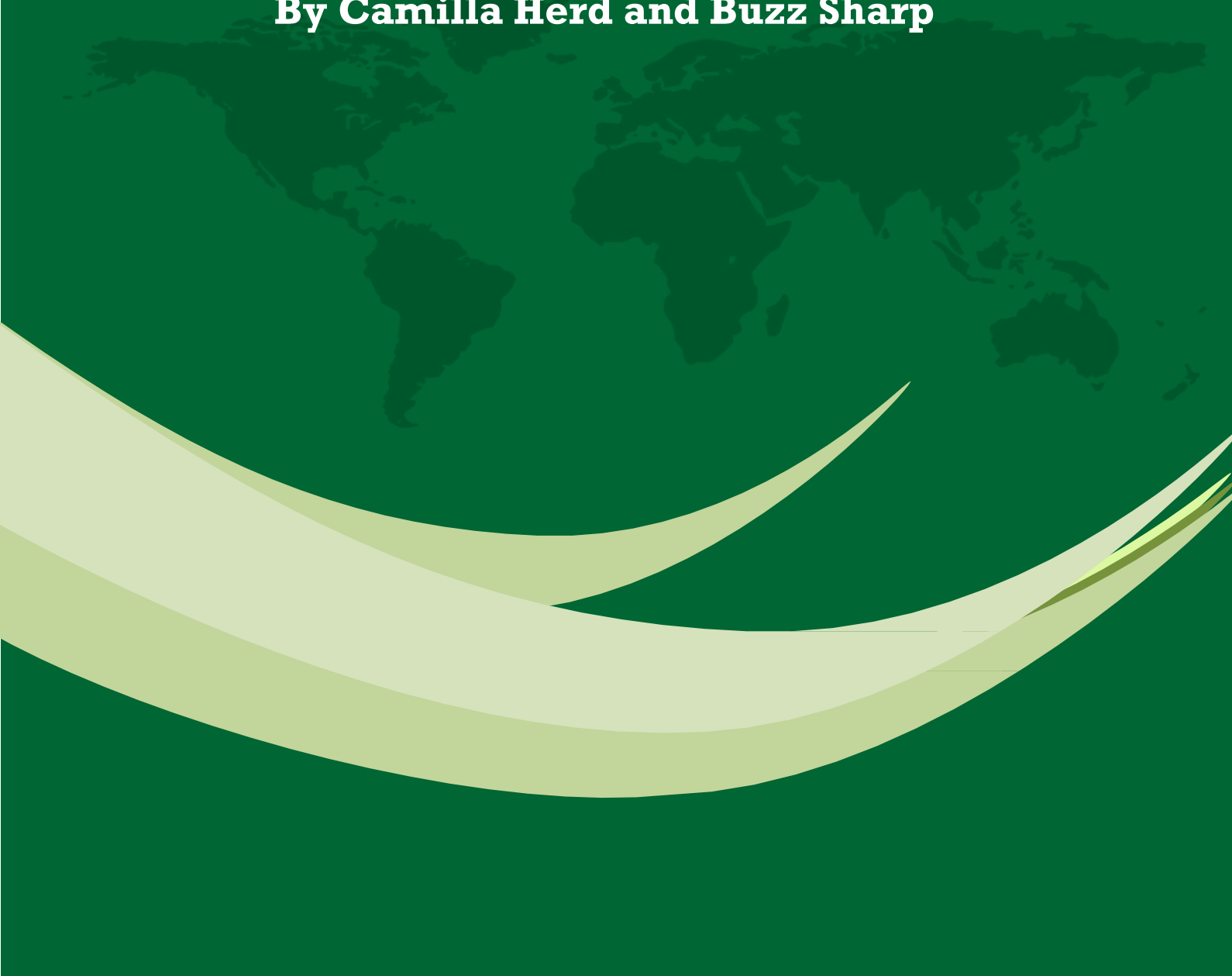


**Evaluation of the Marsabit County  
Emergency Response Programme in  
Kenya**

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## Executive Summary

This evaluation report aims to provide an independent assessment of the impact of Concern's livelihoods emergency response project entitled *Filling the Hunger Gap among mobile livestock keepers affected by extreme drought, and protecting assets in Marsabit County, Kenya*.

