Knowledge Matters
Knowledge Base Quarterly Review
Issue 2 April 2012

CONCERN worldwide

Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of Knowledge Matters (KM). I received a lot of feedback with respect to the first issue. It appears that colleagues are very much in support of the initiative, and see it as a step in the right direction with regard to connecting and collecting Concern's knowledge. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the various contributors to this issue and thank colleagues for their feedback.

The opening piece in this issue comes from Uganda. Chris Oyua gives us an insight into how the Uganda country team strengthens their planning, monitoring and evaluation (P,M and E) system. Chris's article sheds light on an area that is increasingly gaining prominence within the humanitarian and development sector.

Gudrun Stallkamp writes an insightful piece on the Re-aligning Agriculture to Improve Nutrition (RAIN) baseline survey experience in Zambia. As a number of countries travel down the road of baseline development under the Irish Aid Programme Funding Scheme, Gudrun's piece could not have come at a more opportune time.

Concern is currently implementing the Innovations project. This is a pilot project testing a range of unconventional solutions aimed at overcoming barriers mothers and infants face in accessing essential, life-saving health services. Ariel Higgins-Steele gives us an insight into how the innovations team are approaching knowledge management and learning.

This issue also contains a mix of evaluation and research news from across the organisation. Gabrielle Smith has completed research on the use of new technologies in cash transfer interventions. The research examines the constraints associated with the uptake of new technologies within the humanitarian arena.

One of the evaluations that is highlighted in this issue is the final evaluation of the Niger food security and nutrition emergency intervention. The evaluation team note that while the multi-sector approach presented an opportunity to increase overall cost-effectiveness, establishing the extent to which Concern was able to exploit such potential was not possible.

I greatly appreciate your views and opinions and keenly encourage you to comment on these articles. I would welcome you to submit any articles that you feel could benefit colleagues. I would also encourage you to share this publication with partners. The next issue of KM is planned for July.

Enjoy the read!

Kai Matturi

Content

CONCERN worldwide

Reflections on Efforts to Strengthen the Planning Monitoring and Evaluation System within Concern Uganda

By *Chris Oyua*

Over the last number of years, there has been an increasing awareness within Concern of the need to strengthen our monitoring and evaluation functions both at global and country level. In Uganda, we have sought to improve our monitoring and evaluation systems and processes through a number of initiatives.

There is now a much stronger link between the country strategic plan, sector strategies, and the annual plans. Each project has a baseline, a Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) plan and progress is measured through quarterly participatory review meetings with partners. Mid-term reviews and final evaluations are now mandatory for each project.

Despite the improvements that have been made a number of challenges still remain. These pertain mainly to aligning and harmonisng the Concern P,M and E system with that of partners, the issue of staff capacity and the quality of consultants. The support of the country management team has been crucial to the ongoing success of improving monitoring and evaluation.

For colleagues, who may be interested in understanding how country teams grapple with M and E, I have produced a case study which sheds more light on some of the issues raised.

Learning from the Baseline Survey for the Realigning Agriculture to Improve Nutrition (RAIN) Project in Zambia

By Gudrun Stallkamp

The Realigning Agriculture to Improve Nutrition (RAIN) project conducted its household baseline survey in Mumbwa District, Central Province in mid 2011. The survey was the initial part of the overall impact evaluation that the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), are conducting; they will conduct an end-line survey in 2015, which will be almost identical to the baseline. Concern Worldwide and IFPRI jointly began the survey preparations in late 2010 to prepare documents for ethical approval. The questionnaire was adapted to the context in the project area, Mumbwa District.

The design process of the baseline survey spanned over several months and the final questionnaire consisted of 14 modules. Data collection was carried out by a sub-contracted Zambian agency called Palm Associates, whose enumerators, supervisors and master trainers were trained for two weeks.

Data collection stretched over six weeks and was initially supervised by IFPRI. The survey covered the three different arms that the project would like to compare: the 'agriculture only', the 'agriculture and nutrition/health', and the 'comparison' group. To detect a meaningful change in child stunting a sample size of approximately 1,000 households is required for each of the three areas. In total, we surveyed 3,044 households (and their young children).

