaken a variety of cash-based responses in Masisi since 2008:

- Multisectoral fairs: temporary markets created by Concern where beneficiaries could use vouchers to purchase from traders items that span different humanitarian sectors (e.g. education, shelter, non-food items);
- Seed fairs: temporary markets created by Concern where beneficiaries could use vouchers to purchase seeds and tools;
- Food fairs: temporary markets where beneficiaries could purchase food with vouchers (they were not successful for a variety of reasons);
- CFW: road rehabilitation and maintenance, in order to increase household income and improve infrastructure;
- Unconditional cash transfers: piloted in 2011/2012 as an alternative to food fairs to enable beneficiaries to meet food and other needs and discourage the sale of assets purchased with vouchers.

The 2012/2013 programme sought to increase access to household assets and maintain humanitarian access to targeted villages through three principle activities – vouchers worth \$54 redeemable in markets, unconditional cash transfers (\$40) and CFW road maintenance (\$36). The programme logic was that the market vouchers would enable purchasing of productive and non-productive assets, followed by four smaller cash transfers (two unconditional transfers and two through CFW), to meet other needs and to act as a safety net in times of crisis to protect household assets. All of the targeted recipients received all three types of assistance. The open market vouchers and unconditional cash transfers were both new activities for the Concern Masisi OFDA-funded emergency programme.

Open market vouchers

Open market vouchers were the first assistance received. Popular purchases were school fees, *pagnes*, children's clothing, salt, kitchen items, soap, mattresses and metal sheets for roofing. For those that paid school fees, 82% paid for more than one child; a total of \$2,082 was paid to 10 schools. While most of those consulted stated that all the items that they needed were available through the traders, approximately 28% of beneficiaries exchanged vouchers for cash, losing between 4% - 10% of the value in the exchange, in order to meet other needs (e.g. food), pay secondary school fees, repay debts and because cash was simpler than vouchers. Concern designed

the voucher activities with a 30-day redemption period so that beneficiaries would not be pressured to spend quickly, but nearly all beneficiaries spent the vouchers the day that they received them. The 73 traders in Masisi who participated in the voucher scheme in total received \$122,030; profits reportedly were used for household needs and to invest in their businesses.

Unconditional cash transfers

The purpose of the cash transfers was to enable households to meet basic needs and prevent the sale of assets purchased with the vouchers. The cash was spent on diverse items, but food and school fees were the most significant purchases. In total beneficiaries spread out their spending over 22 different non-food items, 11 types of food, nine varieties of seeds, four types of animals and seven items for resale through small business activities, as well as using the cash for paying school fees and debt repayment. Most focus group participants would have preferred getting the cash all at once (rather than in two transfers) in order to help them better plan how to meet numerous needs and undertake larger purchases. Unlike vouchers, very few beneficiaries spent all of their money the same day, and the majority of the money was spent outside of Masisi. Given the amount of cash provided, and assuming similar spending patterns of money received through CFW, a rough estimate is that \$111,000 went into the local economies outside of Masisi through unconditional transfers and CFW.

Cash for work

The objective of CFW was to maintain humanitarian access to the targeted areas and provide income to meet needs and discourage the sale of assets. CFW has increased access and road traffic, which was highly valued by inhabitants. Focus groups indicated that the \$36 was spent in a similar fashion as the unconditional cash transfers. However, the ways that households took decisions about these expenditures appear to be different, namely that women who worked had more control over these funds compared to unconditional cash transfers.

There were several challenges related to gender and vulnerable persons, which are linked to the overall targeting approach used in the programme. The targeting resulted in a pool of workers dominated by women, widows and elderly, which was highly inappropriate for undertaking heavy manual labour on roads. Concern did provide some vulnerable persons with unconditional transfers rather than CFW. However, targeting the most vulnerable for CFW, and then providing the most vulnerable with unconditional transfers instead, is not logical as this approach would not leave many left to work if it was fully followed through.

Preference

Of unconditional cash transfers, vouchers and CFW, most focus groups preferred cash transfers owing to their flexibility in meeting needs and discreetness compared to vouchers; they ranked unconditional cash over CFW as it did not take them away from other activities. As most of the villages were familiar with Concern's previous fairs, they were asked about their preference between the open market vouchers compared to the fair. Most preferred the market voucher because all of the items they sought were available and because the coupons were valid for a longer period.

Delays

All of the activities started later than intended owing to security issues. Given the risks for Concern staff and beneficiaries, the delays were reasonable. While beneficiaries consulted were understanding about the delay, it had consequences because they took on or more debt in anticipation that assistance would be coming soon. Interest rates increase over time, so delays in assistance meant increased debt.

Targeting

Concern chose to work in mainly the same villages where it had operated the year before because the area receives the majority of displaced households fleeing conflict in the north and west of the territory and humanitarian needs therefore remained high; four new villages and three new IDP camps were added. The targeting approach within villages and camps was designed to identify the poorest and most vulnerable households by using a point system that included points for 'vulnerability' categories (e.g. widow, child-headed households, households with a disabled person) and points for poverty based on house quality, the quality of the sleeping area and for possessing certain kitchen items.

Targeting was the most problematic aspect of Concern's emergency response. There was nothing inherently wrong with either Concern's decision to continue operating in the same area or use a points-based system; the main problem was that the end result of the targeting process appears to have excluded a substantial number of people who were no less or only marginally less poor than those included. This happened because Concern used the cut-off for inclusion in the programme based on the number of planned beneficiaries (2,400 households) and nearly double that many people lived in the camps and villages. The small amount of difference between those with 'means' and the 'poorest' in the targeted villages makes any targeting exercise problematic, especially when the amount of money provided could shift the balance between who has means and who does not. Across the board informants felt that households who were equally poor were left out of the assistance and that Concern should assist more people even if it means giving less assistance.

Protection

Concern put in place several protection measures, such as distributing cash and vouchers only on market days, liaising with armed groups and providing transport for vulnerable beneficiaries after the voucher markets. Monitoring of the cash transfers found that 12% of beneficiaries faced problems on the road, mainly being stopped at barriers and having to pay informal taxes. Concern by and large was aware of the security incidents that occurred. Between cash and vouchers, most of those consulted expressed that vouchers posed more security risks because of the high visibility of transporting the items purchased.

Concern delayed the participation of one village in the voucher activities for security reasons, but the leaders insisted that Concern go ahead; in another village (which was pillaged the night of the voucher activities), leaders downplayed the security risks ahead of the activity. These instances show that they will not tolerate Concern 'leaving them behind' for security reasons. A final protection issue is that the targeting and exclusion of large numbers of people caused relatively serious intra-village tensions and problems for leaders because some people received aid and some people did not.

Conclusions

Concern's emergency response was appropriate and effective in meeting a wide range of needs facing households affected by conflict in Masisi. Given the delays caused by insecurity, Concern did an admirable job in providing the assistance within the one-year programme cycle. An exception is that the targeting process for CFW was not appropriate, and in general the targeting of assistance was problematic.

Concern's decision to provide cash and vouchers was not meant as an experiment to compare different types of assistance, but it is insightful on several issues:

- *Spending patterns:* Cash is spent on a wider range of goods compared to vouchers;

- *Impacts:* Cash results in more money going into villages and markets outside of Masisi; the spending and benefits of vouchers are concentrated in Masisi and specifically amongst participating traders;
- *Risks:* Cash is more discreet compared to items purchased with vouchers, which are highly visible when beneficiaries are walking on the road from Masisi to their villages and camps.

The flexibility, discreetness, impacts and majority preference for cash all make cash transfers the preferred way of helping beneficiaries to replace assets, invest in their homes, meet basic needs and invest in livelihoods. Their appropriateness though will always be context-specific, and as Concern assists more people with cash, awareness of the activities and therefore risk will inevitably increase. Any progress that can be made to shifting the storage and delivery of cash away from Concern to private sector delivery agents would be important in minimising the risks to Concern staff and increasing the use of unconditional transfers where appropriate. Where the use of cash transfers is hampered by delivery mechanisms, risk or the specific characteristics of new intervention areas, vouchers remain an appropriate alternative or complement to cash transfers. CFW should be separated from the voucher and unconditional transfer activities, targeting people and households capable of undertaking manual labour.

The most significant weakness of the intervention was targeting. Given the pervasive poverty and negative repercussions of targeting, Concern should help more people in the villages and camps even if that means giving less. Targeting all or the vast majority of households makes sense because there appears to be a very flat wealth distribution in the areas where Concern operates, and targeting creates tensions that might have longer-term negative impacts on intra-village relations and undermine informal safety nets and institutions.

Providing humanitarian assistance in DRC is immensely challenging. The findings show that staff must navigate trade-offs between transparency and risks of fraud; between Concern's risks and beneficiaries' risks; and between Concern's humanitarian principles of assisting the most vulnerable and the firm beliefs of local people that all should be reached in the context of immense poverty and potential discord in villages. Concern should encourage its staff to be open about the tensions and dilemma faced in interventions, where often there is no 'right' solution. This evaluation speaks to Concern's commitment to learning and improving programming, which is an important element of navigating these challenges.

1. Introduction

Years of fighting and instability in eastern DRC has resulted in dire humanitarian consequences for civilians. In Masisi territory in the province of North Kivu, Concern Worldwide has provided emergency assistance since 2008 in order to respond to humanitarian needs created by cycles of displacement and return. From August 2012 to August 2013 Concern provided three types of cash-based assistance – vouchers that could be exchanged for a wide variety of household goods, seeds and school fees; unconditional cash transfers; and cash for work (CFW). The emergency programme was funded by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) and Irish Aid. This report is the result of an OFDA-funded evaluation of the emergency assistance, focused on learning lessons in order to improve future assistance in Masisi and beyond.

Context

The Democratic Republic of Congo is commonly described as a post-conflict context. However, the reality of the DRC is more complex than transitioning ‘out’ of war. The two wars that occurred between 1996 and 2003 devastated a country that had already been run into the ground by decades of rule by Mobutu Sese Seko. Presidential elections held peacefully in 2006 were won by Joseph Kabila, marking the official end of the post-war transition that began in 2003. Subsequent presidential elections took place in November 2011 amidst concerns about irregularities and abuses by security forces. Positive developments in recent years are juxtaposed with on-going conflict in eastern DRC, rampant corruption, human rights violations and a security sector that remains in desperate need of reform. In the east, fighting amongst a range of armed actors continues with dire humanitarian consequences. OCHA estimated that 2.6 million people were IDPs as of March 2013 (OCHA, 2013).

Despite the official end of the second war in 2003, fighting has continued amongst the national army (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo - FARDC) and local and foreign armed groups. Armed groups are numerous and have shifting alliances. In 2008, fighting escalated between the FARDC and National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), an armed group with the stated goal of protecting ethnic Tutsis in DRC. A peace agreement was signed on 23 March 2009 between the CNDP and the DRC government, resulting in the integration of numerous CNDP fighters into the FARDC, including the CNDP leader Bosco Ntaganda. In April 2012, Ntaganda led a mutiny of ex-CNDP soldiers and formed the M23 movement on the pretext that the terms of the 23 March peace agreement had not been respected. Since that time M23 leadership has changed. Ntaganda handed himself in to the US embassy in Kigali to face trial for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court. It is widely believed that both the CNDP and the M23 are supported by Rwanda, which played a key role in the 1996-2003 wars.

Since the defections of the ex-CNDP and the formation of the M23 movement, the security situation has worsened significantly in the territory of Masisi in North Kivu.¹ While the main M23 activities have taken place in Rutshuru and the eastern border area of Masisi, they have had far-reaching impacts on the rest of the territory. With the FARDC weakened by the defections and concentrated in strategic positions to defend the territory from the M23 advance, large areas of Masisi were left with little or no protection. This resulted in a proliferation and strengthening of other armed groups, notably Mai-Mai Nyatura, Raia Mutomboki, Force de la Defense Congolaise (FDC) and the Alliance Patriotique pour un Congo Libre et Sovreign (APCLS). Fighting continued around Mahanga in the far west of the province between FDC and FDLR militias, provoking further displacement and humanitarian needs. Similarly, the Nyabiondo-Lukweti axis has suffered from conflict among APCLS, Mai-Mai Cheka and FARDC. The sustained presence of armed groups has resulted in serious

¹ This paragraph draws from the context description in the TORs.

protection violations with civilians facing harassment and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence, within their communities as well as when travelling to markets and fields.

