

# Evaluating Concern’s Emergency Responses



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### 1. Background

Concern is committed to the *systematic analysis and assessment of all of its projects and programmes*<sup>1</sup>, focusing on their planning, design, implementation and impact<sup>2</sup>. All of our programmes should be evaluated at least every three years, or within their lifetime if their lifespan is less than this.

The March 2018 *Approach to Emergencies* paper requires that we evaluate all emergency responses at the appropriate level, use standard templates to ensure the correct issues are considered, and that a sufficient body of evaluations is generated to allow for the regular development of meta-evaluations to identify common issues and challenges. In short, we must evaluate and seek to learn from all of our responses, and be open to the external sharing of any lessons identified for learning that might be derived from them<sup>3</sup>.

The emergency response meta evaluation for the period between 2013 and 2016 highlighted that we responded to 160 emergencies in 26 countries in this period, but that a large number of country programmes did not appear to be evaluating their emergency responses. Of the countries that reported undertaking responses, only 16 of them produced evaluations, with four country programmes (Haiti, Pakistan, Malawi and Kenya) responsible for almost half of the total – 17 of the 36 - evaluations included in the review.<sup>4</sup> This profile of evaluations meant that the meta-evaluation may have offered a somewhat skewed picture of the nature of Concern’s work, and it is highly probable that important learning was not captured.

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<sup>1</sup> A programme is a group of related projects managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits not available from managing the projects individually. A programme may also include elements of ongoing operational work. So, a programme is comprised of multiple projects and is created to obtain broad common objectives – *Concern’s Programme Quality Guide*.

<sup>2</sup> *Evaluating emergency interventions - towards good practice*, Emergency Unit, February 2009.

<sup>3</sup> *Approach to Emergencies*, Emergency Directorate, February 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 36 evaluations reviewed, 18 were commissioned by Concern and 18 were undertaken by consortia but included aspects of Concern’s emergency response.

With such a large proportion of emergency interventions not being evaluated, the question emerges whether there are specific types of interventions being largely excluded. Two of these are those that are very small and localised in nature, and more protracted complex emergencies. In terms of the latter category, the question also arises as to whether we should be evaluating the response in its entirety, spread over a number of years, or only specific components of the response such as camp management, nutrition, WASH, etc.

Evaluations of emergency responses can differ considerably from other forms of evaluation in that:

- the operating environment can be incredibly challenging due to the chaos on the ground in the aftermath of the disaster – or that, in a complex emergency context, the chaos may be sustained over a protracted period of time
- there is a high level of urgency required to assess, plan, design and implement responses quickly
- there is often a lack of baseline data available, especially if we have had no prior presence in the area or country, or if there has been significant displacement of people
- there are often significant security and access constraints
- in the larger scale responses, there is often a high turnover of staff resulting in a lack of institutional memory

## 2. Evaluation principles and approaches

Evaluations of emergency responses require *the systematic and impartial examination of humanitarian action, intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability*.<sup>5</sup> This definition will guide the principles and approaches outlined below.

**Frequency** – all programmes must be evaluated at least every three years. In the event that a programme intervention is completed within this timeframe, as may occur with some emergency responses, an end of programme evaluation be conducted in a timely manner.

**Format** – there are many evaluation types and managers are urged to select the one that best suits the response. Evaluations may focus on a policy, function, programme, project, practice or set of procedures, or be a meta-evaluation seeking to aggregate learning from a range of evaluations in relation to programme experience or changes in good practice guidance. Evaluations may be conducted at an early stage of an operation (in ‘real-time’), at the mid-point or upon completion. Evaluations may be internal, external or a hybrid using internal and external evaluators.

**Evaluators** – while recognising the value of external, or external-led evaluations, we also acknowledge the commonly accepted constraints in relation to the exclusive use of external evaluators. If Concern staff are to be part of an evaluation team, they must not have engaged in the delivery of the response.

**Transparency** – evaluations will be conducted openly and the executive summaries of all external evaluations will be placed on the Concern website for public access.<sup>6</sup> There will be a tendering process for external evaluations.

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<sup>5</sup> Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria, ALNAP ODI, March 2006.