The project ran for a period of six months commencing in September 2011 and ending in February 2012. The project was funded by ECHO and implemented and supervised by Concern with on the ground implementation by Concern's local partner, CIFA. The project was initiated against a need assessment derived from the July 2011 Mid-Season Long Rains Assessment (LRA) written by the Kenya food security steering group and its partners.

The project's emergency response was aimed at enhancing immediate food security for vulnerable households and protecting livelihoods from the effect of the drought. Its design directly targeted 5000 vulnerable beneficiaries and their households, including pastoralists who had settled around urban towns and who had limited livestock assets. Target locations were selected across Marsabit County at sites in Marsabit Central, Marsabit North and South. The project design integrated two livelihood and nutrition components under which numerous interventions were implemented, including:

- 1) A food voucher scheme valued at Kes 2500 for 2000 female headed households, delivered by local vendors, aimed at improving immediate food security during the project period and supporting the function of nascent markets in the target locations
- 2) Targeted livestock feeding for 2000 prime cattle selected by 1000 beneficiaries to protect important livestock assets from impacts of drought as a starter in rebuilding herds/flocks
- 3) Community based livestock health programme including refresher training of 100 community animal health workers (CAHWs) and distribution of veterinary kits to CAHWs
- 4) Livestock off-take and slaughter of 9,000 shoats and associated meat distribution to 3,000 vulnerable households as a supply of proteins

During a re-alignment of the project in October 2011, in order to meet emerging needs of the target communities, livestock feeding and the health programme interventions were stopped and additional activities were included:

- 1) Deworming of 100,000 shoats for control of parasites, over achieved with 241,676 shoats
- 2) Purchase, deworming and distribution of 50 bulls to 366 persons from 50 livestock keeper households to support milk production of female livestock and herd restoration
- 3) Cash for work schemes with employment of community member to create and/or rehabilitate and desilt 3 water pans using human labour from the local communities

## Key findings

The evaluation qualitative assessments indicate positive evidence of achievement in project output and results targets as beneficiary households received 30-50% of their monthly food basket value, and the loss of breeding stock was kept under 10% for stock under the livestock feeding intervention, and these livestock acted a starter in rebuilding herds. All other livestock interventions, such as destocking and animal health services, could not be directly linked to protecting the livestock assets of targeted households from impacts of drought and high mortality rates were suspected.

The livestock feeding intervention clearly demonstrated its cost-effectiveness. The evaluation finds it would have been over three times more expensive to purchase new breeding stock at the end of the project compared to the cost of keeping the livestock alive via the project's feeding intervention. In addition, the food voucher achieved in providing a resource base transfer and asset protection mechanism by helping reduce beneficiary debt and, for those with assets, livestock disposal. It was interesting to note that all beneficiaries shared their food rations with relatives and neighbours outside their households according to social custom. Benefits to local vendors were achieved. The Project livelihoods interventions were yet to positively impact food security, however early indications of longer term benefits were evident, such as livestock breeding and pending milk supply.

Regarding the project design, given the emergency situation the evaluation finds the project's performance in identifying beneficiary needs and priorities for all project interventions was appropriate in relying on secondary data from the LRA assessments; GoK Nutritional Surveys; the local knowledge and previous experience of Concern and CIFA; and harmonisation with other agency approaches. This level of appropriateness may however be undermined by Concern's and CIFA's lack of livelihood baseline data (such as Household Economy Approach or rapid livelihoods assessments) on which to tailor the general findings (of LRA and GoK Nutritional Survey) more specifically to the project areas. There was limited evidence of beneficiary participation in the design of project interventions as recommended by SPHERE and LEGS. A positive exception was the livestock feeding intervention with beneficiary involvement in design, implementation and monitoring.

