



KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

Concern's experience and learning
from the Graduation Approach

Issue 30 | May 2021

CONCERN
worldwide

**ENDING
EXTREME POVERTY
WHATEVER
IT TAKES**

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The views expressed are the authors' and do not necessarily coincide with those of Concern Worldwide or its partners.

Knowledge Matters basics

Knowledge Matters offers practice-relevant analysis relating to the development and humanitarian work of Concern Worldwide. It provides a forum for staff and partners to exchange ideas and experiences. The publication is committed to encouraging high quality analysis in the understanding of Concern's work. Concern staff and partners document their ideas and experiences through articles. Articles are very short – 500 – 1,500 words. Usually, you only have space to make one or two interesting points. Here are some tips on writing a short feature article:

- Start by imagining your audience – a Concern colleague. Why are they interested – why do they want to read what you have to say? When you identify what your most important point is, say it straight away, in the title or first sentence.
- What can others learn from your story? Focus on this. Remember to back up your story with evidence. This can be taken from evaluations.
- It's easier to get people reading if you start with the human perspective – mentioning real people and real-life events. (You don't have to give names).
- Use short sentences. Use Concern's style guide to help you.
- Keep paragraphs to a maximum of six lines long.
- Use clear language. Many of the readers of Knowledge Matters are non-native English or French speakers, so think carefully about using phrases or colloquial language that might not be easily understood by others.
- Always avoid assuming too high a level of knowledge of the topic you are writing about on the part of the reader.
- Use active sentences ('we held a workshop' not 'a workshop was held by us')
- Use short and clear expressions.
- Keep your title short - no more than eight words.
- Where necessary use photos to accompany the narrative but ensure that you follow the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

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For more information, please see:

- <https://www.concern.net/insights/graduation-programming>
- <https://www.concern.net/insights/research-graduation-model>
- <https://www.concern.net/insights/graduation-model-and-gender-empowerment-research-project-malawi>

Cover photo: Euphemia Inina (42) mother of Alphonsine Niyonzima (21) waters their market garden at her home in Mabayi, Cibitoke. As part of the Graduation programme all participants are given seeds and training on how to grow food in their gardens. Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith / Concern Worldwide.

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From the Issue Editor

Welcome to this special edition of Knowledge Matters which is focused on Concern's experience of, and learning from the Graduation Approach.

Our first experience implementing a Graduation programme was in Haiti between 2007 and 2009. Since then, we have adopted and tailored the approach, as a way of achieving social and economic inclusion in nine countries (Bangladesh, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Malawi, Somalia, Rwanda and Zambia) directly reaching 110,971 people.

By their very nature, Graduation programmes are intended to target individuals or households living in extreme (and often chronic) poverty. Targeted interventions are designed to address the root cause of poverty therefore programme design is context specific though programmes do contain a number of core pillars – social protection, livelihood promotion, financial inclusion and social empowerment.

The evidence that the Graduation Approach works has been well documented and we remain committed to the approach under the new Livelihood Strategy (2021-2025).

This is the second special edition focused on the Graduation Approach. The first, published in 2014, focused on the success and challenges of early programmes in Burundi, Rwanda, Haiti and Zambia. Seven years later, we have taken the opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the approach within Concern and to explore specific themes (coaching, income generation, risk management, system strengthening, gender transformative programming, monitoring and evaluation) to generate learning for the design and implementation of future programmes, particularly focused on what is needed to achieve sustainability and scale.

We hope you enjoy this edition and welcome any and all feedback. A big thank you to all of the contributing authors and programme teams who, without them, this special edition would not be possible.

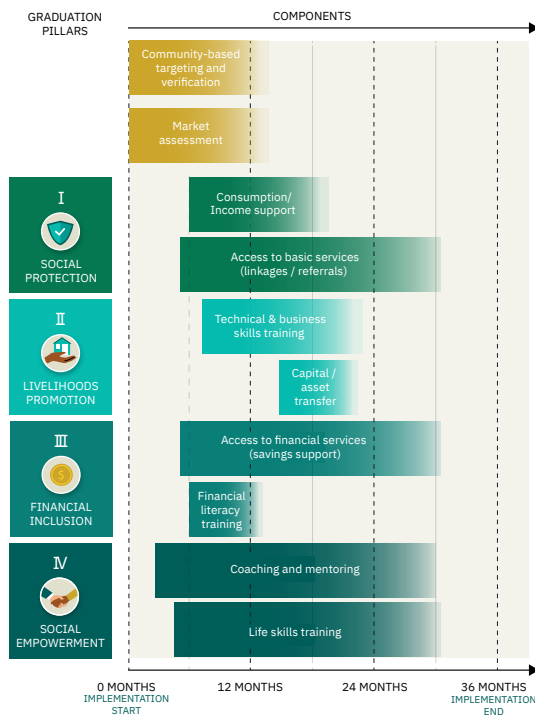
Jenny Swatton - Social Protection and Economic Inclusion Adviser

Concern(ing) Graduation in 2021

Written by Jenny Swatton

The term ‘Graduation’ is most commonly associated with the successful completion of a degree, course or training however, it is also used to refer to a person exiting a social protection programme after reaching a certain threshold and, more recently, the move (upwards) or gradual change from food insecurity to sustainable livelihoods. The Graduation Approach was first pioneered by BRAC in Bangladesh in 2000 as a way of exploring how social protection, livelihood promotion and access to finance could be sequenced to provide a pathway out of extreme poverty. Since then, there have been efforts by multiple actors to scale up and adapt the approach to different contexts and to reach different population groups. Estimates show that economic inclusion programmes (including those adopting a Graduation Approach) currently serve 92 million people (directly or indirectly) in 75 countries.¹ Graduation approaches are quickly becoming a key feature of national social protection systems globally and to achieve scale, it requires a systems-level approach with governments at the forefront.

¹ Partnership for Economic Inclusion (2021) State of the Sector <https://www.peiglobal.org/state-of-economic-inclusion-report-2021>



* sample schedule

Concern’s first experience of the Graduation Approach was in Haiti between 2007 and 2009 in partnership with Fonkoze, Haiti’s largest microfinance institution. Since then, we have directly supported 110,971 people across nine countries (Haiti, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, DRC, Bangladesh, Zambia and Somalia).

The approach itself encompasses four main pillars: social protection, livelihood promotion, financial inclusion and social empowerment. Following a



Comprehensive targeting ensures that households living in extreme poverty are identified as programme participants.