<sup>6</sup> In certain contexts, to safeguard our programme participants, the exact locations of where we work will not be identified in evaluation reports or placed in the public domain.

Independence – all evaluations will be conducted in an independent manner and carried out by persons who have not had a direct role in the implementation of the response being evaluated. Neither the evaluators nor their reports should be subject to the control or interference by Concern staff or Board.

Consultation – the views of beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and other key stakeholders (authorities, NGOs, donors, UN, etc.) of the intervention must be sought in the course of the evaluation.

Terms of reference – while some aspects of evaluations will be generic, separate and specific terms of reference must be developed for each evaluation. These terms of reference must be informed by the extended DAC criteria for emergency responses.<sup>7</sup> They will also identify the background to and rationale for the response; the main objective and scope of the evaluation; the primary issues and questions to be addressed; the evaluation criteria and methodology to be employed; the expected deliverables; an indicative timeframe; and the requirement for the inclusion of the views of beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and other key stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria – consistent with the fact that we are signatories to a range of external codes and good practice guidelines, we will ensure that evaluations take into consideration the relationship between the programme design and intervention and the performance standards against which we have committed ourselves – the Red Cross Code of Conduct<sup>8</sup>, Sphere<sup>9</sup>, the extended DAC principles<sup>10</sup>, the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)<sup>11</sup> and any appropriate standards for the specific programme sector being evaluated.

Donor requirements – it may be a donor requirement that an evaluation is undertaken upon completion of a major emergency intervention. The need for this should be considered at the time of programme and budget development. Some donors (such as the DEC) stipulate the requirement for the external evaluation of responses in which there has been an element of DEC funding, and for agencies to make these evaluations available on their websites. On a rotational basis within its members, the DEC also posts the executive summaries of these evaluations on its own website.

### 3. Evaluation Types

The depth and breadth of each evaluation will be informed by the size and scale of the intervention, and four potential types of evaluation are proposed:

1. In-country wash-up led by a member of the Country Management Team (CD or PD/Emergency Director). This type of evaluation is generally short in duration (up to half a day), can include a quick review of quantitative data available at the end of the humanitarian programme and a guided reflection on lessons to be learned from and constraints encountered in the response.

2. Externally led wash-ups can be led by Concern staff from outside of the country of intervention who have not been involved in the response. This is generally conducted in-country but may also be

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<sup>7</sup> See Section 4 below; Concern's Approach to Emergencies paper of March 2018 and OECD DAC's [Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies](#).

<sup>8</sup> The [Code of Conduct](#) of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief

<sup>9</sup> See specifically [The Sphere Handbook](#)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#)

done at organisational level to look at decisions made at head office level around scaling up the response.

3. Independent led evaluations can be led by or include Concern staff from outside of the country of intervention. This type of evaluation is generally longer than a wash-up and can involve a desk review, quantitative and qualitative data collection and direct field observation.

4. Independent led external evaluations must be led by someone who does not work for Concern and who was not involved in the delivery or implementation of the response. Evaluations of larger emergency responses may typically include a team of two, led by an external evaluator, with the potential to include a Concern staff member who has not been involved in the delivery or implementation of the response.

To assist in deciding what type of evaluation should be undertaken, the following guidelines can be used, but not be limited by: the timeframe or duration of the response; its geographical reach; its size (in terms of numbers and financial expenditure); and the number of sectors included in the response. In addition, contractual agreements with donors may require that a specific form of evaluation should be undertaken.

<b>Criteria</b> <b>Type of Evaluation</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Geographical spread</b>	<b>Number of people affected</b>	<b>Sectors</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
In-country wash-up	Up to three months	One small area or ward	< 50,000	One	< €250,000
External led wash-up	Up to six months	One or two areas/wards up to district level	50,000 to 100,000	One or more	€250,000 to €500,000
Independent led evaluation	Up to one year	More than two areas/wards provincial / regional	100,000 to 500,000	One or more	€500,000 to €1,000,000
Independent led external evaluation	More than one year	Multiple areas/wards national / cross border	> 500,000	Multiple	> €1,000,000

Further guidance in relation to the questions that should be considered in the different levels of evaluation are included on Annexe 1.