The beneficiaries largely perceived the project interventions to be relevant to their immediate needs, customs, contexts, and vulnerable groups, and the project successfully protected the welfare of vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly. The design of the Food Voucher Scheme as a safety net program was appropriate in addressing beneficiary purchasing power as the binding constraint to food security during the emergency and identifying available food supply in retail markets as a mode of food distribution.

The livestock feeding and the food voucher interventions were separately the most preferred project activities with beneficiary requests made for their expansion. Numerous other design recommendations were made by the stakeholders, including expanding the items on the food voucher list to include shoats; 90% stated preference for cash transfer instead; food voucher expansion to cover lean periods for 8-9 months (70% of the year); training and support to develop livestock feed production and storage abilities; animal de-stocking price increase and harmonisation between agencies, improving de-stocking slaughter site facilities and procedures, and increasing the focus on camel rearing in animal health and transport support interventions.

Regarding project implementation, the selection of beneficiaries included positive participation of community leaders in community based targeting, yet there was limited disclosure on monitoring the selection criteria and procedures. There was positive evidence of efficient project implementation mechanisms and compliance with SPHERE standards, for instance efficient and transparent food voucher delivery to beneficiaries via local traders, and relevant and timely project delivery of de-stocking and livestock health activities and compliance with LEGS standards. An exception to timely project delivery as recommended by LEGS was the start of the livestock feeding intervention, due to factors outside project control, such as the time of the official emergency announcement.

Project implementation faced some challenges for instance, at the beginning of the delivery value chain for food voucher where local traders' lack of banking facilities affected access to project reimbursements and restocking of shops and additional challenges were the high transport costs, market price fluctuation/inflation, and record keeping abilities affected by illiteracy. There was both positive and poor performance found regarding project monitoring systems. Positive evidence was evident in efficient monitoring of inputs and some output indicators (delivery of inputs to targeted beneficiaries), yet there was limited evidence of monitoring the outcomes/results/logframe indicators to track the progress in achieving results and purpose. The beginnings of a good monitoring plan was developed yet was found to be too ambitious or simply unused resulting in various aspects of the plan not being implemented, and the activities added during the project's realignment were never included into the project's logframe or monitoring plans. Similarly, there were both positive and a few cases of inadequacy found relating to the capacity of the project's management response to feedback and monitoring data: positive cases included responses to harmonise food voucher values, include beneficiary priority items in food voucher, and to address water needs in the livestock feeding intervention. There were inadequate project responses to delays of food voucher delivery and the poor performance of a vendor.

There was limited evidence or disclosure regarding the project's exit strategies. Beneficiaries reported a sharp decline in their food security status at the end of project. The design of food voucher was made on exiting when milk supply from livestock became available yet as the food voucher beneficiaries were selected on basis of no livestock assets, their link to any milk supply was not clear.

## **Key lessons**

1. The project's mixed method approach in its selection of various types of nutrition and livelihood interventions was a positive attempt to ensure immediate food security, whilst helping households increase livelihood security and increase household independence.
2. Project livestock feeding and the food voucher interventions were prioritised by the beneficiaries. Livestock feeding interventions can be cost-effective. Food interventions prioritising women in households as recipients perform well and are in line with social custom.