Regular, predictable and time-bound **Income Support** helps programme participants meet their basic needs (smooth consumption) and offset income losses whilst they invest in livelihood development activities.



Market driven **Technical and Business Skills Training** enhances human capital and facilitates income generation through either self- or waged-employment.



Coaching and mentoring supports participants to meet their goals and encourages positive behavior change. Coaches provide life skills training, offer guidance on specific problems and facilitate access to basic services such as healthcare, education and psychosocial.



Facilitating access to financial services, improving financial literacy and promoting savings helps participants to manage risk and reduces the likelihood of having to resort to negative coping strategies in the event of shocks and stresses.



Capital/asset transfer helps participants establish a new, or expand an existing small business or supports with the costs associated with accessing waged-employment

comprehensive and community-based targeting process, participants are enrolled into the programme and provided with an integrated and sequenced package of support lasting 24-36 months. All of Concern's programmes contain the core elements of comprehensive targeting, income support, technical and business skills training, coaching and mentoring, support to access basic and financial services (savings and loans) and provision of a capital/asset transfer. The design and delivery of these elements however, varies greatly between programmes and contexts.

Over the last fourteen years, we have invested heavily in research and learning to contribute to the global evidence base on what works. This includes three operational research studies in Rwanda and Burundi (in partnership with the UK's Institute of Development Studies) and Malawi (in partnership with Trinity Impact Evaluation Unit at Trinity College Dublin).

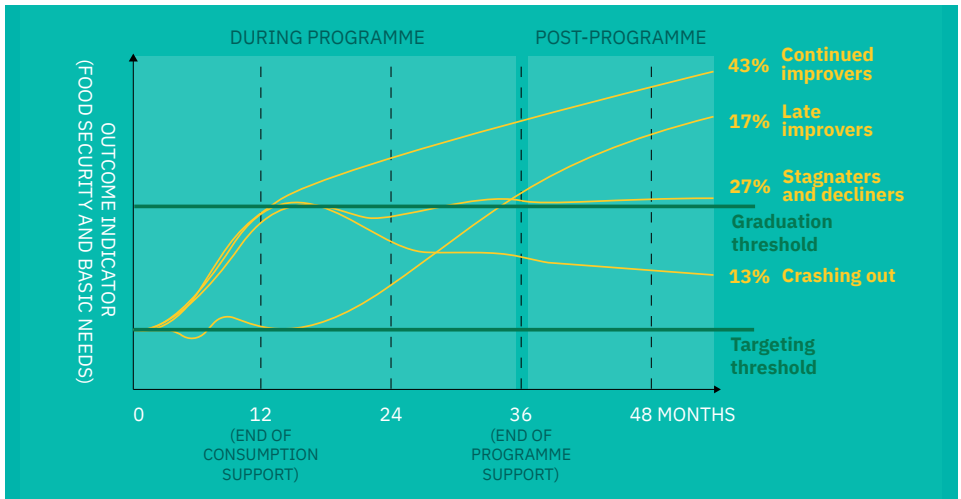
Quantitative research in Rwanda and Burundi examined changes in key indicators over time and the importance of the coaching component in achieving

graduation outcomes. Results showed major improvements in multiple dimensions of poverty including an ability to meet basic needs, the accumulation of assets and higher income levels as well as more transformative improvements such as increased self-efficacy and improved health and nutrition. In Rwanda, 61% of participants met an asset-based graduation rate at 12 months compared to a baseline of 6% whilst in Burundi, research confirmed that positive impacts were not achieved through a single component but through the combination of programme components working together. Further qualitative studies in both countries looked in more depth at graduation trajectories and the effect programmes had on individuals within the households and intra-household dynamics. Current research, being conducted in Malawi, looks to understand the barriers faced by women in escaping poverty and whether the gender of the main programme participant and gender transformative dialogue sessions affect household decision-making, gender attitudes, food security and income levels. Results are already showing that the programme is positively affecting women's lives in multiple ways including improved

intra-household relations, especially the sharing of household tasks and reduced conflict. For more information on all of Concern's research findings please see: <https://www.concern.net/insights/research-graduation-model>.

Concern's programmes are implemented over a fixed period therefore, regardless of socio-economic status, participants stop receiving support at the end of the programme cycle. However, Graduation approaches are designed to bring about sustainable changes in wellbeing and we would expect improvements to be retained or further improve after the period of support ends, and that households be able to cope with moderate shocks without resorting to negative coping strategies. There are indications that many of the benefits are sustained. In Rwanda, one year after programme support ended, 77% of participating households met asset-based graduation criteria, up from 61% three years earlier and one year into the programme.

However, despite indications that many benefits have been sustained, experience has shown that people follow different



graduation trajectories during and after programme support. Further examination of the data from Rwanda showed that the trajectories of 43% of participants continued to improve after the end of the programme, 17% improved later in the programme cycle, 27% stagnated or declined whilst 13% fell back below the graduation threshold though not lower than the targeting threshold². This highlights a need to consider enabling and constraining factors, and look at what people are graduating into and onto.

Partnership is central to our approach. Several of Concern’s programmes are integrated within broader systems of social protection; building on top of existing safety net programmes (Malawi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Bangladesh) and/or directly implemented by government departments (Rwanda and Burundi). We also work closely with national NGOs on implementation. Whilst, at a global level, we engage in several key networks. We are a technical partner of the World Bank-hosted Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI), the NGO Collaborative and the UNHCR-led Poverty Alleviation Coalition (PAC). Collectively, we gather evidence on what works and share good practice, we also advocate for the adoption and scale up of the approach under national social protection systems.

Organisationally, we remain committed to the Graduation Approach. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for more inclusive economies to address stark inequalities has never been greater and the approach plays a central role under the social and economic inclusion pillar of the new livelihood strategy (2021-2025). However, despite our commitment to the approach and its relevance and effectiveness to supporting national economic development priorities and building self-reliance, it is not about removing people from social protection altogether. Instead, social protection – which comprises policies and programmes that aim to prevent or alleviate poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion over a person’s lifecycle – should be part of a state-citizen contract and we have a role to work with host and donor governments and advocate for adequate social protection coverage.

². Sabates-Wheeler, R., Sabates, R. and Devereux, S. (2018) Enabling Graduation for Whom? Identifying and Explaining Heterogeneity in Livelihood Trajectories Post-Cash Transfer Exposure IN Journal of International Development, 2018

Adapting Graduation approaches to different contexts

Written by Claver Kabuhungu and Victoria Jean-Louis

Introduction

Graduation approaches provide a comprehensive and holistic package of support - designed to address the root causes of poverty. Therefore, it is crucial that programmes are adapted to address the barriers to people's development and what is required to achieve long-term sustained improvements in well-being.