#### 4. What are the evaluations looking to report on?

Our programme design and delivery criteria are drawn from the criteria developed by the OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee). These criteria must inform the evaluation of our emergency responses:

<p><b>Relevance</b> is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy). <b>Appropriateness</b> is the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability, and cost-effectiveness accordingly.</p>
<p><b>Coherence</b> is the assessment of relevant policies to ensure that there is consistency and that they take into account humanitarian and human-rights considerations. In conflict</p>

contexts, country programmes may seek to limit the degree of coherence that exists with peace and stabilisation actors.
<b>Coverage</b> involves determining who was supported by humanitarian action, and why. In determining why certain groups were covered or not, a central question is: 'What were the main reasons that the intervention provided or failed to provide major population groups with assistance and protection proportionate to their need?'
<b>Efficiency</b> measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of programme inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output to see whether the most efficient approach has been used. <b>Cost effectiveness</b> is included in this criterion.
<b>Effectiveness</b> measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. <b>Timeliness</b> and <b>Coordination</b> are included in this criterion.
<b>Impact</b> looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical, environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household).
<b>Connectedness</b> refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.

Evaluations of emergency responses should include separate sections covering the following **cross cutting issues and themes**: *equality; protection; HIV/AIDS; partnership; and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)*.

All evaluations should consider these seven criteria and five cross cutting issues and provide an appraisal of how well the emergency intervention has fared against each using the following grading scale, where:

4	outstanding performance
3	performance in line with what would be expected of a well-functioning organisation
2	generally acceptable performance but with some clear, and documented, shortcomings
1	barely acceptable performance with some major shortcomings and reservations
0	totally unacceptable performance or insufficient data to make an assessment

All evaluations must include recommendations on how the response could be (or has been) improved. This will allow for comparison and the identification of potential problems in specific countries and/or sector/system areas, and facilitate the production of meta-evaluations.

These recommendations must be achievable and time-bound. The country management team must develop a *management response* to the evaluation report indicating whether, how and when its recommendations will be addressed.

## 5. Managing the process

Commissioning evaluations of emergency interventions and ensuring that these are of an acceptable standard is the responsibility of the country management team and the relevant RD. Terms of reference for each evaluation must be developed based on the criteria and cross-cutting issues and themes identified above.

A meta-evaluation of emergency responses will be carried out every three years. The findings of these evaluations will be presented to SMT and the PM+E Committee of Concern's Board.

## Annexe 1 - Evaluating Concern's Emergency Responses

When conducting wash-ups or evaluations, consideration must be given to the extended DAC criteria for evaluating emergency responses outlined in Concern's *Approach to Emergencies* paper of March 2018.

Clear Terms of Reference should be developed for all evaluations.

### **Key issues for consideration for in-country or external led wash-ups**

1. Overview of the emergency event and its impact – scale and number of people affected
2. Summary of the response – scale, timeframe, sector(s), staffing, funding, donors, partners
3. Review of the quantitative data available at the end of the response
4. Consider what went well with the response
5. Consider any constraints that emerged during the response
6. Consider what might be done differently next time
7. Identify lessons and learning that could be applied to future responses

Wash-up deliverables to include an outline of key findings and limitations, with clear recommendations that will inform future emergency response in a report of maximum 5-10 pages in length (without appendices)

Organisational level wash-ups that usually take place at head office level following a major response will typically look the areas around coherence, decision making and capacity. They will consider (but will not be limited to) assessment, communications and media, the design of the response, staffing, fundraising, finance, procurement, logistics, and coordination (including cluster engagement).

### **Independent led evaluation and independent led external evaluation**

1. Overview of the emergency event and its impact – scale and numbers affected
2. Summary of the response – scale, timeframe, sector(s), staffing, funding, donors, partners
3. Review of the available quantitative data available at the end of the response
4. Objectives of the Evaluation – to assess in an evidenced based manner the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of the response and its impact; provide an understanding of the relevance of the response and assess the sustainability of the response results
5. Evaluation methodology to be clearly articulated

Evaluation deliverables to include an outline of key findings and limitations, with clear recommendations that will inform future emergency response in a report of maximum 15 -20 pages in length (without appendices).