Palm Associates entered the data and conducted basic data cleaning and prepared the data set, which was then analysed by colleagues at IFPRI. The final report was ready in February 2012. For each of the three groups, it describes the different aspects of the project, including child nutrition status, infant and young child feeding, health care seeking, agriculture, women's empowerment, HIV & AIDS awareness, shocks and coping and socio-economic status.

Highlights and Challenges

1) We had some difficulty getting the ethical permission for collecting blood samples (to test iron levels), which delayed us for almost two months. In the end, we applied for ethical permission from a different committee, at the expense of dropping the blood measurements. Interestingly, the challenge was not about collecting blood but a condition by the committee to pay the households for their participation.

2) The survey questions were based on UNICEF's conceptual framework on the causes of malnutrition that helps to capture the

multi-sectoral factors contributing to child mal nutrition.

3)   We used standard indicators and questions as much as possible, for example those found in the Demographic and Health Surveys, Living Standard Monitoring Surveys.

4)   Palm Associates are an experienced agency with great professionalism and very skilled and experienced staff for complex and large surveys. While they were very expensive in relation to our normal baseline surveys, it was money spent well considering the research focus of this particular project.

5)   We considered digital data gathering during the design but actually found that it would be too costly and the programming of the devices would have taken a long time considering the very complex questionnaire.

Tips for other programmes

1)   It is essential to   plan carefully and think through a survey. This does take time and ideally should not be rushed and done last minute. A baseline provides not only the status quo of what a project will be measured against with a similar endline survey and evaluation; it also could provide a useful data source for further project fine tuning.

2)   It is not recommended to replicate the scale of this particular survey in any other project, it is a rather exceptional setting. We could, however, learn from the rigour that IFPRI applied and the value that they give to monitoring as part of the project activities to improve our current work.

For those readers interested in finding out more about the project, a project brief on the rationale, model and implementation has been produced. A project brief has also been produced on the evaluation model.

Learning how innovations in maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) is approaching learning and knowledge management

By Ariel Higgins-Steele

The overall aim of Innovations for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (Innovations) is to find and test ambitious new ideas that have the potential to overcome access barriers that prevent health services and treatments from reaching the people who need them most. To do this, Innovations has undergone a process of seeking suggestions and ideas from unheard or unconventional voices and those people often excluded from healthcare planning and decision making.

The nature of this initiative requires strong and sustained attention to learning. The mandate of *Innovations* is not just to generate new evidence and knowledge, but to go one step further and to render these outputs actionable, especially in terms of describing essential learning around how to replicate or scale up a successful new approach.

Due to the above reason, *Innovations* looked closely at learning and knowledge management in the first quarter of 2012, and broke down core concepts and definitions. *Innovations* are defining evidence as the information and data that contributes to knowledge. Knowledge is being defined as: information combined with experience, context, interpretation and reflection. When knowledge is distilled and actionable, it becomes "learning". This flow of evidence from knowledge to learning is schematically illustrated in the figure below.
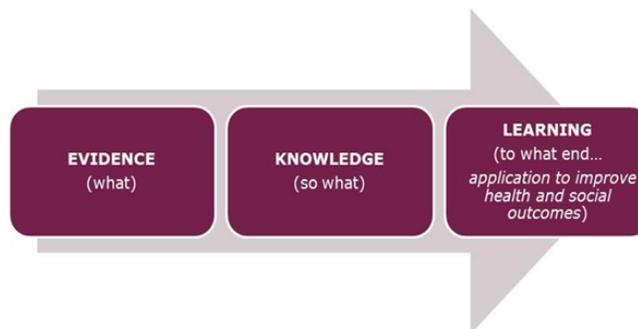
With pilot projects underway in Malawi, Sierra Leone and India (Odisha state) and several more in the design stage, *Innovations* articulated its overall approach in a "Learning Framework," also defining key priorities for learning and knowledge management.

Learning what? *Innovations* is focused on generating learning in two major areas. The first is related to process and the second is related to results.

Learning how? Each pilot has a set of learning related inputs and outputs from a range of contributors, using a range of approaches.