Historically, much of Concern's experience implementing Graduation programmes has been in stable rural areas where the community is settled and we work alongside government partners on implementation.

This has also provided opportunities for Concern to build on existing national social protection systems and influence the design of relevant policy and programming. However, over the past four years' Concern, like many other development actors, have piloted programmes in different contexts (urban, conflict-affected) and targeted different groups (refugees, internally displaced persons - IDPs, youths) to explore what does/does not work in different settings. This includes programmes in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo (2017-2021) which are presented here.

Graduation approaches in fragile and conflict-affected settings: the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

DRC is ranked 175 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index¹ and 72% of people in DRC live in extreme poverty - less than \$1.90 per day². Armed conflict and natural disasters continue to provoke massive population movements and the country is now home to the largest population of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa - 5.2 million people were displaced as of February 2021³.

Our Graduation programme in DRC started in 2017 with the goal to improve the livelihoods of extremely poor and marginalised households in Manono Territory, Tanganyika Province. In addition to a comprehensive package of support provided at the household level, programme participants benefited from a wider set of complementary activities designed to specifically reduce people's vulnerability to water borne diseases and health-related shocks. Furthermore, we adopted an 'Engaging Men and Boys approach' and work with community leaders to address issues of gender inequalities that discriminate against women and girls.

During inception, we conducted a comprehensive risk analysis to inform our programme design. Following prolonged periods of conflict, Manono Territory is now largely stable however, the likelihood of conflict breaking out between different ethnic groups in

1. UNDP (2020) Human Development Report <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report>

2. World Bank 2020 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview#:~:text=While%20its%20poverty%20rate%20has,less%20than%20%241.90%20a%20day>

3. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/2021-humanitarian-response-plan-democratic-republic-congo-will>

neighbouring territories is high and could lead to displacement and a further influx of IDPs. To mitigate this risk the programme incorporates a number of key features:

- Households are targeted using a participatory community targeting approach, ensuring representation of different ethnic groups and genders and reducing the bias towards any particular group.
- Households hosting IDPs are provided with additional financial support, to avoid erosion of development gains.
- Public employment activities offer temporary labour opportunities for a wider pool of poor vulnerable households. Employment on road and bridge rehabilitation is designed to improve access to markets and services for all. Some villages are now accessible by cars for the first time.
- A Complaints Response Mechanism (CRM) system provides recipients and non-recipients an opportunity to share feedback/complaints about the programme.

- Case Managers are recruited from local communities and different ethnic groups to increase local acceptance and inclusion.
- Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions target the whole community and Water Management Committees are represented by different ethnic groups as well as genders.

The sensitivity shown to the risk of exacerbating existing ethnic tensions throughout implementation has played a role in programme success. Between 2017 and 2019 participating households almost doubled their asset ownership and 90% reported an improvement in their health and nutrition status. Women's role in decision-making has also improved, with an increase from 15% in 2017 to 62% in 2020 of women surveyed reporting that they are consulted in key areas of decision-making in their household. However, it has not been without its challenges. During the initial targeting period, a flare up of violence between ethnic communities meant that rural areas were inaccessible for several months. This resulted in us having to narrow



Ngoy Safi Adriene tells us how Concern IGAs enabled her to reopen her restaurant, during a savings meeting organised by the beneficiaries of Concern IGA programme. Photo: Sophie Keres/Concern Worldwide, 2020

the geographic boundary of the programme initially - the first cohort is largely made up of households living in villages within close proximity to Manono Town or in Manono City. Fortunately, as the programme has evolved, new cohorts from more remote villages were able to be brought in.

Graduation approaches in urban contexts: the case of Haiti

Haiti is ranked 170 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index⁴ and more than 2.5 million people fell below the extreme poverty line of US \$1.12 per day in the latest poverty estimate (World Bank 2020). Political instability hampers social and economic development and the population is highly vulnerable to the impacts of natural hazards including hurricanes, floods and earthquakes.

Our current Graduation programme in Haiti (2017 – 2021) is an integrated community resilience and conflict mitigation programme. It is implemented in Cité Soleil, one of the most densely populated and economically disadvantaged areas of Port au Prince. High population concentration puts great pressure on infrastructure and basic services and has resulted in environmental degradation and high unemployment. The consequences of which are poor living conditions, problems of social integration and insecurity - particularly social, food and economic.

The programme targets those considered most in need with a specific focus on vulnerable women and youth. We worked in collaboration with community partners on developing a set of vulnerability criteria and verifying locations and households identified in order to increase community ownership, and support to those persons identified as most in need.



Ti Ayiti in the Cité Soleil area of Port au Prince is one of the most disadvantaged communities in the city, with houses subject to regular flooding and families experiencing anti-social activities. Photo: Kieran McConville/Concern Worldwide/2019

Contextual analysis, including conflict analysis, is undertaken annually to inform programme design and enable us to adapt activities and delivery methods (as required) and to avoid placing participants at risk or aggravating an already stressful situation. Aspects of Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) are well integrated into the design of the programme. For example:

- Security risks inform how we deliver financial support. Currently we deliver support through a mobile money platform (Mon Cash) facilitated by a community bank and financial services company (FINCA) though we are also looking to partner with Red Rose to look at options for the greater use of digital transfers and beneficiary tracking.
- Case Workers are recruited from target neighbourhoods thereby increasing their access to participating households even during times of conflict when the movement of the population is limited.
- We provide training on Protection to community focal points and work with the municipality on the rehabilitation of communal assets and waste management components to reduce the vulnerability of the population to certain natural hazards.

⁴ UNDP (2020) Human Development Report <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report>

Partnership is central to the programme and we work closely with a variety of different stakeholders on its delivery. Rather than just employing the services of professional schools and training centres when delivering technical and business skills training, we have developed partnerships with institutions (Haititec and CAPAC) who are committed to the on-going and additional investment in these communities. Representatives of these institutions have been involved in co-creating the programme and in supporting the journey of programme participants.

Whilst external events (political instability, flooding and COVID-19) over the past three years have led to slow progress on economic indicators, the programme has had success in improving participant's ability to cope with shocks and stresses. In 2019, 57% of participants reported not having been adversely affected by the most recent disaster (compared to 41% in 2017) with employment activities stable even if income had not increased. We have also seen significant improvements in individual attitudes towards violence and knowledge on how to resolve conflict with less tolerance for domestic violence. However, it is not without its challenges. Cité Soleil and its population are marginalized and stigmatized as being a violent and dangerous community. This leaves people, particularly youth, with few employment options and little means to generate income thereby exacerbating criminal activity. By improving people's ability to earn an income, we can provide a valuable alternative for individuals and the community as a whole.