Since the beginning of 2013, the security situation in the centre and west of the territory has shown improvements, allowing some families to return home and facilitating humanitarian access to certain areas that have been inaccessible for long periods owing to insecurity. However, security in Masisi is very fluid, affecting the types of programming that aid agencies can pursue. For example, a context analysis done by Concern in 2011 identified certain zones that were more stable and offered potential for longer-term engagement because of the increased security. A visit in 2013 by the Concern Social Protection Advisor found that such engagement was no longer an option due to the proliferation of armed groups (Smith, 2013).

With its persistent instability and conflict, Masisi is the epitome of a 'protracted crisis'. Protracted crises are defined as environments where 'a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease and disruption of livelihoods over a prolonged period of time. The governance of these environments is usually very weak, with the state having a limited capacity to respond to, and mitigate, the threats to the population, or provide adequate levels of protection' (Harmer and Macrae, 2004). Protracted crises pose serious challenges for aid agencies, which typically use short-term tools (e.g. humanitarian aid) to address what are in fact longer-term problems caused and exacerbated by repeated shocks and chronic vulnerability.

Concern's emergency programme

Concern has been present in eastern DRC for nearly two decades, including implementing a livelihoods project in Masisi territory from 2003 – 2007. In 2008, the security situation in Masisi deteriorated significantly when the CNDP gained strength and advanced towards the provincial capital Goma. Owing to the changing needs, security and access, Concern shifted its programming to an emergency focus. Amongst other activities it organised 'fairs' where displaced and host families could use vouchers to purchase items like kitchen pots and pay for school fees. As discussed above, insecurity and population movements have persisted in Masisi owing to the activities of armed groups and efforts by the FARDC to defeat them. Concern has continued with its emergency programming, modifying certain aspects along the way.

Concern's emergency programme in 2012-13 had the overall objective of 'providing productive and non-productive household assets (including education) for vulnerable, conflict-affected households and to maintain humanitarian access to vulnerable communities. Concern sought to achieve this objective through a mixture of cash and voucher assistance and road rehabilitation through CFW. Beneficiary households received vouchers (worth \$54) that they could exchange for household items, shelter materials, school fees, clothes, seeds, tools and livestock² from various traders in Masisi. Households also received two unconditional cash transfers of \$20 each and two cash payments through CFW (\$18 each). Labour-deficient households were meant to receive two additional unconditional cash transfers as an alternative to CFW. The cash transfers and CFW were provided in order to meet household needs not met through the voucher activities, such as food during lean months, and to provide a safety net for households in case of shocks such as illness or looting. Through CFW Concern sought to open and maintain humanitarian access by means of road rehabilitation and maintenance using High Intensity Manual Labour (HIMO) method.

Concern also distributed NFI kits in the five IDP camps near Masisi that are recognised by the CCCM cluster, and undertook agricultural training and demonstration plots with a view to improving food security.

² Only in a limited number of fairs because recipients did not opt to purchase livestock

Purpose and scope of evaluation

The evaluation of Concern's 2012-2013 Masisi emergency programming has three objectives:

1. Assess the appropriateness / relevance, efficiency, effectiveness,³ and impact of the project;
2. Identify lessons learned and provide practical recommendations to Concern for future programming;
3. Support the organisation's commitments to accountability to donors, government, public, and beneficiaries.

Evaluations serve two purposes – learning and accountability. While these are intrinsically linked, one should be the dominant reason for the evaluation as this influences the evaluation design. (Buchanan-Smith and Cosgrave, 2013). The primary focus of this evaluation is on learning. By critically examining Concern's intervention, it will also contribute to Concern's accountability to its donors.

The evaluation covers the voucher, unconditional and CFW assistance provided by Concern in 2012/13. The TORs for the evaluation did not include the demonstration plots and the NFI kit distributions, and these are not covered. However, the NFI distributions are briefly discussed and some evaluation findings will be relevant, such as those related to the appropriateness of cash-based responses.

There are multiple stakeholders for this evaluation. First and foremost is the Concern Worldwide office in DRC, to inform their current and future programming in Masisi. Second is Concern Worldwide Headquarters, to contribute to their learning from DRC and its potential application to other contexts. The third set of stakeholders is Concern's donors in DRC, namely OFDA, which is funding the evaluation, and ECHO and Irish Aid, who also finance Concern's humanitarian activities in North Kivu. Finally, the evaluation may be useful for other aid actors interested in practical lessons and evidence on cash-based interventions.

Methodology

The evaluation took place in August and September 2013. It included a two week trip to DRC in August, of which eight days were in Masisi. The methodology was qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data collection involved a desk review, 21 focus group discussions (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, disaggregated by gender; village leaders) and interviews with Concern staff. Five of the 18 sites assisted by Concern (four villages and one IDP camp) were visited. The evaluation drew on quantitative data gathered through Concern's monitoring; the evaluator reviewed the survey questionnaire and suggested additional questions related to effectiveness and impact that were then added. The number of field visits and group discussions was determined by the amount of time and staff available to support the evaluation (see Annexes for more details on the methodology and documents reviewed).

Learning-oriented evaluations usually involve those who want to do the learning (Ibid). This evaluation paired an external evaluator with staff from Concern Masisi and Pacodevi (Concern's local partner) for the fieldwork and analysis, with a view to striking a balance between independence and staff engagement in learning. The involvement of programme staff poses the risk of bias and influencing the responses of beneficiaries who might not be comfortable voicing criticisms. Efforts were made to minimise these risks through discussions on bias with the participating staff, and emphasising to focus group participants that Concern wanted to learn about any weaknesses of the programme in order to improve it.

³ This includes assessing progress made towards the achievement of objectives, indicators and targets

Organisation of report

Section 2 describes Concern's emergency programming in Masisi and the design of its 2012-2013 activities. The main evaluation findings are outlined in Section 3. The evaluation findings are organised according to the OECD-DAC criteria of appropriateness, effectiveness, impact and efficiency (OECD-DAC, 1999). Section 4 provides conclusions and recommendations.

2. Programme description

Concern has provided emergency assistance in Masisi since 2008. This section outlines the evolution of Concern's emergency programming and the design of its 2012-2013 activities that are covered in the evaluation.

Evolution of Concern's emergency programming in Masisi (2008-2012)

In DRC, Concern was amongst the early adopters of cash-based interventions. In 2008, several factors prompted Concern to use vouchers as an alternative to distributing non-food item kits (e.g. functioning local markets, evidence that beneficiaries often sold kit items, and the growing global experience of Concern Worldwide in cash-based programming). Since that time, cash-based activities have continued to be a central component of Concern's emergency programming in Masisi. Concern has made modifications along the way based on lessons and evaluations, as well as the desire to try new approaches that might be more effective and appropriate.

One challenge of tracing the evolution of Concern's emergency programming – not just the changes to programming but why they were made – is that some key staff in the Concern DRC office with knowledge of the programme left in the months prior to the evaluation. Even if they had not, in DRC it is rare to have expatriate programme and senior management staff who stay longer than a few years. The following information was gathered based on programme proposals, evaluations and research reports of Concern's emergency programming. It shows that Concern has engaged in a wide variety of cash-based interventions since 2008 – multisectoral fairs, seed fairs, food fairs, CFW and unconditional cash transfers – as well as provided assistance in-kind assistance.

Multisectoral fairs (i.e. 'closed fairs')

Concern began its emergency cash-based response in Masisi in 2008/2009 with fairs, which are temporary markets where traders bring items that can be purchased with vouchers. At the time, several aid agencies in DRC were experimenting with using fairs as an alternative to distributing non-food item (NFI) kits, in order to increase the flexibility of assistance, reduce costs and overcome some of the logistical challenges of trucking assistance posed by Congo's roads (or lack thereof). The fairs are described as 'multisectoral' to indicate that items are available that span the different sectors by which humanitarian aid is organised (e.g. education, shelter, non-food items). Concern selected participating traders based on their ability to stock certain items; the prices in the fair were fixed by Concern in consultation with traders and beneficiaries. The items that could be purchased with \$35 worth of vouchers were limited to *pagnes*⁴, casseroles, jerry cans, plates, basins, soap, headscarves, machetes, hoes, improved seeds and school fees. An evaluation of the intervention found that the fairs were an appropriate and effective response to the needs created by displacement and return. It recommended that Concern increase the diversity and quantity of items available in fairs, include more traders and ensure that beneficiaries who did not understand the process could be accompanied by someone who did (Bailey, 2009).

Concern continued implementing multisectoral fairs in Masisi until 2012. It substantially increased the total amount of money that people received through vouchers, from \$35 in 2008/2009 to \$130 in 2010/11. It is difficult to track the reason for the increase given the amount of time that has passed, but presumably it had to do with the fact that Concern wanted beneficiaries to be able to purchase a similar basket of items compared to NFI kits and also purchase seeds and school fees. NFI kits were valued from between \$70 and \$90 depending on the items considered; other NGOs implementing fairs were providing vouchers with a higher value that corresponded to the value of kit items. Concern made other changes as well: increasing the items available in fairs, and piloting a scheme whereby beneficiaries could exchange \$10 worth of vouchers for cash. Challenges remained

⁴ *Pagnes* are pieces of cloth 6m x 1m that are used for clothing.

with the fairs, particularly that some items would run out of stock, disadvantaging beneficiaries who entered the fair later in the day.

Seed fairs

Concern distributed seeds and tools in Masisi in 2009/2010. In 2010/2011, Concern changed its approach to providing agricultural inputs through 'seed and tool' fairs. Beneficiaries were given vouchers worth \$40 (the approximate cost of the previous seed and tool package). The logic of switching to seed fairs from seed distributions is that the fairs would afford beneficiaries more choice over the types and quantities of seeds and tools. It is not clear why separate seed fairs were organised given that the multisectoral fairs included seeds and tools; it appears that this was linked to the evolution of the programme and differences in assistance provided to host population and displaced households.

Food fairs

In 2011/2012, Concern implemented 'food fairs' to increase access to food and thereby discourage beneficiaries from selling assets purchased in the multisectoral fairs. These food fairs were not successful for several reasons. Vendors did not want to risk buying perishable items that might not be sold, so they stocked a limited variety of non-perishable foods (e.g. sugar, rice, lentils, maize flour) that didn't correspond well to beneficiary preference for local produce. People in villages tend to make purchases from nearby producers as they provide the types of food that they want at prices cheaper than in Masisi town (Concern Worldwide, 2012). These drawbacks promoted Concern to more seriously consider cash transfers as a way to meet food and other basic needs in a more effective manner.

Cash for work

Since 2009/2010, the emergency programme has included CFW in the form of road rehabilitation and maintenance, in order to increase household income and improve infrastructure. Poor roads are a perennial problem in DRC, affecting access by aid agencies, the movement of commercial goods and (in some cases) the security of people travelling on roads. Beneficiaries work on road rehabilitation and maintenance for 12 days, receiving between \$36 and \$40.

Unconditional cash transfers

In 2011/2012, Concern piloted unconditional cash transfers in Masisi through the UNICEF-funded Alternative Responses to Communities in Crisis (ARCC) programme. The pilot study, conducted in collaboration with Tufts University, directly compared multisectoral fairs and unconditional cash transfers using a methodology that randomly assigned beneficiaries to either the 'cash' or 'voucher' group. The study found that the 'cash transfer program was cheaper, and more cost effective, for both Concern Worldwide and programme recipients' (Aker, 2012).

In-kind assistance

While many displaced persons in DRC stay within host communities, some have created settlements in locations outside of major towns. Concern has worked as the NFI partner in the Masisi Centre camps since their creation in 2008. These 'official' camps fall under the purview of the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster and are managed by NGOs. Aid agencies describe non-managed remaining camps as 'spontaneous' even though they are settled in the same manner as official ones – the difference being the labels and distinctions that aid agencies have made between camps, which affects the assistance they receive (see Section 2: Appropriateness). Concern provides NFI items as recommended by the CCCM cluster (i.e. blankets, shelter, clothes, jerry can, hygiene kits and kitchen sets). Concern provides full, partial, and renewal kits. Newly

arrived households received full kits; all households received a quarterly renewal distribution of soap and sanitary towels and annual renewal kits containing certain items (or \$40 worth of NFI vouchers).

Learning and evaluation

While not an activity per se, Concern has undertaken efforts to improve programming through learning and evaluation. In addition to the ARCC research on unconditional transfers, Concern commissioned evaluations of its emergency programming in 2009 and 2012 and arranged visits from to DRC from Concern social protection and protection technical advisors.