Regular *internal* learning-related outputs are generated which are analysed and vetted to produce a set of *external* learning-related outputs, which will be channelled through the *Innovations* website among other places. This way, learning is being extracted regularly during the implementation of individual pilots – not just at the end of a pilot – with specific themes analysed across pilots.

Learning to what end? *Innovations* looks to contribute substantive evidence, knowledge and learning on i) promising ideas and tested innovations in response to identified MNCH access barriers, and ii) methods of eliciting and nurturing innovative MNCH solutions that are rooted in the expressed needs and interests of communities. This evidence, knowledge and learning will be used in a targeted way to influence practitioners, other development partners and government partners as appropriate.

Innovations "Learning in Innovation" Quarterly Briefs

By Ariel Higgins-Steele

A new series of quarterly publications, "*Learning in Innovation",* are brief pieces which present priority learning from individual pilot projects under the *Innovations for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health* ("*Innovations*") initiative for external and internal audiences.

The Learning in Innovation briefs highlight important emerging lessons from the early phase of implementation of pilots in Malawi and Sierra Leone.

The *Learning in Innovation* brief for the Malawi pilot, entitled "Technology as a Tool to Bridge Health Service Delivery Gaps," highlights learning on several key themes:

◊   technology as an accurate and respectful interface

◊   technology as a tool for empowering beneficiaries

◊   technology as a tool to strengthen continuity of care

◊   technology and behavior change for client management

◊   scalability and sustainability in determining entry points

The *Learning in Innovation* brief for the Sierra Leone pilot, entitled "Supporting Health Workers to Strengthen Health Systems," highlights learning on a very different set of key themes:

◊   psychosocial support to health workers

◊   the development of trauma-based models in Sierra Leone that are not appropriate for the purposes of stress management for health workers

◊   the use of quality circles to dismantle hierarchies for health workers

◊   the potential of cross-learning circles for strengthening the continuum of care

These and other publications can be found on the *Innovations* website: http://innovationsformnch.org

Evaluation of Concern's Cholera Response Project in Haiti

In 2011, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) undertook an evaluation of Concern's two cholera projects in three communities in Haiti, namely, Port-au-Pricne, La Gonave and Saut d'Eau.

The evaluation team made use of five criteria to evaluate the projects: pertinence, efficiency, effectiveness , impact and sustainability.

Under each of the five criteria the interventions scored favourable, although the evaluators noted that better use could have been made of human resources.

One of the major lessons learnt from the interventions relates to the issue of sustainability. The evaluators note that one of the ways the projects could be better sustained was if more use was made of volunteers.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the evaluation report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

Evaluation of Concern's Niger Food Security and Nutrition Emergency Intervention 2010

In 2011, Concern commissioned the Humanitarian Outcomes Agency to undertake a multi-sector evaluation of its 2010 Mitigation project in Niger. The evaluation sought to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the conception and implementation of the project and to assess its relevance and effectiveness from the point of view of beneficiaries, staff and partners.

The evaluation reviewed all three sectors of Concern's response: nutrition, cash transfer and agricultural support, both separately and in aggregate terms. It also looked at cross-cutting issues, including disaster risk reduction, beneficiary participation and the operational research component of the project. The evaluation noted that, in many places, Concern appeared to benefit from the integrated aspect of the intervention.

The report also noted that while the multi-sector approach presented an opportunity to increase overall cost-effectiveness, establishing the extent to which Concern was able to exploit such potential was not possible.

The evaluation made a number of recommendations, including the need to improve management and use of data, as well as strengthening staffing and internal coordination .

This report should be read by any of the country offices considering implementing the *"Early Response to Predictable Emergencies (ERPE)"* model as this particular intervention acted as the prototype for the ERPE model.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the evaluation report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

Mid-Term Review of the Farming Together Programme

Christopher Davey undertook a mid-term review of Concern's "Farming Together" intervention. This is a multi-country EU-funded programme, currently being implemented in Burundi, Tanzania and Ethiopia. The programme is working to encourage private and public investment in agriculture.