Summary

The experiences from DRC and Haiti both emphasise the importance of having a good understanding of the context to ensure that programmes really address the barriers people face to social, financial and economic inclusion and what is required to achieve positive and sustained changes in well-being in different settings. While there are still gaps in our knowledge of how to best adapt Graduation approaches, it is clear that any adaption needs to be tailored to contextual realities, taking into account existing capabilities, the physical and operational environment, political economy, social structures and vulnerabilities. Both programmes also touched on the element of risk and the role that participatory programming and partnerships can play in mitigating risk and ensuring the sustainability of outcomes.

The role of coaching in Graduation programmes: The experience from Rwanda and Burundi

Written by Damien Ntawiyanga and Theophile Bujeje

Coaching is a process that aims to improve performance. It is seen widely to be the ‘x factor’ of Graduation programmes and instrumental to programme success and the sustainability of outcomes. Within the Graduation Approach, coaching is provided by front line staff referred to as Case Managers, Case Workers, Community Development Animators, etc. For the purposes of this article, we use the term Case Managers.

Different structures are adopted, from full-time staff employed directly by Concern or a third party to informal community structures or government extension and there are advantages and disadvantages of each. The Case Manager’s role varies by programme but tends to involve a mix of training, sensitisation and moral support (akin to that provided by social workers). They also play a vital role in linking or referring participants to relevant

services (e.g. shelter, extension, community health, social networks, psycho-social support), ensuring that they are aware of them and have access to these after the period of programme support.

Finally, Case Managers are often responsible for monitoring household progress and are involved from the beginning of a household’s journey - helping them set out their goals and vision for the future and then are there to support them on the journey to achieving these. This article shares experience of coaching from our programmes in Rwanda and Burundi.

The evolution of coaching in Rwanda

We have been implementing a Graduation programme in the Southern Province of Rwanda since 2012. Coaching is provided by

	Phase 1 (2012-2016) Nyaruguru and Huye Districts	Phase 2 (2017-2022) Gisagara District
Title	Community Development Animator	Community Development Animator
Case load	15 households	40-55 households
Coaching delivery	Individual (2 visits per month)	Individual (2 visits per month); group (weekly)
Management	Line and task managed by Concern	Line managed and paid by local government; task managed by Concern
Person specification	Low level of education; limited expertise	Secondary schooling
Payment	RWF 10,000 (US \$10) net salary/month	RWF 50,000 (US \$50) salary/month

Community Development Animators (CDAs) who are recruited from communities where the programme is operational however, the structure has evolved over time. The box below highlights differences between phase 1 and 2 of the programme.

The dual reporting lines in the current phase requires coordination which is achieved through field supervision, weekly planning meetings between CDAs and field staff, monthly CDA reporting and quarterly coordination meetings with the local administration at District and Sector Level.

In Rwanda, CDAs provide a range of functions including:

- Undertaking home visits to follow participant progress against household plans and agree on the way forward;
- Delivering training and coaching on topics such as agricultural techniques, financial literacy, business skills;
- Counselling on aspects such as hygiene, family planning, gender equality, nutrition, conflict management (household/ community), and;
- Acting as a mentor and adviser to the household.

Coaching is provided directly to households through individual home visits and through group structures (Farmer Field Learning School, Village Saving and Loan Groups etc.) There are 12 formal training modules that are delivered through a Training of Trainers approach; CDAs receive training on all topics and on facilitation skills, and then deliver training to participants.

The setting and monitoring of household performance contracts (*imihigo*¹) is a key

1. 'Imihigo' is the practice of goal setting adopted by the central Government of Rwanda and is used by all levels of government to implement development programmes in Rwanda. For more information on household performance contracts see the Knowledge Matters edition on Results-Based Management: <https://www.concern.net/insights/knowledge-matters-results-based-management>

“ ...He was like my teacher (he trained me), my mentor and my light. I bought land and increased livestock – I have 1 cow, 6 goats and 3 pigs. For my household development, his advice is more than money”.

Programme participant, Gishubi sector - Gisagara

“ Today, even if the programme is ended, I am grateful for great advice, guidance and follow up I received from a programme CDA. She was my mentor, first of all she helped me to do a situation analysis and make a household plan. Without a household plan, the inputs provided could be misused; she supported me to avoid the misuse, then I managed to increase productive assets (land and livestock) and improve my wellbeing. I completed main activities I had planned.”

Programme participant, Mugombwa sector - Gisagara

feature of our programme. This contract is an agreement between the household, Cell (administrative) authorities and Concern and sets out clear goals and commitments of each stakeholder. CDAs are responsible for following up on a household's progress towards their goals and recording details in a household book (*Igitabo*). The household book is intended to be a positive and supportive tool and also acts as evidence for Field Officers to verify CDAs are visiting households and performing their role. At village level, Village Management Committees (VMC) consisting of the Village Head, Community Health Worker and CDA have been established to reinforce follow up.

Finally, CDAs also have oversight over how capital transfers are spent – spending must align with household plans, and if spent on things which do not benefit the household then CDAs have authority to restrict access to future financial support for a period of time.

The impact of coaching

The role of coaching and support in achieving positive and sustained impact was examined by the Centre of Social Protection at the UK’s Institute of Development Studies (IDS) between 2017 and 2019². Overall, the study highlighted the crucial role played by CDAs in the implementation of the programme and in its success, particularly strengthening empowerment outcomes. Favourable views were shared by local government, who also agreed that graduation from Rwanda’s national Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) would be more possible if CDAs were recruited. Other key findings include:

- CDAs have a strong local presence and credibility because they are recruited from the sectors (third level administrative boundary) where they work, which also builds trust with participants.
- CDAs are generally liked and trusted by participants and participants enjoy and find meetings with them useful.
- Coaching plays a functional role in improving community relations and conflict management.

However, CDAs face challenges linking participants to government services that are either inactive or under-resourced. Furthermore, households making slow progress towards their goals can make relationships with CDAs challenging.