Table 1: Types and value of cash-based assistance per HH (2009-2013)⁵

Type of assistance	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Multisectoral fair (i.e. 'closed fair')	\$35	\$35	\$90*	\$54	N/A
Seed fair	N/A	N/A	\$40	N/A	N/A
Food voucher	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$40	N/A
Cash for work	N/A	\$40	\$36	\$36	\$36**
Open market voucher	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$54
Unconditional cash transfer	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$40

* \$10 could be exchanged for cash in order to rent land or meet other needs

**Labour-poor HH were meant to receive a \$36 unconditional transfer instead of CFW

Concern's emergency programme 2012-2013

The 2012/2013 programme sought to increase access to household assets and maintain humanitarian access to targeted villages through three principle activities – vouchers worth \$54 redeemable in markets, unconditional cash transfers (\$40) and CFW road maintenance (\$36). The programme logic provided in the proposal document was that the multisectoral vouchers would enable purchasing of productive and non-productive assets, followed by four smaller cash transfers throughout the year (two unconditional transfers and two through CFW), to meet other needs and to act as a safety net in times of crisis to protect household assets. All of the targeted recipients received all three types of assistance which had a total value of \$130 per beneficiary. The open market vouchers and unconditional cash transfers were both new activities for the Concern Masisi OFDA-funded emergency programme.

Vouchers redeemable in markets (i.e. 'open market' vouchers)

In 2012/2013, Concern opted for 'open market' vouchers as an alternative to multisectoral fairs, in order to provide recipients with more flexibility by enabling them to purchase a wide variety of goods over multiple days, as well as reduce the administrative burden involved in organising fairs. The 'open market' approach is basically the standard voucher approach of providing people with coupons that can be used with traders in an existing market.⁶ Beneficiaries had \$54 which they could spend on school fees, seeds and tools and a wide variety of household and income-generating items. The amount of \$54 was the same amount that had been provided the previous year for the multisectoral fairs. The main items which were *not* supposed to be redeemed with vouchers were alcohol, cigarettes, jewellery and food. The criteria for traders to participate were that they needed to have a current trading license, identity card, mobile phone number and address. Seventy-five traders participated in the voucher programme; another 54 were rejected for not meeting the criteria to participate. Ten primary schools took part so that beneficiaries could pay school fees.

⁵ Based on data from Smith, G. (2013) *Country Report: Social Protection and Safety Net Adviser Support Visit, Masisi, DR Congo*. Internal document

⁶ In DRC many aid agencies use the term 'closed market' to refer to fairs and 'open market' to refer to vouchers redeemable in existing markets

Unconditional cash transfers

Owing to the overwhelmingly positive findings from the 2011/12 pilot, unconditional cash transfers replaced previous food fair activities. Together with CFW, the two unconditional cash transfers (\$20 each) were meant as a 'safety net' in the face of minor shocks and to ensure that beneficiaries would not sell items bought with vouchers to meet food needs. The capacity of finance institutions in Masisi is weak and mobile phone companies that have services for mobile transfers in DRC are not present. Owing to the lack of financial service providers with sufficient capacity to deliver transfers, cash was distributed by Concern at its office in Masisi. Concern decided not to substitute the open market vouchers with cash owing to risks both Concern and beneficiaries might face related to handling large amounts of cash and because of office capacity to distribute cash.

Cash for work

Concern continued with CFW activities in 2012/2013 because road access is a significant challenge to meeting humanitarian needs. Heavy rainfall, landslides and poorly maintained roads and bridges often inhibit road travel. CFW focused on road maintenance carried out on previously rehabilitated roads in the intervention area. As mentioned above, the CFW was also meant to meet basic household needs and discourage the sale of items purchased with vouchers. Labour deficient households were meant to receive two unconditional cash transfers as an alternative to the two CFW payments.

Gender, protection and risk in programme design

Concern took several steps in the programme design to address gender, risk and protection in the design of activities, including:

- Providing transport for vulnerable beneficiaries (e.g. heavily pregnant women, elderly) after the voucher markets to ensure that they return home safely and easily;
- Distributing cash transfers on market days when there are many people walking on roads to Masisi;
- Modifying previous the targeting approach in an effort to reach those most in need and minimise potential for fraud by not publicising some of the targeting criteria;
- Undertaking focus group discussions with women in June 2011 to inquire whether the CFW activities would take them away from their other duties (and also a visit from Concern's Social Protection advisor in Feb 2011);
- Providing vulnerable households with unconditional cash transfers as a substitute for CFW;
- Using analysis from the Tufts / Concern study on unconditional transfers relevant to intra-household decision-making (i.e. ensuring that women were not disadvantaged by cash transfers).

Targeting and monitoring systems

The next section will discuss the design of the targeting and monitoring systems in relation to their appropriateness.

3. Evaluation findings

This section details the main evaluation findings based on the criteria of appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and gender and protection. It aims to present a comprehensive picture of the findings in a logical manner, recognising that some findings relate to multiple criteria.

Appropriateness

Appropriateness and relevance refer to the extent to which the programme was in line with local needs. The discussion here also considers the appropriateness and the targeting and monitoring systems that were put in place.

Concern understood the population needs through its on-going assistance activities in Masisi (including previous evaluations, assessments, and context analysis). Focus group discussions to plan voucher activities were held in order to refine the design of the open market vouchers. Evaluation fieldwork confirmed that the needs that the project intended to address (i.e. access to household goods, productive and non-productive assets, road rehabilitation) were indeed those that people faced as a result of the conflict and displacement / return. The needs cited during fieldwork were diverse – household goods (e.g. kitchen items, blankets, mattresses), food, pagnes, clothing, shelter, tools, school fees, shelter, livestock and roads.⁷

The overall programme objective was to ‘provide productive and non-productive household assets (including education) for vulnerable, conflict-affected households and to maintain humanitarian access to vulnerable communities’. This objective was logical and broad enough to encompass the wide range of needs. Likewise, the three cash-based activities (open market vouchers, cash transfers, CFW) were all consistent with the objective given that they all enabled recipients to purchase what they needed. Concern had previously undertaken market analysis that found that the goods that people prioritised could be found in Masisi’s market.

At first glance it appears that cash could have replaced vouchers and simplified the process greatly. In reality, the capacity of the Concern office, the absence of financial service providers in Masisi and the fact that cash transfers were relatively untested in Masisi all justify having not gone down the path of providing all of the assistance in the form of cash. CFW was appropriate given the need for Concern to access the target areas by road and the importance that local populations place on improved access. However, as will be elaborated, CFW should have been separated out from the other two activities, primarily by having a different targeting process.

The original design of the activities used the vouchers as a means of asset replacement; the role of subsequent cash transfers and CFW was as a ‘safety net’ to meet other needs and protect household assets by ensuring that beneficiaries would not need to sell them. The size and rhythm of the transfers (\$54 in vouchers followed by \$18-\$20 each in four separate cash transfers spaced out over several months) corresponded well to this vision. However, the activities were implemented more closely together than originally planned because of delays caused by insecurity. While the end result was not according to plan, providing the transfers more closely together was for the best. Households preferred having large enough sums of money with which they could cover a broad range of needs and, in some cases, to invest in larger purchases (see Effectiveness – Unconditional cash transfer).

Targeting

Concern chose to work in mainly the same villages where it had operated the year prior, with the vision of meeting the needs of newly displaced and returnee households and assisting those who

⁷ Two sites also mentioned drinking water, which is not a sector where Concern intervenes in North Kivu.

previously had not been helped. The reasoning was that the area receives the majority of displaced households fleeing from conflict in the north and west of the territory and humanitarian needs therefore remained high. Concern also was limited logistically to the places that could be accessed from Masisi town in a day, given that it was unsafe for staff to spend the night outside of Masisi. In an effort to include some places that had not yet received assistance from Concern, four new villages (Kautu, Bukenge, Bukingi and Bukenge) and three IDP camps (Burora, Bonde and Bushani) were added by the Programme Manager who took over management of the emergency programme. The fact that Concern intervened in areas where it had previously provided assistance, and that were readily accessible from Masisi town, suggests that these were not the most vulnerable villages and camps in the area. At the same time, they did have substantial unmet humanitarian needs, and Concern faced limits to how far it could go without a base outside of Masisi where staff could be based or spend on the night.

Targeting approach / point system

The targeting approach within village and camps was designed to identify the poorest and most vulnerable households. It was based on a point system that included points for ‘vulnerability’ categories (e.g. widow, child-headed households, households with a disabled person) that were elaborated by a village committee; there were points for poverty based on house quality, the quality of the sleeping area and for possessing certain kitchen items (see Table 2). The point system was put in place in order to address what Concern perceived as weaknesses in previous targeting processes and because Concern felt that one of its donors wanted a more poverty-based approach (Smith, 2013). Staff from Concern, Pacodevi and Asode (a Goma-based organisation) surveyed every household in each target village / camp and took details of household characteristics, including whether the household met any of the vulnerability categories. The staff recorded information on the quality of the dwelling structure and sleeping area, as well as whether households were in possession of jerry cans, sauce pans and plates. The end result was a total point ‘score’ that served as a proxy for poverty and vulnerability – the higher the score, the more vulnerable the household.

Table 2: Targeting point system

Category	Details	Max points possible
Vulnerability	Elaborated by village committee, examples include elderly, widowed, households with orphans, large households, IDPs)	10 per vulnerability category (max 50)
House quality	Roof (grass v. metal), walls (mud v. wooden)	5 pts for house made of mud and grass
Quality of sleeping area	Whether there is a raised sleeping and mattress	5 pts for sleeping on the floor on straw (no mattress)
Possession of HH / kitchen items	Possession of less than 2 jerry can, less than 4 saucepans, less than 5 plates	2 pts for less than 2 jerry cans 2 pts for less than 4 saucepans 2 pts for less than 5 plates

Targeting was the most problematic aspect of Concern’s emergency response. There was nothing inherently wrong with either Concern’s decision to continue operating in the same area or to choose households using a combination of categorical targeting and a form of poverty-based targeting (i.e. based on housing quality and household items). The main problem was that the end result of the targeting process appears to have excluded a substantial number of people who were no less or only marginally less poor than those included. There were also major issues with using a vulnerability-

based targeting process in order to select people for CFW (discussed below in ‘Gender, vulnerability and CFW’).

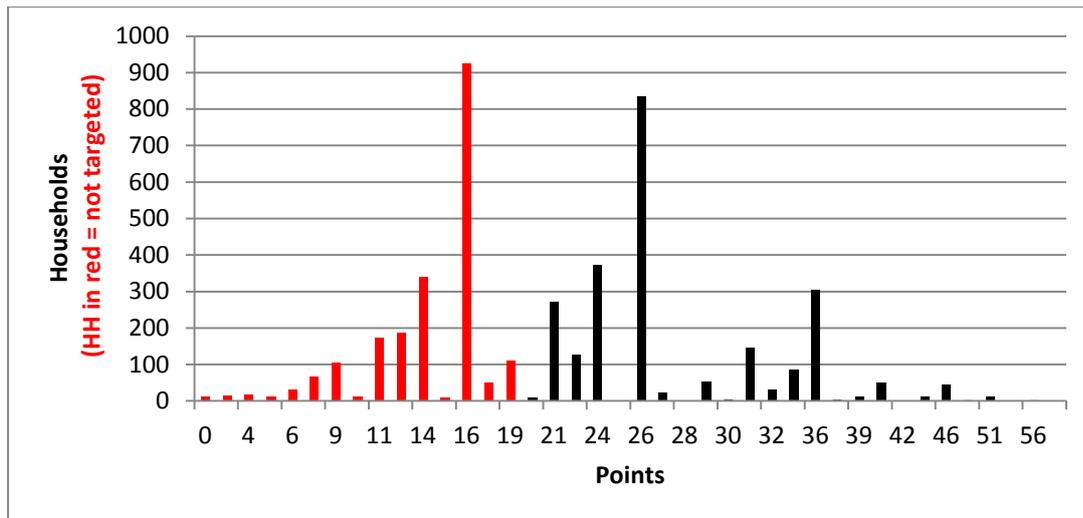
How did this happen? The intervention area had experienced population movements owing to displacement and return, and prior to undertaking the household survey, Concern did not know the number of households living in them. Concern used the cut-off for inclusion in the programme based on the number of planned beneficiaries (2,400 households). The total number of households surveyed was 4,462 – nearly double the planned beneficiaries. Concern therefore established a cut-off whereby just over half of the households could be included. From a needs-based perspective, this meant that the targeting cut-off was arbitrary because it was based on pre-established numbers rather than driven by needs, which were substantial.