It works with 11 Civil Society Organisation (CSO) partners (nine in Tanzania, one in Ethiopia and one in Burundi); and targets 93,201 rural householders, 249 local government authorities, 23 CSOs and 253 community based organisations. Overall, the review found that the intervention is appropriate to local needs and opportunities in all three programme countries.

The report found that the intervention remains directly relevant. It 'fits' with local government priorities in all three countries, and addresses the needs of programme participants.

However, the report notes that the programme teams must maintain modest ambitions for the remainder of the programme, and wrap-up technical work by addressing some of the more detailed aspects of the interventions.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

New Technologies in Cash Transfer Programming & Humanitarian Assistance

This research study was commissioned by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) in 2011, to review the current use of new technology in humanitarian cash and voucher programming and the broader implications for humanitarian practice.

The research was undertaken to explore (i) preconditions for the use of technological mechanisms identified (ii) user-friendliness of the technology for the recipient and for the agency (iii) issues concerning accountability and (iv) potential for wider impacts.

The research discusses in detail three types of technology currently being used in aid programming: electronic payment systems, the use of mobile phones for text and voice communication, and digital data gathering tools. For each, the study outlines current use, examines benefits experienced and issues faced by the recipient and the agency and highlights key lessons learned.

The study also looks briefly at new emerging uses of technology in aid programming including recipient management and crisis mapping. The report then looks at the potential benefits and risks of using new technologies in the cross-cutting areas of cost-effectiveness and accountability.

The research examines the constraints to the uptake of these technologies in humanitarian programming, and has identified barriers to wider adoption of new technology that can be broadly grouped under seven themes: technological, financial, institutional, operational, attitudinal, political and legislative.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

Repellent Plants Provide Affordable Natural Screening to Prevent Mosquito House Entry in Tropical Rural Settings

An article was published in the journal PLoS ONE, which featured the research outputs of a collaborative initiative between the Concern Tanzania country office and a team of researchers from the Ifakala Health Institute in Tanzania and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the University of Durham in the UK.

As most of us might be aware, sustained malaria control is underway in many countries using a combination of vector control, prompt diagnosis and treatment of malaria cases. Progress is excellent, but for long-term control, low-cost, sustainable tools that supplement existing control programmes are needed.

It was with this in mind that the research team sought to evaluate an additional means of reducing mosquito house entry-the screening of mosquito house entry points by planting the tall and densely foliated repellent plant Lantana Camara around houses. A pilot efficacy study was performed in the Kagera Region, Tanzania, in an area of high seasonal malaria transmission.

House screening using Lantana reduced indoor densities of malaria vectors and nuisance mosquitoes with broad community acceptance. In essence, the research found that the plants can act as an affordable natural screening to prevent the transmission of malaria.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the article can be accessed on the knowledge base.

## 1,000 Days to Scale Up Nutrition for Mothers and Children
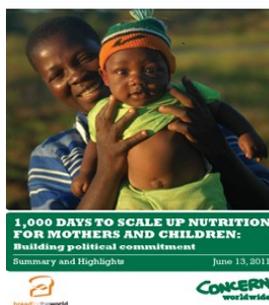
This is a summary report of a workshop that was held in Washington D.C. The goals of the meeting were to assess progress on Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) efforts already being made at the country level;

identify challenges; and develop a joint advocacy agenda for upcoming global forums.

The stakeholders included members of civil society, representatives of the governments of developing and developed countries, and representatives of the United Nations.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

Maternal and Child Under-Nutrition: Translating Evidence and Rhetoric into Action
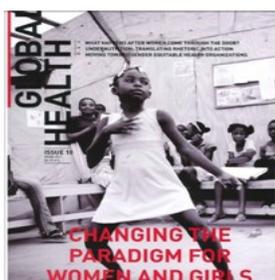
The spring issue of 'Global Health' featured an article on using evidence to prevent and treat child under-nutrition. The article was jointly co-authored by Tom Arnold, Chief Executive Officer of Concern Worldwide and David Beckmann, President of Bread for the World.

The authors make the point that adequate nutrition is critically important during the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

The article states that there is scientific evidence available showing the impact of under-nutrition on infant and child mortality.