Comparing different coaching structures in Burundi

We have been implementing a Graduation programme, known locally as *Terintambwe*, in Burundi since 2012. Under the first phase of the programme (2012-2016) we employed full-time Case Managers who were contracted and managed directly by Concern. Under the second phase of the programme (2017-2022), we adopted a similar community-based structure as used in Rwanda. Following recruitment, undertaken in collaboration with the local government at Commune level, a significant amount of time is spent on strengthening CDA capacity. Training is provided by regional staff and supervisors and focuses on the key areas in which CDAs provide training and advice on (e.g. hygiene, nutrition, savings etc.). Other differences between the coaching structures adopted in Phase 1 and 2 are highlighted in the table below.

² This qualitative study was one of several topics identified for further examination following operational research undertaken in Rwanda and Burundi, by IDS between 2012 and 2016.

Devereux, R. and Isimbi, R. (2020) Understanding Graduation Outcomes in Rwanda: Coaching, Relationships and Empowerment in Concern Worldwide’s Graduation Programme https://admin.concern.net/sites/default/files/documents/2020-11/Understanding%20Graduation%20Outcomes%20in%20Rwanda%20-%20Coaching%2C%20Relationships%20and%20Empowerment%20in%20Concern%20Worldwide%E2%80%99s%20Graduation%20Programme%202019.pdf?_gl=1*1wei6h0*_ga*MTQ1MDEwNjQ1Ni4xNjE1NTU3MzAz*_ga_RLZ9XCKFP1*MTYxNTU1NzMwMi4xLjEuMTYxNTU1NzM3OC42MA.

Devereux, S. (2016) Final Evaluation Briefing Paper Sustaining Impacts: Concern Worldwide’s Graduation Programme in Rwanda https://admin.concern.net/sites/default/files/media/migrated/rwanda_graduation_final_briefing_paper_19.10.16.pdf?_gl=1*hm4zhw*_ga*MTEyMDg3NTk1My4xNjEzNjYONjIx*_ga_RLZ9XCKFP1*MTYxNdc4NDg4OS42LjAuMTYxNdc4NDg4OS42MA.

	Phase 1 (2012-2016) Cibitoke and Kirundo Provinces	Phase 2 (2017-2022) Cibitoke, Kirundo and Bubanza Provinces
Title	Case Manager	Community Development Animator
Case load	Approx. 40 households	Approx. 40 households
Coaching structure	High treatment (2 visits per month); Low treatment (1 visit per month)	Individual (at least one visit per month); Group (weekly)
Management	Line and task managed by Concern	Contracted by local government; line and task managed by Concern
Person specification	High school diploma or equivalent; experience in agriculture or nursing preferable.	High school diploma or equivalent; experience in agriculture or nursing preferable
Payment	BiF 243,000 for 5 days per week (full time)	BiF 120,000 for 4 days per week (16 days per month)

CDAs are the frontline staff, serving as the main face and contact for the programme. They are responsible for delivering training and following up with individual participants through home visits during which they check that households are following any previous advice they have given and offer tailored support on the development of business plans, issues with the community or other concerns. Formal training in technical and business skills is provided to groups of participants roughly every two weeks based on a standard curriculum.

The use of both individual and group coaching allows for greater peer learning and CDAs tailor support to households based on how well they progress through the programme. Households identified as slower moving are provided with more coaching support (additional visits) as required.

The impact of coaching

In Burundi the role of coaching and support in achieving positive and sustained impact was also examined by IDS between 2017 and 2019³. The study found that coaching and support are crucial components within the *Terintambwe* programme and that CDAs play an indispensable role as frontline workers in delivering training, coaching and tailored support services.

³. This qualitative study was one of several topics identified for further examination following operational research undertaken in Rwanda and Burundi, by IDS between 2012 and 2016.

Concern Worldwide (2020) Implementing Coaching and Support in Graduation Programmes: the case of the Terintambwe programme in Burundi https://admin.concern.net/sites/default/files/documents/2020-11/Research%20Brief%20-%20Implementing%20Coaching%20and%20Support%20in%20Graduation%20Programmes%20a%20case%20study%20of%20the%20Terintambwe%20programme%20in%20Burundi%202020.pdf?_gl=1*12kk1v8*_ga*MTEyMDg3NTk1My4xNjEzNjY0NjIx*_ga_RLZ9XCKFP1*MTYxNDc5ODE3My43LjAuMTYxNDc5ODE3My42MA

Concern Worldwide (2016) Evaluation Briefing Paper: Sustaining the Impact of Concern Worldwide's Graduation Programme in Burundi https://admin.concern.net/sites/default/files/media/migrated/burundi_graduation_research_brief_v2.pdf?_gl=1*74crkl*_ga*MTEyMDg3NTk1My4xNjEzNjY0NjIx*_ga_RLZ9XCKFP1*MTYxNDgwMDMyMS44LjAuMTYxNDgwMDMyMS42MA

Other key findings include:

- **The importance of caseloads.** High caseloads in Phase 1 of the programmes and the predominance of individual coaching led to Case Manager's struggling to visit all participants' households each month. The greater use of group structures in Phase 2 has improved this.
- **The role that confidence and capability plays in ensuring effective and strong coaching.** A reduction in the level and duration of training of CDAs or follow up training between Phase 1 and Phase 2 is deemed to have led to a lack of CDA confidence in delivering aspects of the programme. The supervision and capacity strengthening of programme staff including CDAs is of upmost importance and is something that is discussed on a regular basis, particularly when there are staffing changes. Where needs are identified, follow up training is provided.

One of the other things that the study looked at was whether there was a preferable coaching structure. The shift from coaching provided by full-time Case Managers to one working with CDAs was deemed to offer greater embeddedness in local communities and strong linkages to local governments as well as to present a more cost-effective model for delivery of coaching support. However, experience has been more nuanced – Case Managers were better paid, better trained and had a stronger alliance to Concern and their work, but CDAs have equal education attainment at recruitment and have closer links to the communities they are serving. That said, the current contractual arrangement with CDAs employed through local government structures, but paid and trained by Concern, has meant that CDAs do not feel part of either organisation and this had not had the desired effect of embedding CDAs within local organisations. Overall,

In an effort to find out whether certain components of the Graduation Approach are more important than others, Concern partnered with the Centre for Social Protection and the UK's Institute of Development Studies to look at the effectiveness of the coaching component and whether more household visits led to greater outcomes. Between 2012 and 2016 our programme in Burundi was designed as a controlled trial with three treatment arms: one which received high levels of coaching (two household visits per month), one that received low treatment (one household visit per month) and a control group which did not receive any programme support. Results found that the changes in wellbeing between treatment groups was insignificant whilst there was a huge difference between both treatment arms and the control group.