The breakdown of vulnerability scores in Figure 1 is insightful. It shows that the most common score was 16 points. Keeping in mind that higher scores were meant to signal higher levels of poverty and vulnerability, 16 points was the maximum score that people could receive based solely on the ‘poverty’ criteria – dwelling quality, sleeping area quality and possession of kitchen items. The households that received 16 points met all of the ‘poverty’ criteria Concern had elaborated; they had mud houses with thatched roofs, lacked mattresses and lacked the minimum numbers of kitchen items specified in Table 2. However, the cut-off point for including the highest scoring 2,400 households fell at 19 points, and no households could receive that score without having one of the vulnerability categories (i.e. 10 points for a being widowed, handicapped, large household). Thus, despite the effort to include ‘poverty’ criteria, in the end only people who also met at least one of the ‘vulnerability’ categories were included in the programme.

This suggests that there was exclusion error – people who should have been included in the programme but were not – because Concern had intended to target poor households rather than solely reach those who were widowed, handicapped, etc. This finding on exclusion error was further supported by focus group discussions. Across the board participants felt that households who were equally poor were left out of the assistance. Concern staff interviewed also felt that the targeting process excluded people who no less poor and vulnerable than those who were included. Concern took measures to work with leaders to explain that Concern’s resources were limited and that Concern could not assist everyone, but based on interviews with Concern staff it appears that those efforts did not result in decreasing dissatisfaction about the targeting process.

The targeting system probably did help minimise people who met one of the categorical targeting criteria but had more means than others (e.g. a widowed person with wooden house) – but only to a certain extent. For example, households with 19 points met a vulnerability category (10 points) and thus possessed more household goods and/or had better dwellings than those with 16 points. Most of the focus groups stated that a small number of people who received assistance had more means than some of those who had been left out. This suggests that there was a marginal amount of inclusion error – people included who should not have been. At the same time, even ‘people with means’ were very poor given the extreme poverty in these areas – just perhaps not as poor as some of the people who were left out. With all the findings on targeting, it should be kept in mind that households had incentives to misrepresent themselves as meeting a vulnerability category and downplay their assets (see below for examples), which also influenced targeting challenges.

Figure 1: Targeting point ‘scores’ of all households



Concern had the data, even if imperfectly through the survey indicators like house structure, to conclude that there was not much difference in the poverty of the vast majority of those registered. This was also a finding of a previous evaluation (Crawford, 2012). The small amount of difference between those with 'means' and the 'poorest' in the targeted villages makes any targeting exercise problematic, especially when the amount of money provided could shift the balance between who has means and who does not. Further, everyone consulted (leaders, beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries) would have preferred that Concern had divided the assistance amongst all the households (i.e. providing half the assistance to double the people). Concern was aware of this sentiment as well through the visit by the Social Protection Advisor in April 2013 (after the activities were underway). A detrimental result of the targeting process was increased tensions in villages between those who benefited and those who did not (see Protection and Gender).

In theory the number of beneficiaries could have been expanded. For example, if the cut-off had been at 11 points, this would have included 94% of those living in the villages and camps. Assuming that the overall envelope of assistance remained the same, each household would have received \$75 worth of cash and vouchers, compared to the \$130 that was provided. Blanket targeting (i.e. assisting everyone) would have resulted in \$70 per household. However, Concern did not have the capacity to ramp up the logistics to provide payments to double the number of beneficiaries. Another option would have been dividing the activities amongst beneficiaries (e.g. some receive the voucher fair, some the cash transfers), which would have delinked the activities from the objective of asset replacement through vouchers and asset protection through cash. There was not a straight-forward answer to this problem, and it is logical that Concern wanted to make good to the commitments laid out in the proposal. At the same time, more thought should have been given to potential options to avoid leaving out so many poor households. The main difficulty was that Concern did not have a clear picture of beneficiary numbers until it did the household survey, owing mainly to population movements in the months leading up to the activities but also not knowing what would be the result of the new targeting process.

Transparency

Many of those in focus groups could cite the vulnerability criteria that informed targeting (e.g. elderly, large households, widows). It was the process of surveying households and then paring down the list to a final group of beneficiaries that was not well understood. Firstly, the fact that a staff member wrote down information about their household led to expectations that households were being registered for assistance. Secondly, they were not made aware of the other targeting criteria (i.e. dwelling quality, household items). This lack of transparency was deliberate, resulting

from Concern's own efforts to minimise fraud by reducing the chances that households would misrepresent their situation and hide assets. How the final list was elaborated was a mystery to the target population.⁸

Based on conversations with staff and focus groups, there was probably a small amount of fraud, such as 'ghost beneficiaries' resulting from households showing up the day of the survey. There is a suspicion that a person (or people) aware of the registration process might have provided information about the dates and locations of the survey activities to people that they knew. There were also isolated reports from focus group discussions of small payments to people involved in the registration process. Given the difficulty of getting information on fraud and corruption in humanitarian response (Maxwell et al., 2008), it is not surprising that this evaluation could not verify any of these claims. However, based on the information from discussions and interviews, it is not felt that any of these challenges were a major problem or beyond what normally takes place when providing humanitarian assistance in DRC, and that Concern took several steps to limit potential fraud. Despite Concern's attempts to keep the targeting criteria under wraps, villages caught on quickly. The Emergency Programme Manager happened across a stash of mattresses and sewing machines in a forested area; and in one village the nicest house was filled to the brim with household items (unsurprisingly no one claimed to be the owner of the house!).

Another attempt to reduce fraud was by avoiding sending Concern and partner staff to survey households in areas where they were from, to avoid the temptation and pressure to include people that they knew. Instead an organisation from Goma was contracted. However, some of those staff were actually from Masisi, thus raising these very problems.

Different targeting approaches amongst different aid agencies and in different places

Aid agencies in Masisi take different approaches to targeting, owing both to the individual approaches of aid agencies and the context in which the assistance is provided. Some of the areas assisted by Concern were non-official IDP camps; there is a clear disconnect between Concern's blanket targeting in official camps and compared to the targeted assistance outside of them. Some leaders discussed how agencies like Solidarité and the Red Cross help all of the people in the village. These inconsistencies were not lost on those participating in focus group discussions, many of whom are aware of the blanket targeting methodologies used by other aid agencies and in official IDP camps (and prefer those approaches even if it means that people receive less). As discussed further below, all of those consulted would prefer that all households in camps and villages be assisted even if it means that beneficiaries receive less assistance.

Box 1: Quotes on targeting process (from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries)

'The lists went to Goma with all the names and then came back with only the names of some people.'

'Concern registers some and leaves others who are also poor'

'It's the machine'

'We were selected because of the grace of god'

'We're all poor'

'''Concern doesn't have limited resources'' – even if it was divided it three that would still be a lot'

'If Concern does it again there will be a rebellion'

'How can white people in Europe know that this person has means and this person doesn't?'

'It still hurts in my heart' (from a man who did not receive assistance)

⁸ Concern did try to engage leaders and community members to explain why some were targeted and not others, but this did not appear to have achieved the intended outcome.

'[People who received assistance] have blankets, we are still using pagnes'
'When you come to my house, you will see that I am poor, even though I have a husband'
'Better than only assisting some, instead fix the road as everyone benefits'

Monitoring

Indicators and monitoring should enable Concern to understand what was going on with the programme and make changes accordingly. Were Concern's systems appropriate to achieve this function? While the indicators in the logframe (see Table 3) are not very meaningful in and of themselves, on the whole Concern's monitoring of the fairs and cash transfer activities provided useful information on purchases, protection and process issues like wait times. This evaluation was able to use the monitoring data to identify broad trends and triangulate findings from the group discussions.

There are ways that the monitoring tools can be improved. The voucher monitoring tool and the original draft of the cash monitoring survey asked beneficiaries to list the items purchased with vouchers and cash transfers. Without asking beneficiaries how much they spent on each item (or on broad categories like food), this question does not yield information on the proportion of transfers spent on different goods (e.g. it shows that someone purchased clothing, but not whether 1,000FC or 10,000FC was spent on the clothing). Tracking how much of the transfers were spent on different items would help Concern better understand spending patterns.

The recent transition to digital data collection is particularly interesting as data and reports are available instantly, dramatically reducing the time involved in inputting, cleaning and analysing data. For cash transfers, one future possibility might involve experimenting with collecting baseline data on expenditure patterns and following up in the monitoring. This would yield insight on how marginal income from the transfers affects overall household expenditures, but this approach is time-consuming and faces challenges related to recall. For vouchers, surveying beneficiaries the day of the fair on the different purchases and the cost per item would be relatively straightforward. A final minor point is that the cash transfer tool asked about preference only in relation to food fairs, which is a narrow view of preference (which Concern deliberately took in order to draw comparisons with its previous food fair activities). Questions on the preference for a single larger transfer compared to multiple smaller transfers would also be useful.

Informal communication was important to understanding issues facing the programme. Conversations that the Emergency Programme Manager had with traders and even with Concern guards yielded information on challenges in the voucher programme and potential fraud in the registration process. These insights were due in no small part to the fact that the programme manager speaks Swahili and has a good rapport with staff.

NFI distributions

The evaluation did not examine the NFI activities in the official camps as part of the evaluation. That said, the NFI distributions raise some interesting issues related to appropriateness that are worth highlighting as these could be explored further.

Whether to provide cash or in-kind assistance should be determined based on the programme objective, needs faced by populations, access to markets and other factors like preference and risk. The needs, market access and preference of IDPs in official camps probably are not very different to those of IDPs living in other settlements and with host families. CCCM camps might be more accessible to roads and towns, as evidenced by aid agency presence in the camps. However, both the type of assistance provided (in-kind kits rather than vouchers or cash) and the targeting (blanket

rather than targeted) shows that very different approaches have been taken to providing assistance to IDPs in official camps compared to those residing outside of them. An exception is that Concern has used vouchers in some cases as an alternative to annual ‘renewal’ kits. People living in camps receive assistance repeatedly through quarterly and annual renewal kits, compared to those living outside of camps, resulting in transfers with a higher value over time being provided to those in camps. These inconsistencies raise questions about the type and amount of assistance that should be provided.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness and impact consider the changes that resulted from the programme. Effectiveness examines these changes as they relate to Concern’s objectives (and impact, discussed below, considers changes that were outside of these objectives but that nonetheless might be important). To explore effectiveness, this section analyses how the different transfers were used; whether beneficiaries were able to access to the goods and services that they prioritised through the cash and vouchers; preference; delays; and the achievement of the indicators established by Concern at the outset of the programme.

Open market vouchers

Open market vouchers were the first assistance received. Voucher activities took place in February / March; beneficiaries had \$54 in vouchers to spend amongst the 75 participating traders.

Spending patterns

Discussions with beneficiaries and monitoring indicate that a wide variety of goods were purchased, and that the option to pay school fees was highly valued. Based on monitoring, popular purchases were school fees (paid by 64% of beneficiaries), *pagnes* (purchased by 55% of beneficiaries), children’s clothing (52%), salt (38%), kitchen items (33%), soap (25%), mattresses (19%) and metal sheets (14%) (see Table 1). One-third of people purchased items that could be used for income-generating activities (e.g. salt and clothing for resale). For those that paid school fees, 82% paid for more than one child; a total of \$2,082 was paid to 10 schools. Most participants in the focus group discussions indicated that all the items that they sought were available (in monitoring 88% expressed this opinion); some expressed that they wanted to pay the school fees for children in secondary school. Only primary schools were included in the fair because Concern felt that including secondary schools would have been counter to donor regulations.

Table 1: Items purchased by beneficiaries with vouchers

Items	% benef who bought	Items (continued)	% benef who bought
School fees	63.9%	Suitcase	8.6%
<i>Pagne</i>	54.9%	Machete	8.2%
Clothing (children)	51.8%	<i>Cuvette</i>	5.9%
Clothing (adult)	45.9%	<i>Botte</i>	4.7%
Box of salt	38.0%	Jerry can of petrol	4.3%
Seeds	37.9%	<i>Sack of farine de froment</i>	3.9%
Saucepan	33.3%	Radio	3.5%
Blanket	31.8%	Umbrella	3.1%
Plate	31.0%	Mats	3.1%
Shoes	28.6%	Storm lamp	2.4%
Soap	25.5%	<i>Jague</i>	2.4%

Mattress	18.8%	Sheets	2.0%
Plastic sheeting	14.9%	Basket	1.6%
Metal sheets (roof)	14.1%	Batteries	1.2%
School uniform	9.4%	Mosquito net	0.8%
Notebook	9.4%	Watch	0.8%
Kitchen utensils	9.0%	Wooden board	0.4%
Cups	9.0%	Dressmaking	0.4%
Plastic tub	8.6%	Padlock	0.4%

Source: Concern DRC (2013b)

It appears that many beneficiaries bought meat even though it was not supposed to be available from participating traders (as several beneficiaries stated, 'we cannot forget the meat / *on peut pas oublier la viande*'). Meat was purchased either by exchanging vouchers for cash, buying meat from traders collaborating with pre-selected vendors and purchasing it from pre-selected vendors themselves.