3. Whilst reliance on secondary data sources for project needs assessment and design during emergencies enables swift response, both SPHERE and LEGS emphasise the importance of rapid needs assessments and baseline data (livelihoods, nutritional, and coping mechanisms) and full beneficiary participation to enable appropriate design approach and measurement of achievement.
4. Community based targeting of beneficiaries is an effective means to select project beneficiaries yet further disclosure of the guiding principles and monitoring of the process would enhance its value.
5. Partnering with good local implementation partners, such as CIFA, generates good relationships with beneficiaries and provides good on-the-ground knowledge that can easily be built on, structured and supported to generate high quality livelihoods surveys that would benefit any future design of interventions.
6. The capacity building of project implementing partners is important to facilitate adequate management and response to monitoring data and necessary adjustment of project operations during implementation.
7. The design of the food voucher scheme to address the purchasing power constraints of targeted households reduces food insecurity. The mode of delivery of food voucher services utilising local traders can successfully comply with SPHERE Standards and indicates adequate local retail systems are in place; it is important to harmonise and increase the food voucher value from time to time to protect households from inflation.
8. Project monthly reimbursements to vendors if delayed may subsequently cause delay to delivery of services to beneficiaries if vendors do not have the capacity to make up the gap until payment is received. Vendors' performance needs to be monitored to avoid cases of poor delivery of services. Vendors may face challenges in the early stages of the chain of delivery of services. The inclusion of local traders is likely to benefit local markets in the long-term.
9. The beneficiaries are interested in food vouchers being expanded to include support for livelihood production activities; and are interested in cash vouchers rather than food vouchers. The use of cash vouchers in emergency and humanitarian development is growing, lessons are being learnt that will be useful to Concern and CIFA. There is a potential risk of food interventions becoming embedded as a common livelihood and coping strategy and thus increasing welfare dependency or work disincentives and undermining sustainable community development, as highlighted as a concern by the District Commissioners Office in Marsabit Central.
10. Timing of early livestock feeding interventions at the start of droughts/emergencies is important to saving prime livestock. Destocking interventions can be suitably delivered after the drought has taken affect, yet early interventions help ensure the livestock are in better condition enabling higher quality animals for slaughter and meat distribution and less waste and loss of opportunity. Stakeholders recommended destocking price increase and harmonisation between agencies, and improved slaughter site facilities and procedures.
11. Effective cooperation can be achieved between CIFA and district veterinary & Livestock officers. Adequate agency and government collaboration is important for de-stocking pricing and activities.
12. Livestock surveys and baselines are needed to be able to assess whether other project livestock interventions, such as de-stocking and animal health services, help protect the livestock assets of targeted households from impacts of drought.
13. The longer term contextual issues of food security remain a challenge after interventions stop, and exit strategies are important and need more careful analysis.
14. Any project realignments should be designed with greater participation of beneficiaries and project field staff, and be incorporated into project logframes and monitoring systems. There is good project capacity to conduct efficient project monitoring of inputs and some outputs, yet capacity to measure outputs, results and purpose was lacking.

## Key recommendations

1. Improve beneficiary participation in project design as per the processes outlined by the SPHERE & LEGS standards. For instance, the design of food interventions should consult beneficiaries about their preferences on the type of transfer, recognizing that this might vary from season to season, and between communities located closer to, or further from, well-functioning markets.
2. Continue to use community based targeting as effective means to selecting project beneficiaries but aim to improve the design, disclosure, and monitoring of the selection criteria and procedures. Be aware that Community based targeting may be prone to risks of bias. Consider learning from other Concern country projects, such as Malawi Food interventions, and adopt Concern's community triangulation method for targeting – dividing a community into three groups and debating their lists of needy households in a public forum – avoids the risks of nepotism and elite capture that have undermined other community-based methods.
3. Undertake a livelihoods assessment or Household Economy Approach to increase the achievement of a more informed, appropriate and relevant approach to baseline data capture, ability to identify needs and priorities, and the relevant design of interventions to targeted beneficiaries
4. The design of food interventions should factor in the social customs that beneficiaries share their food rations with relatives and neighbours outside their households
5. Concern and CIFA should continue to base food interventions on women as the main recipients and continue to include other vulnerable individuals as recipients such as elderly men
6. The question of delays in monthly payments/ reimbursements to local traders and their ability to purchase stock should be considered in all future selection criteria of vendors
7. If desired, continue to use local traders as an efficient food delivery mechanism to beneficiaries
8. In any future design of food intervention via local traders, address the challenges faced by traders in the delivery stage, such as the accessibility of the banking system, literacy, and prompt reimbursement to traders by projects. In terms of the mechanism for delivering food to targeted beneficiaries, it may be helpful to view the traders' role, activities and objectives from the perspective of a value chain of delivery, from the procuring the inputs (goods and stock), through organizing them to deliver transfers or services to the beneficiaries, and finally realizing the desired impact (beneficiaries collect commodities from shop and take them home). Every step in this value chain is important for achieving a good cost-benefit ratio, and any failures along the line will have a negative effect on the final result.