The indifference between treatment arms has largely been attributed to research design rather than actual impacts – the differences in support were too small for capturing differential impacts, secondly there were substantial spill over and contamination effects between households in different groups, as they were neighbours in the same villages and during qualitative research participants spoke of how they would share the information given to them in trainings and through coaching with neighbours, in fact there was also evidence that non-participants (including members of the control group) were also replicating certain behaviours and which had been promoted to participants, such as establishing kitchen gardens and participation in community based savings groups [Savings and Internal Lending Communities - SILC].

findings confirmed that there are clearly advantages and disadvantages of both and there are trade-offs between the intensity of support and cost of implementation that need to be considered.

Summary

Our experience from Rwanda and Burundi confirms how important the role of coaching is within the Graduation Approach to achieving positive outcomes. Coaches play an important role in facilitating the household journey, providing a range of support that has led to increased confidence and self-esteem, the effect of which cannot be underestimated, particularly when thinking about the sustainability of outcomes and household resilience including people's ability to absorb or adapt to lifecycle events. The structure of coaching within our programmes in Rwanda and Burundi has evolved over time. We have moved away from a direct full-time Case Management model (as in the case of Burundi) to one which is embedded in local administrative structures. We have also utilised more group coaching alongside individual coaching to increase opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and support and address previous challenge associated with high caseloads. However, as evidenced by research, we should never underestimate the importance of dedicated and professional staff in the contribution to this success and the importance that coaching staff having the confidence and capability to carry out their roles. This can be improved by prioritising training and support structures for front line staff. We also need to continue to work closely with government departments on implementation, as this can offer an opportunity to highlight challenges and learnings faced during the implementation of the programme.

“ Without them [CDAs], the programme will not have impacts. The programme's effects depend on the involvement of beneficiaries, and it is the CDA who creates a sense of ownership of the programme among beneficiaries through trainings and household visits.”

Programme staff, Burundi



Gerard Ndabahekeye (28) with his daughter Megisela Muhoza (6). Gerard has a business, a small shop, which he was able to set up due to the investment of the Graduation programme. Photographed in their home in Bukinanyana, Cibitoke, Burundi, 2018. Photo: Abbie Traylor-Smith / Concern Worldwide.

Increasing the impacts of the Graduation Approach on the lives of women: Our research programme in Malawi

Written by Adèle Fox

There is still a misconception among many implementers of the Graduation Approach that targeting women as programme participants is synonymous with promoting gender equality. Concern has long recognised that the barriers that women face in lifting themselves and their households out of extreme poverty are much greater than a lack of knowledge, capacity or resources. They stem from a deeply rooted patriarchal system, often labelled as culture and tradition, in which men have the ultimate power within the household, as well as at community and societal level. This affects a woman’s decision-making power over the use of household resources, her freedom of movement to take up opportunities and the time she has available after the majority of domestic and caring tasks fall to her. It also affects the extent to which gender-based violence, in all its forms, is normalised.

There is, however, a gap in the evidence about what really works to overcome these deeply engrained norms and ultimately increase the impact of the Graduation Approach on women’s lives and that of their families. We are seeking to address this gap in the form of a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) in Malawi in partnership with the Trinity Impact Evaluation Unit (TIME) at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), which is testing three variations of the model through the treatment arms below.

Through this research we aim to better understand the barriers faced by women in escaping poverty and examine whether the sex of the Graduation programme recipient, and the compounded effect of gender transformative dialogue sessions, affect household decision-making, gender attitudes, food security and income.

Treatment Arm 1	Treatment Arm 2	Treatment Arm 3
Targets male household members as the primary recipients of Graduation inputs	Targets female household members as the primary recipients of Graduation inputs	Targets female household members as the primary recipients of Graduation inputs PLUS she and her partner/husband participate in 12 gender transformative dialogue sessions .

What is the gender component of the Graduation programme?

Umodzi, meaning ‘united’ takes the form of 12 monthly sessions with couples that reflect on topics such as gender norms, power, decision-making, household budgeting, violence, positive parenting and healthy relationships. The development of the curriculum was informed by formative research conducted across Mangochi and Nsanje which looked at the concepts of gender norms and masculinity and the consequences of men who fail to live up to traditional expectations. It looked at prevailing marriage practices (polygamy, matrilineal and patrilineal marriage practices) and sex within marriages as well as household dynamics, the division of household labour, control of money within a household and intra-household decision-making.

To reinforce the monthly *Umodzi* sessions, Case Workers follow up at a household level on a bi-monthly basis to encourage regular reflection and discussion on the implementation of key messages.

What have we found so far?

While we wait for the quantitative results from the three treatment arms to emerge, we are building a picture of the impact from various qualitative sources. A recent Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol (QuIP) from our research partner, TCD, which interviewed women from Treatment Arms 2 and 3, indicates greater change for women participating in the couples’ dialogue sessions. Together with the consumption support women’s lives have been positively affected in multiple aspects such as increased income generation, positive changes in household expenditure and improved intra-household relations, specifically the sharing of household tasks and reduced conflict and to lesser degree changes in women’s role in decision making. Ultimately, though, men remain the ultimate decision-makers and therefore this appears to be an aspect of inequality that is more challenging to change.



Umodzi session for couples in Mangochi, Justyna Maciejczak, 2020

Case Study Rose Msusa

Rose attended *Umodzi* sessions with her husband, Adam. Their relationship has seen some significant changes since their participation in gender transformative dialogue. Previously, she took responsibility for all of the housework, most of the childcare and had little say in any household decisions. Through the sessions, she saw him accept that men need to consider the workload that their wives bear and support them with it, while she now feels better able to ask for his support by referring to what they learned in the sessions. While he still has the final say in household decisions, she has learned that women are also able to make decisions. Furthermore, he had recently taken one of his children to the health facility, a task that would have previously been reserved for a woman.



Rose Msusa, Graduation participant from Mangochi, Malawi, 2020 © Tara Bedi

Rose learned that “for a good relationship there has to be respect”. For her, that means welcoming him when he comes home rather than just continuing with her activities. For Adam, this means that he no longer beats her. For Rose this was the most important part of *Umodzi*, as nothing had stopped the beating before. According to the culture in this area, men feel powerful over women but slowly there is a sense that they are more equal, which is reflected in how they treat their wives.