Exchange of vouchers for cash

Concern's monitoring estimated that 28% of beneficiaries exchanged coupons for cash. Focus group participants indicated that some people exchanged their entire packet of vouchers for cash, losing between 4% - 10% of the value in the exchange, and that others exchanged only some of their vouchers. Some beneficiaries indirectly exchanged vouchers for cash by buying items like metal sheeting and immediately reselling them (sometimes at a loss). It appears that some 'non-selected' traders collaborated with selected ones to change the vouchers to cash (to the chagrin of other participating traders who felt that this practice hurt their profits). The voucher value 'lost' by the beneficiary in the exchange went to the traders / money-changers as profit. While it is not possible to know the total amount of money that traders gained and beneficiaries lost through these transactions, a high estimate based on the monitoring and evaluation data is \$3,500 (2.8% of the total value of all vouchers distributed by Concern). This calculation is based on 28% of beneficiaries exchanging 100% of their vouchers at 90% of their value – in reality the figure probably would be much lower since some of those beneficiaries did not exchange all of their vouchers and not all beneficiaries lost 10% on the transaction.

The justifications provided by focus groups about why some people exchanged vouchers for cash were to meet other needs in the household (e.g. food), pay secondary school fees, repay debts and that some people who exchanged were older and did not have the strength to transport goods or had trouble understanding the voucher system. The exchange of vouchers for cash indicates that cash is highly valued – as beneficiaries were okay with losing some money on the transaction – and that some traders have the liquidity and connections to act as money-changers for vouchers.

Prices

While Concern's post-fair monitoring found that about three-quarters of beneficiaries thought that the prices were average, several focus groups expressed that the prices of certain items were artificially high. Specific examples cited were that boxes of salt were 9,000 FC rather than 6,000 FC, pagnes were 12,000 – 14,000 FC rather than 11,000 – 12,000 FC; one group said that saucepans and clothing were more expensive than normal. The salt example was cited by multiple groups. This suggests that vendors charging slightly inflated prices for certain goods like salt. However, given that prices vary according to quality, it difficult to draw firm conclusions. The findings on prices are a vast improvement from Concern's first fairs in 2008 where high prices were one of the biggest complaints

(Bailey, 2009). It indicates that the more traders that are involved the less they are able to raise prices.

Redemption period

Concern designed the voucher activities with a 30-day redemption period so that beneficiaries would not be pressured to spend the vouchers quickly and have more bargaining power with traders (i.e. they could return another day if they deemed prices to be high). Nearly all beneficiaries (97% according to Concern's monitoring) spent the vouchers the day that they received them because:

- The distance between their villages and the Masisi discouraged multiple trips;
- They might face dangers on the road and would be alone on subsequent visits;
- They found everything that they needed at the market on the first day;
- They did not think that the prices would be any lower subsequent days;
- If they took vouchers home they might get wet and damaged;
- Vouchers could not buy anything in the villages.

While Concern's assumptions that beneficiaries might want to spend the vouchers over time were not accurate, some focus group respondents appreciated knowing that the vouchers would still be valid the days after they received them just in case that they could not use them all in one day. It also enabled Concern to deal with beneficiaries who did not receive vouchers the day of the distribution and approached Concern at a later date for them.

Understanding

Sensitisation efforts appear to have been broadly successful. Beneficiaries were easily able to identify the participating traders, who wore badges and had signs with the Concern logo. Monitoring found that 92% of participants easily understood the system. Some older people did not understand the system, and beneficiaries consulted indicated that these people by and large brought someone to help them (e.g. one of their children). This message had been part of Concern's sensitisation. There were a few exceptions. In two sites examples were provided of some older people that were taken advantage of. In both instances, the persons were illiterate and had approached strangers in Masisi to ask them for help in navigating the system; the people ran off with the vouchers. A minor point is that some beneficiaries thought that vouchers were missing, when in fact some pages were taken out of the booklet by Concern during pre-fair checks to ensure that the correct amount of vouchers were in the booklet.

Unconditional cash

The purpose of the cash transfer was to enable households to meet basic needs and prevent the sale of assets purchased with the vouchers. The unconditional cash transfers were distributed in March / April 2013 (first transfer) and May / June (second transfer). Concern provided \$20USD per beneficiary per transfer; beneficiaries then exchanged the dollars for Congolese Francs from local traders.⁹ It would have been unrealistic for Concern to distribute the money in local currency as the highest denomination of Congolese Francs is about \$0.54 – the process of transporting, counting and distributing local currency would have been inefficient and unmanageable.

Spending

Beneficiaries reported that they did not have any problems getting the cash from Concern. The cash was spent on diverse items, but food and school fees were the most significant purchases. Half of beneficiaries said that food was the largest expenditure of the transfer and 92% of beneficiaries

⁹ Dollars are used as a currency in DRC.

spent some of the transfer on food (Concern DRC, 2013b). School fees were second (79% paid for school fees and one-third said it was how they spent most of the cash transfer; 78% of those paying school fees paid for more than one child). The full list of items purchased is long, the monitoring found that in total beneficiaries spread out their spending over 22 different non-food items, 11 types of food, nine varieties of seeds, four types of animals and seven different items for resale through small business activities, as well as using the cash for paying school fees and debt repayment. In focus group discussions a small number of participants stated that they hired labour for their fields, labour to build a house, leased manioc fields (whereby they can cultivate the already planted manioc for food), shared the money with relatives (namely adult children who did not benefit) and rented fields for planting. Table 2 provides a general picture of how the cash transfer was used.

Table 2: Use of unconditional cash transfer

Category	Popular items	% benef purchasing items in this category	% benef stating was largest use of transfer
Food	Flour, beans, tubers, meat, fish, oil	91.6%	52.7%
School fees	One trimester, two trimesters	78.5%	34.2%
Non-food items	Kitchen items, <i>pagne</i> , clothing, mattress, blanket, metal roofing	50.6%	5.1%
Income generation / livelihoods	Box of salt, seeds, clothing, <i>pagne</i> , oil	25.3%	2.5%
Seeds and tools	Beans, groundnut, corn, cabbage, machete	66.2%	1.7%
Shelter		21.5%	1.7%
Small livestock	Chicken, duck	24.5%	1.3%
Debt repayment		48.5%	0.8%

Source: Concern DRC 2013

The cash transfer expenditures were influenced by the fact that beneficiaries had already bought certain key items with vouchers. In other words, these expenditure patterns would have almost certainly been heavier on household items if beneficiaries had not already met those needs. Some beneficiaries stated that there was a difference in how they spent the first and second transfers; while others indicated that they made similar purchases with both. Given the large number of issues covered in group discussions, it was not possible to delve into the reasons for diverging purchasing patterns, other than the fact that different households had different needs and priorities.

Unlike vouchers, very few beneficiaries spent all of their money the same day. Several expressed in the focus group discussions that a significant advantage of cash was that the household could plan how best to meet its needs over time, and that it would be foolish to spend all of it at once when needs will arise later.

Two smaller transfers or one larger transfer?

The cash was provided in two transfers. Most of the focus group participants would have preferred getting it all at once for two main reasons. First, \$20 is seen as a relatively small amount; \$40 can meet numerous needs and larger purchases and investments can be made. Second, participants expressed that it would be easier to plan expenditures when all the money is provided at once. A minority of those consulted preferred receiving it in two transfers because they had planned the spending of the second transfer better compared to the first one and because needs might arise that a second transfer could be used to address. Preference did not vary amongst the male and female focus groups, as the majority in both groups preferred receiving the transfer all at once.

CFW

The objective of CFW was to maintain humanitarian access to the targeted areas and provide income to meet needs and discourage the sale of assets. Participants worked for two periods of six days (12 days total), receiving two transfers of \$18 each. This evaluation did not undertake a technical appraisal of the road maintenance activities, but leaders, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries consulted all placed a very high value on the increased access to their villages that has resulted from Concern's previous road rehabilitation and the continued road maintenance activities, expressing several benefits (see Impact).

Expenditure of CFW

Those consulted in focus groups indicated that the \$36 was spent in a similar fashion as the unconditional cash transfers. However, the ways that households took decisions about these expenditures appear to be different, namely that women who worked had more control over these funds compared to unconditional cash transfers (see Protection: Intra-household decision-making).

Gender, vulnerability and CFW

There were several challenges related to gender and vulnerable persons, which are linked to the overall targeting approach used in the programme. As discussed above, the targeting system resulted in the selection of households who met at least one vulnerability criteria. In addition, the majority (57%) of workers were women. As a result of these factors, the pool of people for CFW was dominated by women and included numerous widows and elderly. The high level of participation by women appears to be because:

- Concern staff encouraged the participation of women in CFW in order to meet indicators of female participation;
- Beneficiaries were under the impression that Concern's programmes were mainly for women;
- Wives went rather than husbands as men are more effective than women at earning money through agricultural daily labour;
- Women wanted the opportunity to earn money;
- Some women wanted to ensure the money went to them rather than their husbands (particularly in the case of polygamous households).

Having a pool of workers dominated by women, widows and elderly was highly inappropriate for undertaking heavy manual labour on roads, including at sites that were several miles from their homes. There were older people and handicapped people who worked and should not have, including a 68-year old man who fainted (this was largely rectified for the second round of CFW). The CFW by women resulted in compromises in meeting household needs, including leaving children outside while they worked, not preparing food and being tired. Even with reduced hours put in place by Concern, for many there were long walks to work sites. The evaluation did not examine in detail whether the participation of women affected feeding and caring practices like breast-feeding, but this might be a question worth exploring.

Concern did take several steps to address gender and vulnerability issues. Concern shortened the hours per working day for women and attempted to find them lighter tasks. However, there are only so many light tasks that can be found when the main activity is road maintenance. Concern also intended for vulnerable persons to receive an unconditional transfer rather than participate in the CFW; this was not done for some of the first round of work and it is not clear why; for the second round of work many of them did receive the transfer rather than working. In total 315 vulnerable households received two unconditional cash transfers instead of CFW payments, but Concern had

targeted 535 elderly beneficiaries. Targeting the most vulnerable for CFW, and then providing the most vulnerable with unconditional transfers instead, is not logical as this approach would not leave many left to work if it was fully followed through. The heavy participation of women and vulnerable persons also reportedly affected the speed and quality of the road maintenance activities.

These findings suggest that CFW should only include those with labour capacity. However, previous efforts by Concern to only target households with labour capacity and avoid vulnerable persons were not well received by people in the target villages who were left out. In assessments conducted by Concern, older people said that they wanted to be included and could send someone (e.g. one of their children) in their place. This practice was problematic as the person who worked understandably wanted a portion of the cash, and some older people worked as they wanted the money. Women had previously come to the Masisi office and accused Concern of discrimination for not including them. These inconsistencies show how tricky it is for Concern to navigate concerns about gender and vulnerability when populations themselves above all want money.

At the heart of these CFW problems is a tension between the dual objective of 1) improving infrastructure and 2) increasing income / enabling beneficiaries to meet basic needs. One of these objectives should dominate, and all of the design choices should stem from it. If the main objective is to increase road access (which in this case it arguably was, given that Concern had other means to assist the most vulnerable) then the targeting process should privilege persons who have the capacity to undertake hard labour. If the predominant objective is to increase income, then the programme should seek the most appropriate way to increase income (which might not be CFW), and only require labour of those who are fit to provide it.

Because CFW was provided as a package of assistance that included unconditional cash transfers and vouchers, beneficiaries viewed the CFW as a form of aid rather than a form of employment. Several women in the focus groups raised these problems. One asked, 'Concern says that they are helping widows, but you are making me work. Is that really assistance?'. Separating out the CFW from the other activities might have mitigated this perception.

Preference for CFW in two phases or all at once

Would people prefer working two six-day periods or the 12 days at once? Concern spaced the periods or work to allow people to meet other needs, and most preferred this approach. Doing the work in two periods better enabled them to respond to household needs (e.g. get food) and pursue other livelihood opportunities. Some women expressed that it would be near impossible for them to do such arduous work for 12 days straight. Others would have preferred 12 consecutive days to have a larger single transfer of money and therefore have more options on how to use it.¹⁰ There was tension between wanting a 'lumpier' payment and needing to address other household needs and livelihood activities that CFW took them away from.

Most important changes

Taking the three activities on the whole, beneficiaries and leaders were asked about the most important changes resulting from the intervention. Focus groups mainly responded that they were able to meet their immediate needs related to household wellbeing, including buying clothing, food and household goods, improvements in shelter, some investments in income activities and consistent school attendance by children. IDPs consulted indicated that the assistance gave them a better social standing in neighbouring communities. All of those consulted emphasised the importance of roads in increasing access to villages (see Impact).