The article also notes that malnutrition is an underlying cause of one-third of all maternal and childhood deaths. This is in large part because young children who are malnourished are more susceptible to illness.

The authors go on to make the point that there is a strong body of evidence with respect to improving early childhood nutrition that is influencing the work of politicians and policymakers. Concern is among one of the key players generating this evidence base.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the article can be accessed on the knowledge base.

Meta-Evaluation of Concern's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programmes

Robert Stroud undertook a meta-evaluation of Concern's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) interventions covering the period 2008-2010.The report highlighted a number of significant challenges within the area of WASH.

The main challenge is our lack of reliable and valid monitoring and evaluation data to determine programme outcomes. Results and achievements that deserved to be highlighted and replicated have been obscured, whilst failures that should have produced an opportunity for learning went unheeded. Ultimately, this is hampering our ability to implement quality, community driven, sustainable development work.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

Evaluation of the Liberia Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Consortium

The Liberia Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Consortium through an external evaluator, John Odolon, undertook an assessment of its work at the central and local government level. The evaluation found that the consortium approach continues to be effective for responding to the key sector needs as expressed in the Government's WASH strategy.

However, the report did note that although water point mapping has been carried out, there is still a need to further analyse the issues identified and their impact on the population.

For those readers interested in finding out more, the report can be accessed on the knowledge base.

A note on the Contributors

Chris Oyua - Chris is based in Uganda. Chris works as the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Partnership Adviser.

Gudrun Stallkamp - Gudrun is based in Dublin and works as the Nutrition Adviser covering Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Niger and Pakistan. Gudrun came back from Zambia where she worked for a year as the project co-ordinator of RAIN.

Ariel Higgins-Steele - Ariel is based in New York. Ariel works as the Policy and Knowledge Management Specialist on the Innovations project.

Knowledge Matters basics

For whom is the publication
All staff involved in designing, implementing , managing, monitoring, evaluating and communicating Concern's work. This publication should also be shared with partners.

What this publication includes
- ◊ Promising practice
- ◊ Organisational learning
- ◊ Promotion of multi-sectoral and integrated approaches to programming
- ◊ Links to full reports

What it doesn't include
- ◊ Targeted recommendations
- ◊ Additional evidence not included in the papers cited
- ◊ Detailed descriptions of interventions or their implementation

Editorial Team
This issue has been compiled by Sam Fox and Kai Matturi. Language editing: Michael Commane. Layout: Eithne Healy.

Additional resources

Knowledge Base

Mapping of Concern Worldwide Research Projects (2011-2015)

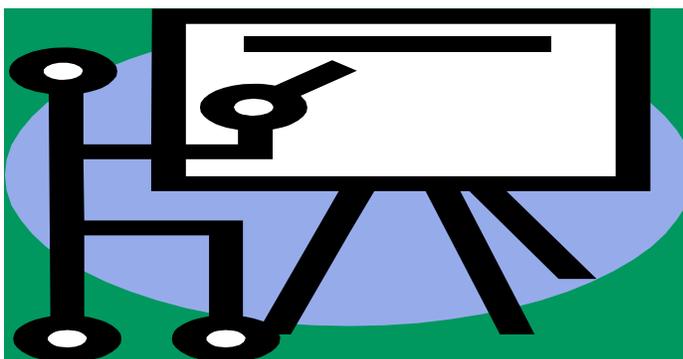**Story Desk holds all of Concern's photos, videos and case studies (beneficiary stories)**

Concern Style Guide

Concern Branding and Guidelines

Free Resources for Programme Evaluation and Social Research Methods

Links to external websites with knowledge products for those working in the emergency and development realm

Have your say
Your views and feedback are welcomed. Please use the contact details below to get in touch. Kai.matturi@concern.net, cw_kai.matturi, +353 1 4178079 .

Knowledge Matters is published quarterly by the Programme Approaches and Learning Unit, situated within the Strategy, Advocacy and Learning Directorate of Concern. The publication seeks to connect and collect Concern's knowledge.

Key words

Health, MNCH, Baseline, RAIN, Nutrition, Innovations, WASH, Meta-Evaluation, Cholera, Learning.