However, making these changes has not always been simple. Men laugh at Adam and women laugh at Rose for their way of living but they feel that these are changes they committed to. They are strong in their belief that these are positive changes for their family and will continue with these despite the negative feedback from their community. They tell the people that mock them that if they had gone through the same training they would understand, “I wish the other families also knew about this as they don’t realise how important this is for them and how good it is”.

By seeing for themselves the positive impacts that such changes have brought to their family, they are able to withstand the reaction from those that did not participate in *Umodzi* and continue to enjoy the benefits.

What have we learned?

As Rose’s case study shows us, making changes to the personal lives of women that mean challenging traditional gender norms has come at a price. Some men have been mocked and others are said to be under their wife’s spell. While this backlash has been seen elsewhere as a retaliation to gender transformative approaches and is not entirely unexpected, it also points to the need to ensure that a community component is included in the design. We must recognise that individuals function within social structures at various levels – household, community and wider society. For participants to transform gender norms and to make significant changes to a way of life that they may never have questioned before, new behaviours need to be tried out, modelled and sustained. They need to be communicated through multiple channels and gather as many willing participants as possible along the way. Only then will new social norms start to form at the wider level.

However, the early indications of the impact of *Umodzi* are that women’s lives, in terms of income, expenditure, decision-making, and household conflict is positive and the outcomes look promising. We will be eagerly watching this space for the final outcomes in 2022.

System strengthening: What does this mean for the Graduation Approach?

Written by Abreham Menber and Claver Kabhungu

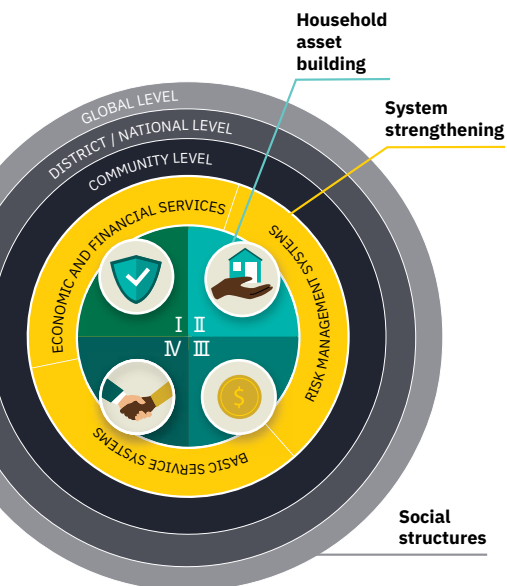
Graduation approaches are designed to bring about sustainable changes in people's wellbeing. However, providing a comprehensive package of support at a household level alone is insufficient if programmes do not address the institutional, societal and cultural barriers that prevent people from engaging fully in society. In order to bring about transformative and sustained changes in livelihoods, we need to go beyond household asset building – beyond an integrated package of support at the household level, and consider the enabling environment – the systems within which people live and work.

Concern considers three main sets of systems: economic and financial systems, risk management systems and basic service systems. Whilst not all elements need to be incorporated into programme design – and it is important not to overwhelm programmes – it is essential to understand which systems are functional and can be accessed by targeted households and which are not. Weak/inaccessible systems need attention, not necessarily through the programme or by Concern directly but through complementary interventions. The following case studies highlight a number of systems and how programmes have aimed to strengthen these to the benefit of those living in extreme poverty.

Supporting national systems: The case of REGRADE in Ethiopia

The concept of Graduation is not new to Ethiopia and our REGRADE (**RE**silience + **GRAD**uation + **E**vidence) programme (2017-2022) is closely linked to the temporary direct support provision of the national Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). PSNP Temporary Direct Support clients are food insecure but have labour capacity and the PSNP provides them with cash and/or food transfers in return for seasonal public employment activities. In addition to the safety net function, the PSNP also has a livelihood component that provides technical assistance, business planning and access to financial services to further livelihood promotion.

Whilst the safety net function of the PSNP covers the whole of Ethiopia, the coverage of the livelihood component is more limited. Therefore, through REGRADE we support the implementation of this livelihood component in 20 Community



Micro Watersheds found in nine *Woredas*¹. Whilst there are some similarities in the design and implementation of the livelihood component of the PSNP and the package of support provided under REGRADE, there are also some differences and we contribute to learning on what is required to bring about sustainable graduation from poverty in Ethiopia. The table below highlights these similarities and differences:

	PSNP-IV	REGRADE
Targeting	REGRADE follows a similar targeting approach to the PSNP. Following geographical targeting, eligible households are identified through a community-based targeting exercise, undertaken jointly with the <i>Kebele</i> Food Security Task Force (KFSTF) and community leaders. Under Cohort 1 of REGRADE, participants had to be receiving PSNP safety net support in order to be eligible for the programme. This was changed in Cohort 2 to capture other extremely poor households not enrolled on the PSNP.	
Consumption support	Both programmes provide the same households with 12 months of support. The PSNP provides two rounds of 6 months between January and June and REGRADE provides two rounds of 6 months between July and December. They provide the same daily rate of ETB 39 (US \$1.86) per person and support is conditional on undertaking public employment. For REGRADE these are related to soil and water conservation within the community watershed (refer to article 6).	
Technical and business skills training	Training is provided on one of three livelihood pathways: livestock and crop production, off-farm and waged-employment. Curriculum covers entrepreneurship, business and marketing and is delivered by a mix of livelihood experts and Agricultural Extension Workers.	Technical and business skills training is provided on eight different occupations (e.g. modern livestock and crop production, masonry, barbary). Training is delivered directly by Concern staff in partnership with Zonal/ <i>Woreda</i> government experts. Where skills do not exist in-house, services are sourced externally from other training providers.
Coaching and mentoring	Households are supported by the Government Agricultural Development Agents (DAs) through general extension services. Each DA supports around 250-300 households.	Households are supported by full-time locally-based Household Case Workers (HCW) employed directly by Concern. Each HCW supports around 50 households. Coaching is delivered through individual household visits (2 per month) and in groups of 10 (4 sessions per month) to nurture positive behaviour change.
Facilitating access to financial services	Households are linked to the government-supported Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives (RUSACCOs) and Micro Finance Institutions.	Households are linked to government-supported Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives (RuSACCOs). Where infrastructure is limited, participants are supported to establish Village Economic and Social Associations (VESA) to bridge the gaps ² .
Asset/capital transfer	Households receive a transfer of approx. ETB 7,000 (US \$250) on a loan basis. Funds are delivered through microfinance institutions (MFIs) and must be repaid in full.	Households receive part-grant (70%) and part-loan (30%) ³ . Grants are made directly by Concern whilst loans are made through RUSACCOs and are repayable. The value of support varies by livelihood activity (up to a maximum of ETB 6,000 US \$222).
Other key design features		Activities are designed to address gender inequality, Gender Based Violence, Health and Nutrition and Risk Management.