¹⁰ There was no difference between the views of male and female focus groups on this issue.

Preference

Questions about what type of assistance is preferred (e.g. cash or vouchers) are normally difficult to analyse because responses are biased in relation to what was received. The fact that Concern provided multiple types of cash-based assistance to the same households provides a uniquely strong basis for investigating this issue. Of unconditional cash transfers, vouchers and CFW, five of the nine beneficiary focus groups preferred cash transfers owing to their flexibility in meeting needs, discreetness compared to vouchers (see Protection and Gender), and, in comparison to CFW, they do not make people exhausted or take them away from other activities. Despite the numerous complaints about the labour requirement, CFW emerged first amongst two focus groups (one male, one female) – such was the importance placed on the increased access to villages. The other groups ranked it last, one refused to even include CFW in the ranking. Two focus groups, both of men, preferred vouchers because ‘cash goes’ while vouchers will always be used for something useful. All of the female focus groups ranked cash or CFW in top position. These findings show that while unconditional cash transfers were most preferred, this was not a universal sentiment and that there were diverse factors influencing preference.

As most of the villages had been assisted in the past and were familiar with Concerns fairs, they were asked about their preference between the open market vouchers compared to the fair. Most preferred the market because all of the items they sought were available (in closed fairs some would items would run out) and because the coupons were valid for a longer period (in case all the purchases could not be made in the same day). For those that preferred fairs, the main reason was because the fair system was straightforward (i.e. all the vendors were together in rows as opposed to dispersed in the market). Some expressed that the prices might be better in fairs because Concern staff could observe the transactions more easily compared to in the market, thus limiting the potential for trickery by vendors. These findings show that price, selection, availability and understanding were all important to beneficiaries.

Transfer value(s)

The overall value of the three types of transfers was \$130. This amount has been constant in the OFDA programme in the last few years; it appears to be based on the value on NFI kit (approximately \$90) plus additional money for school fees and seeds. As the staff involved in the proposal were no longer present in DRC, it was not possible to get a more information. Was the transfer amount appropriate to achieve the objective? Without more precise data on how marginal income was used, it is difficult pin down specifics, especially given the breadth of the objective. However, we do know that beneficiaries were able to buy basic household goods, pay school fees, and purchase food and seeds, and that some invested in houses through metal roofs and invested in small income-generating activities. People consulted did not describe having to make significant trade-offs between different needs (i.e. choosing between clothing, seeds and food). While it is inevitable that some hard choices were made in the context of immense needs; \$130 was certainly large enough to cover many priorities. The extent to which Concern could have provided less money and still met the objective is discussed in the conclusion.

Delays

There were delays in the programme related to security, which meant that the voucher, cash and CFW activities all started later than intended (the multisectoral fair was meant to correspond to planting so that beneficiaries could access inputs and the cash transfers were meant to correspond to the lean period). Given the risks for Concern staff and beneficiaries, the delays were understandable. In fact, Concern did well to finish all of its planned activities within the pre-established programme cycle. While beneficiaries consulted were understanding of the delay, it had consequences. Beneficiaries took on or increased debts thinking that assistance would be coming soon. Interest rates increase over time, so delays in assistance meant increased debt; this affected

the extent to which transfers needed to be used for debt repayment. The fact that people took debt shows that they had confidence that Concern would make good on its commitment to provide assistance.

Performance against proposal indicators

The indicators in the project proposal are outputs – the number of people assisted, the money injected into the local economy, wages paid through CFW and percentage of women participants in CFW. Table 3 shows that Concern met most of its targets or came very close. The indicator on female participation was not appropriate as it encouraged Concern to meet its target when a more nuanced approach to participation by women should have been taken.

Table 3: Programme Indicators – Planned and Achieved

Objective 1 indicators	Planned	Achieved	% Achieved
Economic asset restoration			
Number of people assisted through economic asset restoration activities	2,400 HH	2,321 HH	97%
Total USD channeled into the local economy (through cash grants, vouchers, CFW)	USD \$313,430	\$301,703	96%
Temporary employment			
Number of people employed through CFW activities	2,160	1,941	90%
Average USD amount per person earned through CFW activities	USD \$36 per daily worker	USD \$36 per daily worker	100%
Number and percent of women employed through CFW activities	35%	54%	149%
Kilometers of roads maintained through CFW	54km	54km	100%

Impact

Impact refers to the wider effects of an intervention on individuals, communities and institutions; impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative.¹¹ For this intervention, the most relevant impacts are those related to traders participating in the voucher programme, economic benefits and education. Impact is challenging to analyse because of the limitations of humanitarian evaluations, which are not detailed research or in-depth market studies. Nonetheless this evaluation can provide some basic analysis based on the programme data and discussions with traders and beneficiaries.

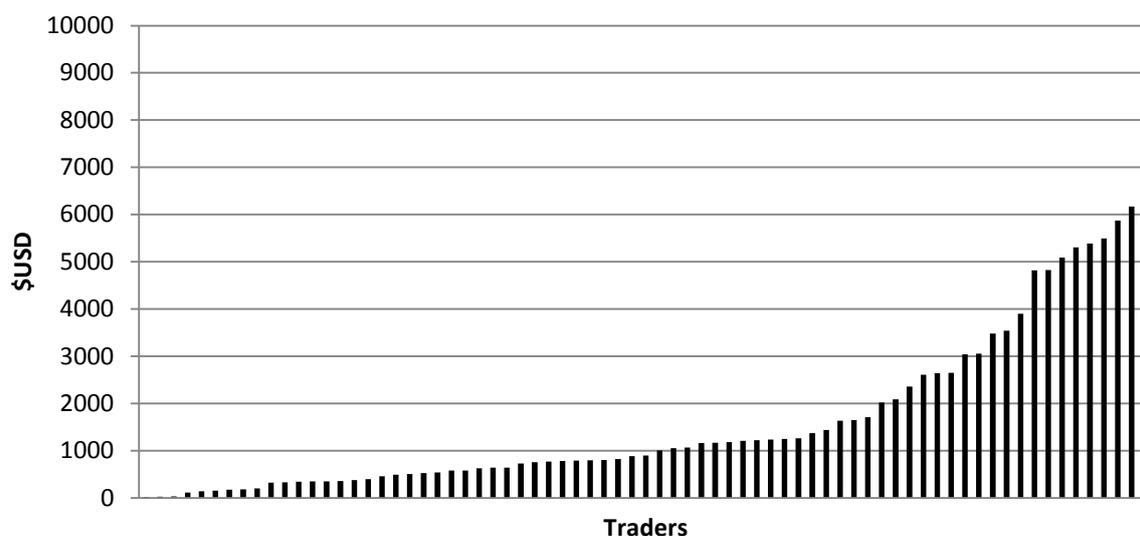
Masisi traders

The 73 traders in Masisi who participated in the voucher scheme in total received \$122,030. The average per trader was \$1,671, the highest was \$9,596 and the lowest was \$20.65. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the money earned per trader. Concern’s openness to including all traders who met the basic criteria for participation helped spread the benefits amongst a reasonably large group (by comparison, for the 2008 fairs there were only 17 traders who received \$281,000). The four traders interviewed all stated that the voucher programme resulted in higher than normal profits, which they used mainly for household needs and to invest in their business (e.g. increase stock).

¹¹ Adapted from OECD-DAC (2001) *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management* and OECD-DAC (1999) *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*.

The traders provided feedback about the functioning of the voucher system. Two were concerned that the large amount of traders included in the programme compared to fairs made it difficult for traders to work together and make arrangements related to managing their stocks (while some traders might have been dissatisfied with this arrangement, it had benefits for beneficiaries since it hampered traders from forming a cartel and controlling prices and stock). Traders interviewed expressed concerns that purchased stock would remain unsold, particularly if some beneficiaries exchanged vouchers for cash. The main drawbacks that the traders described were a result of the increased competition involved in market vouchers compared to fairs – and this competition was positive from the perspective of keeping prices low and offering more choice to beneficiaries. The traders also expressed that Concern should try to reduce the payment time (it took about a month for traders to be paid).

Figure 2: USD earned per trader participating in voucher scheme



Economy

The programme injected \$313,430 into the local economy through vouchers, cash transfers and CFW. There were differences in where cash and vouchers were spent. The economic benefits of vouchers were concentrated in Masisi centre and amongst participating traders. In comparison the cash transfers resulted in cash being injected more widely into local villages and markets / producers outside of Masisi. According to monitoring of the unconditional cash transfer, 35% of beneficiaries spent more than half of the transfer outside of Masisi, 19% spent half outside of Masisi, and 24% spent none in Masisi. Only 6% spent all of the money in Masisi and 17% spent most of it there. Given the amount of cash provided, and assuming that the same patterns were true for CFW, a rough estimate is that \$111,000 went into the local economies outside of Masisi.

Table 4: Estimate of cash spent outside of Masisi¹²

Where transfer was spent	% beneficiaries	% of unconditional and CFW transfers (\$76) spent outside Masisi (estimate)	Total spent outside Masisi
All outside Masisi	23.6%	100%	\$41,629
Most outside Masisi	34.6%	75%	\$45,775

¹² This estimate is based on a few assumptions. It is based on monitoring data of the unconditional cash transfer, so the first assumption is that CFW was spent in a similar pattern (this is supported by findings in the focus group discussions). The second is that respondents who said that they spent 'most' of the money in or outside of Masisi were referring to about 75% of the cash transfer.

Half outside Masisi	18.6%	50%	\$16,405
Little outside Masisi	16.9%	25%	\$7,453
None outside Masisi	6.3%	0%	\$0
TOTAL	100.0%		\$111,262

Economic benefits also have resulted from increased access to villages because of the improved roads. Several beneficiaries discussed being able to purchase and sell goods because trucks were now passing in areas where they previously had not. Examples were provided of lower transport prices (transporting a box of soap to from Goma to Nyabiondo was 2000 FC prior to the road works and 1000FC after).

Education

The evaluation did not look in depth at how the payment of school fees, which cost 4600 FC per trimester, effected children’s education. Focus group participants stated that children were not ‘chased’ from school, meaning sent home temporarily owing to non-payment of school fees, which might have impacted learning from the standpoint of not falling behind or missing lessons. Education would be an interesting area on which Concern could follow up, examining whether the more consistent payment of school fees during the intervention period resulted in changes for children and teachers.

Protection and gender

Protection refers to the safety, dignity and integrity of affected populations, including risks related to gender. Protection also considers that people who face constraints related to factors like age, health status, family status (e.g. divorced, widowed) and displacement (e.g. IDPs, refugees) might face particular challenges in accessing assistance. The specific challenges faced in the CFW programme related to gender and vulnerable programmes are covered above.

Vulnerable persons

Concern put in place several measures to help people who faced constraints related to age and health. After voucher markets, Concern provided transport for vulnerable beneficiaries, including heavily pregnant women and the elderly, to ensure that they returned home safely and easily. Concern put in place a detailed sensitisation process related to vouchers in order to decrease the chances that older and illiterate persons would face problems, the sensitisation included that they could send a trusted person in their place. Electoral cards were the main ways of proving identity to receive the voucher or cash transfer, but Concern recognised that not everyone had them and created an alternative system whereby the person could answer ‘security questions’ about their household (e.g. their age, the name of their wife). However, some people without ID cards had trouble answering the security questions, especially questions related to age.

Gender and household decision-making

Decision-making on how unconditional cash transfers and vouchers were spent seemed to follow patterns of how households normally make decisions. Monitoring of the cash transfer found that 83% stated that they did a family consultation about how to use the cash, though in several focus groups men and women indicated that the man always had the last word in the decisions (a male focus group participant said to the male facilitator, ‘What do you think, that the woman will decide? She will say what she thinks and the husband is the one who makes the final decision’; one woman expressed that ‘there are still things left in women’s hearts, things they wanted but did not get’). Widows described that they made decisions on their own and in discussion with their children. Focus group discussants indicated similar patterns of consultation for the vouchers. Concern did not specify who in the household would receive the voucher, focus groups described that women often

went as household needs are her domain. In addition there was a general impression that women were the intended beneficiaries of Concern's activities.

There were nuances in how decisions were made amongst vouchers, cash transfers and CFW. Vouchers require the most planning ahead of the distribution because of the limited time period in which to redeem them. Monitoring found that 89% decided what to buy ahead of the fair. At the same time, several of those consulted said that there was more potential for the person redeeming the vouchers to make spontaneous purchases because they would come across items that they had not even considered in discussions. Some men expressed being relieved when the spouse stuck to the agreed purchases (one stated, 'I was happy that my wife did not forget my pair of trousers'). A small number of women said that they took advantage of being the voucher recipient to make purchases that they felt were most important for the household, such as school fees.

The planning for the unconditional cash transfer was more flexible as cash did not need to be spent at once and therefore all of the planning did not need to be done in advance. Several people said that they undertook planning after they received the money ('I took the cash home and then we decided what to do with it'); similarly some had decided with their spouses to buy 'Masisi' items like oil and then took the rest home. Again, some women who retrieved the cash profited from that role to make some household purchases in Masisi that had not been agreed in advance. Women in focus groups expressed that the general decision-making patterns (e.g. who had the final word) were the same for cash and vouchers.

In contrast to the voucher and cash transfers, when married women worked, they typically had more control of the money earned compared to the unconditional cash transfers and vouchers (as one man said, 'women imposed their decisions'). While keeping in mind the many different reasons for the high rate of female participation in CFW, several women expressed being able to control the cash was a reason for their participation, particularly wives in polygamous households who wanted the money to go to their own household and not that of the other wife. These findings are consistent with theories on systems of household resource allocation, whereby the way income arrives in the household (e.g. who earns it, whether it is a gift) affects how it is allocated.

The assistance did not appear to cause any tensions in households, in fact it the opposite was true because households were able to meet their needs and purchase items that made life more comfortable. Several beneficiaries expressed that there was more joy ('We danced the night of the fair'). One focus group recipient suggested that there were some exceptions, stating that 'for households where the husband and wife hear one another it is a good thing. The others will always have problems'.

Security

Concern took into account security risks in the design and implementation of the programme. Security for staff and beneficiaries was a consideration in Concern's decision to not provide more of the assistance in cash, and Concern delayed implementation owing to the activities of armed groups in the region.

Monitoring of the cash transfer found that 12% of beneficiaries faced problems on the road, mainly being stopped at barriers and having to pay informal taxes; 1.7% of beneficiaries stated that they were robbed. Once home to their villages, 96% indicated that they did not have any security problems with the cash, 3% faced harassment or theft by the military or armed actors. For the vouchers, focus group recipients reported that they had concerns about carrying the purchases back to their homes, but that there were few problems. One group reported that a small group of women carrying their purchases were pursued by armed bandits into the forest; one of them was caught

and beaten. As with the cash transfers, there was some harassment at road barriers. A man crossed a road barrier playing the radio that he bought; the guards told him that he was not allowed to play music and insisted that he pay \$5.

Concern was by and large aware of the security incidents that occurred and had taken protection measures beforehand by paying the cash transfers only on market days. Concern contacted local armed groups to request that they not rob beneficiaries. This is not as far-fetched as it might first appear; local armed groups portray themselves as defenders of the local population even though they prey on them.

It appears that one village (Lushebere) was pillaged the night of the voucher market. Concern had been concerned about this risk because of the pillaging of a nearby village and previous attacks on Lushebere. Concern therefore had consulted with village leaders and other key informants in Lushebere about whether it was safe enough to go ahead with the voucher activities. They assured Concern that it was. It seems that they deliberately downplayed risks for fear of discouraging assistance. One man who had indicated that there was a risk was hurriedly silenced by the others in the group; when Concern staff tried to get more information from him away from the others, the man indicated that he would have problems if he said anything to discourage the assistance. In fact, only two of the four groups consulted for the evaluation in Lushebere even stated that there was pillaging in response to direct questions about security problems – the groups of women and non-beneficiaries discussed the pillaging; the men and leaders said that there were no security problems. This suggests that there remain concerns about letting NGOs now about instances of insecurity for fear of diminishing chances of getting assistance in the future.

Concern took a different approach in another village, delaying their participation in the voucher market because of increased activities of nearby rebels. The reasons were communicated to the village. Subsequently representatives of the village came to the Concern office in Masisi and insisted that the assistance be provided. Aware that the reason for the delay had to do with the presence of the armed group, some people in the village were increasingly interacting with the rebels and accusing them of ruining their chances of receiving aid. Faced with the possibility of escalating tensions between the villages and rebels, Concern promptly took steps to provide the vouchers.

Both of these examples show that leaders and those they represent will not tolerate Concern 'leaving them behind' for security reasons. It would be reasonable to draw the conclusion that these people have a higher tolerance for security risks compared to aid agencies. This is probably the case, but there is a more subtle finding about trade-offs between different risks. Affected populations face a broad range of risks to their lives and livelihoods – not just those related to security. They place significant importance on the risk that they will not meet their household's basic needs (a risk that assistance goes a long way in addressing). Thus they are willing to increase risks related to security in order to decrease risks related to general household welfare.

Between cash and vouchers, which form of assistance was the 'riskiest'? Most of those consulted expressed that vouchers posed more security risks because of the high visibility of transporting the items purchased. A common theme with the explanations is that the assistance that is the most visible is the most risky (not just physically visible, as knowledge about cash distributions and who receives cash is a form of visibility). Two focus groups of men felt that cash was the riskiest for this reason – none of the groups of women expressed this view.

The Concern office in Masisi and Concern vehicles, which transport the cash from Goma, were not robbed. However, there are evident risks to Concern staff associated with transporting, storing and distributing so much money. Quarterly monitoring reports to OFDA detail numerous instances of

armed robbery in Masisi. The fact that Concern did not face a major security incident should in no way be interpreted as meaning that robbery and violence are not serious risks for Concern staff.

Tension in the village

Targeting caused relatively serious intra-village tensions and problems for leaders because some people received aid and some people did not. In Lushebere, non-beneficiaries were particularly upset that the assistance attracted pillaging, since they had the double problem of not benefiting and some of them getting robbed of possessions.

The targeting process made no distinction between those who formerly had been served by Concern and those who had not. As Concern had previously worked in most of these villages, and used relatively similar targeting criteria, many villagers have watched as their neighbours received assistance through fairs, market vouchers, cash transfers and CFW while they received nothing. There was a small amount of sharing with non-beneficiaries, but only small things like sachets of salt and soap that had been purchased with the cash and vouchers.

These problems were more serious than hard feelings on behalf of those left out. Leaders in several of the sites reported that the assistance had undermined their authority as they could no longer make demands on non-beneficiaries to participate in community works. The village chief in Kasopo, who had accompanied the staff during registration, was attacked; he subsequently left his post as chief because of all the problems. One chief expressed that, 'These problems don't end up with Concern. They fall on us leaders.'

Box 2: Quotes on intra-village tensions resulting from the targeting of assistance

'Assistance is supposed to reduce problems but it caused them'

'Friendship doesn't exist between women anymore'

'It will cause war if Concern targets again'

'When a Concern truck got stuck, we [leaders] asked people to help them. They said "go get the people who got assistance"'

Efficiency

Efficiency considers the cost of alternative approaches to achieving the same output. Owing to the time available, this evaluation did not conduct a detailed cost analysis. However, the analysis done by Aker compared unconditional cash transfers and multisectoral fairs, finding that cash transfers were much more efficient. The marginal cost of the voucher programme was USD \$14.35 per recipient, whereas for the cash programme it was USD \$11.34. In that programme, the cash was provided by a financial institution, which charged \$3 per beneficiary to open an account. The analysis found that staff time was the largest percentage of costs for both modalities, followed by transport and voucher printing (for the voucher intervention) and account-opening fees (for the cash intervention, which would not have applied to the 2012-2013 emergency programme) (2012). Both cash and vouchers are more efficient than CFW given the substantial amount of time required to organise labourers (however, this does not compare 'like for like' as CFW has a different objective and the benefits of road access are not easily quantifiable).

Compared to fairs, market vouchers are more efficient as they involve less staff time to organise and implement. In addition to the staff distributing the vouchers, the implementation of the market voucher activities requires approximately six Concern staff to assist beneficiaries through the process for the first week while fairs involved nearly the entire staff of the Concern Masisi office, effectively putting all other operations on hold (Smith, 2013).

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall the findings indicate that Concern's emergency response was appropriate and effective in meeting a wide range of needs facing households affected by conflict in Masisi. Given the delays caused by insecurity, Concern did an admirable job in providing the assistance within the one-year programme cycle. This is a testament to the commitment and flexibility of Concern staff, who operate in a setting characterised by insecurity, poor infrastructure and significant humanitarian needs. An important exception is that the targeting process for CFW was not appropriate, and that in general the targeting of assistance was problematic.

The programme design reflected Concern's previous experience and learning in Masisi, where Concern has delivered numerous types of cash-based assistance since 2008. Concern has increased the flexibility of programming over time – from the tightly controlled fairs in 2008 to substantially more flexible market vouchers and cash transfers. This is a positive evolution as it enables beneficiaries to use the assistance for diverse needs and tailor it to their individual priorities. While some elements of programme design have changed, there has been a tendency to repeat certain aspects of programming from the previous year, namely the total value of the transfers, without clear reasoning as to why this amount is determined to be the most appropriate approach.

The logic of the transfer value should always be tied to the objective. In this case the transfer value was sufficient for making a wide variety of essential expenditures. Could Concern have provided less money and still achieved its objective? This is a relevant question given the consensus in the villages and camps that Concern should have assisted more people with less money. However, when objectives are broadly about meeting household needs, there is no one right answer on setting the value. In the case of this programme, the transfers needed to be large enough to enable households to respond to basic needs (e.g. household items, clothing), pay for school fees and ideally to invest in productive assets. The costs of sample items and school fees is a starting point, but at the end of the day a judgement must be made about how much money should be provided.

Individual transfers should be large enough to enable planning and accommodate larger purchases (e.g. pagnes, metal sheeting, small livestock). With the benefit of hindsight, providing fewer larger, cash transfers (as opposed to four smaller ones) would have been a more appropriate. Rather than a 'net' people want a 'boost' through large enough sums to respond to multiple household needs and potentially invest.¹³ Concern is planning to provide cash transfers to support resilience as part of another programme, and this finding has implications for that programme as well.

Concern did not seriously consider modifying transfer sizes and beneficiary numbers. This is not surprising as agencies have an obligation to fulfil the commitments to donors that they made in proposals. At the same time, there is a responsibility to step back and verify that the assumptions underpinning the programming logic – from the amounts provided to the way that they are provided to who gets them – all still make sense as the programme moves along. In the event that initial assumptions do not hold correct, it is then up to staff to decide whether to modify the programme as appropriate. It is difficult to imagine that a seasoned donor like ODFA in DRC would object to changes based on well reasoned arguments about how best to assist people. However, in this case, doubling the number of beneficiaries would have been unrealistic as the direct provision of cash and

¹³ In examining lump sum transfers, Farrington found that lump sum transfers work better in post-emergency than development contexts because in post-emergency contexts the emphasis tends to be on the replacement of assets with which the recipients are familiar, so that there is a good 'fit' between actual and intended spending patterns, and to ensure that re-investment in productive assets has good prospects of generating acceptable economic returns (2008).

vouchers by Concern in Masisi had already stretched its capacity and the programme faced delays due to insecurity.

Concern's decision to provide cash and vouchers was not meant as an experiment to compare different types of assistance, but it is insightful for revealing nuances related to effectiveness, impact and protection. There are three main differences:

- *Spending patterns:* Cash is spent on the widest range of goods; food and school fees were the largest and more frequent uses of the cash transfer; vouchers went mainly to household goods and school fees (the timing and order in which the transfers were received also played a role in influencing spending patterns; vouchers were received first);
- *Impacts:* Cash, whether received through CFW or unconditional transfers, results in more money going into villages and markets outside of Masisi; the spending and benefits of vouchers are concentrated in Masisi and specifically amongst participating traders (and while not covered by the evaluation, NFI items are purchased in Goma, benefiting Goma-based traders);
- *Risks:* Cash is more discreet compared to items purchased with vouchers, which are highly visible when beneficiaries are walking on the road from Masisi to their villages and camps.

It is important to not assume that the discreetness of cash makes it inherently less risky in the Masisi context as the findings show that risk is strongly linked to visibility. Vouchers resulted in the highest visibility because people were carrying items like mattresses, clothing, saucepans and metal sheeting. Even if Concern had provided 100% of the assistance in cash, it is probable that people would have bought some of these items in Masisi as they needed them and they are not all available near their villages. Visibility is also a function of awareness about who is receiving assistance and when they receive it. As Concern assists more people with cash through this its emergency programming and through the UNICEF-funded ARCC, awareness of the activities and therefore visibility and risk will inevitably increase. Households appear quite willing to take these risks; for them the bigger risk is getting left out of assistance.

The flexibility, discreetness, impacts and majority preference for cash all make cash transfers the preferred way of helping beneficiaries to replace assets, invest in their homes, meet basic needs and invest in livelihoods. Their appropriateness though will always be context-specific. New intervention areas might face different issues related to market access, and office capacity and security will remain important limitations to how far Concern can take unconditional cash transfers in Masisi.

Concern and other humanitarian agencies are currently considering how they can encourage mobile money service providers to operate in Masisi. Any in-roads that can be made to shifting the storage and delivery of cash away from Concern to private sector delivery agents, whether they are mobile money agents or financial institutions, would be hugely important in minimising the risks to Concern staff and increasing the use of unconditional transfers where appropriate. The security risks for robbery of Concern offices and vehicles are real and will only increase as Concern does more cash programming.

In the future, where the use of cash transfers is hampered by delivery mechanisms, risk or the specific characteristics of new intervention areas, vouchers remain an appropriate alternative or complement to cash transfers. Where vouchers are provided, Concern should not discourage the exchange of vouchers for cash. The exchange rates are not exorbitant and at the end of the day it is up to beneficiaries to decide whether exchanging money is worth it. Concern could try bringing order to the process by working with specific traders and designating exchange rates. This might increase transparency but raises issues about identifying traders carrying large volumes of cash and

adding a new layer of bureaucracy that creates more work for Concern. Concern could partially officialise the practice by letting traders and beneficiaries know that exchanging vouchers for cash is acceptable and asking that traders report the amounts exchanged.

Digital data collection tools mean that Concern can continue to explore interesting questions related to effectiveness and impact. Rather than only asking for a list of the items that beneficiaries purchased with vouchers and cash transfers, Concern should consistently investigate the proportion of money spent on different goods. In the most basic form this can be done by asking what the first largest use of the transfer was, the second largest, etc. A second option is to ask for a breakdown of how the cash and vouchers were spent (e.g. not just that a *pagne* was purchased, but that 12,000FC was spent on the *pagne*). This is relatively straightforward for vouchers. It is less accurate for cash transfers because the money provided by Concern cannot be entirely separated out from other forms of income. A third option would get around this challenge. Concern could do data collection of baseline household expenditure patterns and follow up with questions on expenditure patterns the month that the transfer was received, in order to get a more accurate picture of how marginal income was spent (which is different than asking people how a transfer was used as it takes into account how overall household expenditure patterns change). However, Concern should consider that this approach would be time-consuming and challenged by the ability of beneficiaries to accurately recall spending patterns.

The challenges faced in the CFW programme have less to do with the work requirement per se and more to do with how the programme was designed and implemented. These challenges could be addressed by separating CFW from the voucher and unconditional transfer activities, targeting people and households capable of undertaking manual labour and portraying CFW as work and not assistance to beneficiaries. There are tensions between the apparent negative repercussions that the labour requirements might have for women in fulfilling their other household duties and the desire of women to be included so that they can earn money.

Lessons have emerged on the market voucher approach that will be useful for Concern's future programming. Even if Concern's assumptions that market vouchers might be spent over time were not correct, on the whole they are preferable to fairs as they provide more choice for beneficiaries and require less administration and staff time. Concern should include secondary schools in voucher activities. If beneficiaries and school directors both want secondary schools to be included then it is arbitrary for Concern to exclude them, assuming that their inclusion does not create any large administrative burdens. If donors are concerned that secondary schooling is not 'humanitarian', then there is the argument that the payment of those fees frees up income that can be used for other household needs that are within the donors remit (e.g. food, household items) and mitigates the need for households to take on debt.

The most significant weakness of the intervention was targeting. Specifically, because only 54% of the surveyed households were included; households that were equally poor or marginally less poor were excluded. This had repercussions for them and also created tensions in villages between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and between leaders and non-beneficiaries. Concern was aware of these challenges and is seeking to rectify them in the next programming cycle, first by creating a new sub-base in Masisi that will allow them to work in new areas and second by revisiting its targeting process.

Targeting is a perennial challenge. As described by Maxwell and Burns, targeting is essentially a game in which different players have different incentives, and each is trying to gauge the intentions of the other (2008). It is difficult to imagine a more challenging context than eastern DRC, where populations are aid aware and take all possible steps to be included, and where in some cases local

leaders' credibility towards their own populations is on the line. The findings show a tension between transparency (i.e. informing beneficiaries of the targeting criteria and involving them in targeting) on the one hand and trying to avoid fraud on the other. Given that households quickly figured out the targeting criteria anyway and began hiding assets, and the negative consequences of the lack of transparency, Concern should err on the side of transparency and community participation. Digital registration tools might reduce potential for fraud by including GPS coordinates for huts that can then be verified, making it harder for ghost beneficiaries to be included.

Given the pervasive poverty and negative repercussions of targeting about half of the camp and village inhabitants, Concern should follow the advice of the local populations and help more people in the target villages even if that means giving less. Blanket or 'nearly blanket' (i.e. vast majority) targeting makes the most sense because there appears to be a very flat wealth distribution in the areas where Concern operates, and targeting creates tensions that might have longer-term negative impacts on intra-village relations and undermine informal safety nets and institutions (e.g. participation in community works). The 'dwelling quality' criteria seems to be an appropriate proxy indicator for household poverty, but efforts to exclude the small percentage of 'better off' might not be worth the time and resources since those people might have the connections and power to be capable of getting their names onto lists regardless.

Concern has been implementing emergency assistance in Masisi for six years; prompting the question of whether there is room to provide more meaningful support to livelihoods and more generally have a longer-term vision of assistance. Concern's upcoming UNICEF-funded programme will use a resilience lens and might shed more light on these possibilities. However, there are legitimate questions about how much further Concern can go in its humanitarian programming given the constraints in security and access, including the unpredictability of how access will change over time. The shift to emergency response from livelihoods programming was owing to the security deterioration in Masisi, which continues to the present day. By providing flexible assistance through cash and vouchers that increases people's incomes and options, Concern is engaged in livelihoods provisioning (meeting basic needs through providing access to goods and services), livelihoods protection (protecting assets and preventing negative outcomes), and to a lesser extent livelihoods promotion (improving strategies and assets).¹⁴ One possibility is for Concern to examine how it might engage in more livelihood promotion, including its current approach to demonstration plots and if there are other options for supporting agricultural livelihoods.

A final conclusion is that providing humanitarian assistance in DRC is hard. This is an obvious finding but one worth highlighting, because efforts to improve assistance can only move forward if they are realistic. The findings show that staff must navigate trade-offs between transparency and risks of fraud; between Concern's risks and beneficiaries' risks; and between Concern's humanitarian principles of assisting the most vulnerable and the firm beliefs of local people that all should be reached in the context of immense poverty and potential discord in villages. Concern should encourage its staff to be open about the tensions and dilemma faced in interventions, where often there is no 'right' solution. This evaluation speaks to Concern's commitment to learning and improving programming, which is an important element of navigating these challenges

Recommendations

General

- Provide cash transfers rather than vouchers to the extent that this is appropriate / feasible (related to capacity, security, market access, etc.) – and recognise the different risks that different transfers pose to staff and beneficiaries.

¹⁴ These classifications of livelihoods interventions come from Jaspars and Maxwell (2009)

- Examine NFI assistance in camps, specifically the disconnect between the type and value of assistance being provided in official camps compared to other areas.

Cash transfers

- Individual transfers should be sufficiently large (e.g. \$30+) to enable beneficiaries to meet a variety of their needs and invest to the extent that they can (i.e. large and lumpy transfers as opposed to small and frequent).
- Continue to explore options that would decrease the direct role of Concern as cash distributor, including mobile money providers, and approach other humanitarian agencies to see if there are options for collectively encouraging the engagement of new financial service providers in Masisi.
- Continue to keep the pulse on risk and protection; including only providing cash on market days when beneficiaries blend in with others travelling to markets.

Cash for work

- Continue with CFW in areas that need increased access.
- Separate out CFW from other activities and base the activities and targeting process on the primary objective of road rehabilitation and increased access; the goal of the targeting process should not be to identify the most vulnerable households as they are least likely to have surplus labour.
- Do not employ elderly persons who lack the physical strength to undertake the work.
- Ensure that CFW remains open to women with tasks and hours that are appropriate for them.
- Do not use indicators of female participation; take a gender sensitive approach by understanding the specific constraints facing men and women when it comes to participating in CFW.

Vouchers

- All factors being equal, implement market vouchers over fairs, but as new programming areas are further from Masisi, Concern will need to determine which approach is most appropriate.
- Continue with sensitisation and reinforce the message that people who might have difficulty understanding the voucher system should be accompanied by someone that they trust (and that they should not solicit help from strangers but rather approach Concern staff); explain why pages are taken out of the voucher booklet to avoid the suspicion that fraud has taken place.
- Continue to look turn a blind eye to the exchange of vouchers for cash and consider whether or not to bring some order to this practice.
- Continue to encourage the participation of a large number of traders by keeping the criteria for inclusion basic.
- Include secondary schools in fairs, and if this is contrary to donor rules and expectations then advocate donors for their inclusion on the basis that the payment of secondary school fees frees up money that can be used on goods and services that fall within the donor's mandate.

Targeting

- Help more people within each target site even if that means giving less – do blanket or near blanket targeting in the individual camps and villages.
- Explore ways that digital registration tools might reduce potential fraud (e.g. by including the GPS coordinates of registered huts and undertaking random verifications); while recognising that fraud risks in the targeting process can never be eliminated given the creative ways that people will find to get around systems.

Gender, protection and risk

- Continue with the protection measures put in place in 2012/13, including dialogue with armed groups, consulting with beneficiaries about protection risks and providing transport for elderly and other vulnerable persons from the market in the case of vouchers.
- Review current security plans to ensure that they are appropriate to cover the possibility of an armed robbery of the Concern Masisi office.
- Put a contingency plan in place to switch to vouchers from cash transfers if risks to Concern staff and installations become too high.
- For security questions that people lacking IDs must answer, only use questions that they are likely to remember and avoid ones related to age; emphasise during the registration process that households without ID cards need to remember the answer and should let the Concern staff know if that might pose a problem.

Monitoring

- Ask about the proportion of transfers spent on different goods (for cash) and provide the cost of each item purchased with vouchers.
- Continue to take advantage of the new digital data collection to ask questions that enable a broad understanding of effectiveness, impact and risk, such as where cash was spent, household decision-making and security issues.

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Annex 1: Focus groups and people consulted

The sites and types of participants in the group discussions and interviews are detailed in the below table. The group discussions were facilitated by the Concern and Pacodevi staff who participated in the evaluation fieldwork; they took an average of 1.5 hours. A focus group questionnaire was developed by the evaluator and modified based on input from Concern and Pacodevi staff. The other interviews were conducted by the evaluator.

Sites	Groups	Beneficiary		Non-benef*		Leaders		Total people
		M	F	M	F	M	F	
Bushani IDP camp	4	8	20	13	0	8	3	52
Loashi	5	3	13	8	6	2	1	33
Lushebere	4	7	14	7	8	4	0	40
Kautu	4	4	1	6	5	7	1	24
Ngesha	4	12	10	9	15	9	0	55
Total	21	34	58	43	34	30	5	204
Name	Function							
Gabrielle Smith	Social Protection Advisor, Concern Worldwide (London)							
Sharon Commins	Desk Office - DRC and Uganda (Dublin)							
Saul Butters	Emergency Programming Manager, Concern Worldwide (Masisi)							
Steven Michel	Emergency Project Officer, UNICEF (Kinshasa)							
Trader 1**	Trader participating in vouchers (Masisi)							
Trader 2**	Trader participating in vouchers (Masisi)							
Trader 3**	Trader participating in vouchers (Masisi)							
Trader 4**	Trader participating in vouchers (Masisi)							

*In all sites but Bushani male and female non-beneficiaries were in the same group.

**Traders were told that their names would not be used in an effort to encourage openness on profits and challenges.

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Baseline survey results

Post-voucher market survey results

Endline survey

Masisi map

OFDA current proposal and interim reports

Masisi Contextual Analysis 2011

External evaluation report (Lee Crawford, OPM 2012)

DRC country programme Plan 2013

External evaluation report (Sarah Bailey, ODI 2009)

MDF 2009 evaluation

Concern / Tufts Operational Research Examining Differences between Cash and Vouchers (Jenny Aker, 2012)

DRC Security Management Plan

Concern DRC Welcome Pack

Concern Programme Participant Protection Policy

Social Protection and Safety Nets Advisor Visit Report (internal report, 2013)

Protection Advisor Visit Report

Post-Fair Monitoring

Cash distribution monitoring