1. A *woreda* is the third level administrative division in Ethiopia, similar to a district. A *kebele* is the smallest administrative unit, similar to a ward or neighbourhood.

2. Even when members are linked up to RuSACCOs, VESA structures have remained and social activities (labour sharing and group insurance) have continued.

3. Under Cohort 1 the division was 50% loan and 50% grant however, participants successfully negotiated to reduce the loan requirement further.

We work closely with the Zone, *Woreda* and *Kebele* Food Security Task Force on implementation and took part in the annual PSNP reverification process when households are assessed as ready or not to exit the programme (graduate). This has led to the development of new jointly agreed criteria (and thresholds) upon which households will be assessed.⁴ Under the PSNP, readiness for graduation was traditionally measured by asset-based criteria potentially hiding other poverty dimensions the household might face. Concern's Graduation programmes support the notion of sustainable graduation therefore, we would expect levels of well-being to be sustained or even grow overtime. The new jointly developed criteria are multifaceted and cover a range of aspects including annual income and income diversification, asset ownership, food security, nutrition, linkage with financial institutions, housing condition and health and education status.

Over the course of two years, REGRADE has provided an additional investment of ETB 13,342 per household on top of the ETB 6,840 – 9,360⁵ provided under the PSNP Temporary Direct Support component. This additional investment led to a graduation rate of 59% amongst REGRADE Cohort 1 households based on the pre-existing PSNP asset-based graduation criteria (compared to a national graduation rate of 3% in 2019⁶ based on the same criteria) or a graduation rate of 24% amongst REGRADE Cohort 1

⁴ Agreed by Regional, Zonal and Woreda DRMFS – Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Commission teams

⁵ To note, this figure only covers remuneration based on public works activities and does not include costs of delivering other activities, such as the cost of coaching and mentoring which Government Extension Workers conduct.

⁶ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2019) Rapid Assessment on PSNP Graduation and Institutional Factors: The case of highland regions in Ethiopia. October 2019



Workinesh Alto outside the new family home, built with profits from her agricultural trading business, which she set up in the wake of taking part in REGRADE, a graduation-based programme run by Concern in SNNPR, Ethiopia. Kieren McConville, Concern Worldwide 2020.

households when based on the nine new multi-dimensional criteria. Up to May 2019, the programme had also led to the restoration of over 1,770 hectares of unproductive land and reduced soil loss by 51%.

The role of physical infrastructure: The case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Our programme in DRC (2017-2022) is implemented in Manono Territory which has the highest levels of food insecurity and inequality in the country. The population largely depends on subsistence farming and casual labour to earn a living and lack the resources to diversify and strengthen their livelihoods options. Poverty is exacerbated by vulnerability to water borne diseases and health shocks – 33 million people in rural areas (80% of total population)⁷ do not have access to safe water – and the population is constrained by weak and/or inaccessible social protection, government extension, financial services and road and transport infrastructure.

⁷ UNICEF (UD) <https://www.unicef.org/drcongo/en/what-we-do/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

In addition to providing a comprehensive package of support to households to improve their asset base our programme addresses the challenges created by the poor road network which creates a barrier to people being able to physically access market locations to buy and sell goods, and the inadequate water system which exposed people to health-related hazards. Specific activities included:

- An assessment of existing roads/ tracks and bridges to identify critical infrastructural constraints and prioritise infrastructure to be rehabilitated conducted jointly by the Programme Team (under the supervision of our Programme Engineer) with local administrative structures.
- A public employment programme targeted at the wider community to support the rehabilitation of roads and bridges and minimise negative social impacts⁸.
- Supervision of the rehabilitation work to ensure Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) principles are considered.
- Construction and rehabilitation of water points together with hygiene promotion.

A range of actors are involved in addressing systemic constraints. We work closely with local administration and technical structures (Departments of Health, Roads and Markets) on the establishment and management of water points, construction of roads and rehabilitation of bridges, and in validation of the works conducted. These partnerships have provided a good opportunity to raise their awareness of the poverty and vulnerability status of targeted communities and the challenges they face. We undertake joint visits to programmes which has also provided a good opportunity for communities to raise issues with authorities.

⁸. For more information on this, please see the accompanying article on adaptation that is also in this edition of Knowledge Matters.



Muzinga Costasie collecting water in Nsonsa village. Photo was taken during our technical evaluation. This area was hit with frequent Cholera outbreaks, typhoid and other diseases. Salomen Kalembu, Concern Worldwide 2019



Mukamba Kaseye, the Territorial Administrator of Manono, and Berry Nsenga, Chief Medical Officer, at the official opening of the new water point. Since the new water point has been in use, incidents of diseases have drastically reduced. Thierry Yumba, Concern Worldwide 2020

Up to the end of 2020, we had successfully rehabilitated 143 km length of roads and 9 bridges and constructed 46 and rehabilitated 6 water points. Over the past four years, the proportion of households with sanitary toilet facilities has increased from 32% to 74% whilst the proportion of households testing negative for E. coli in drinking water at point of use increased from 1.8% to 71%. Improving the road and transport infrastructure subsequently led to improvements in market accessibility. For some of the villages, 2019 was the first time that they had ever been accessed by vehicles. This has meant that wholesalers are able to access producers and producers are able to get their goods to the market and have greater access to raw materials (e.g. seed and tools).

Summary

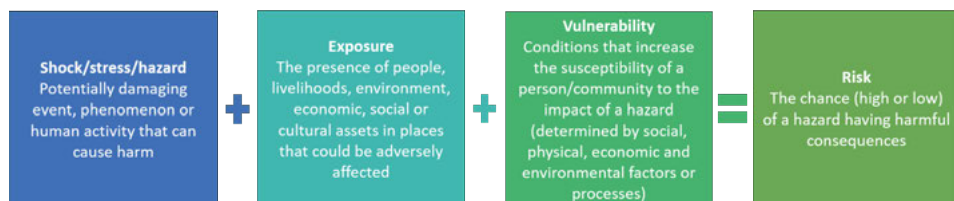
Our experience from Ethiopia and DRC highlights the importance of considering the systems and structures within which people live and work in order to bring about sustainable graduation from extreme poverty. In addition to providing households with a comprehensive package of support we need to consider and start to help them address the bottlenecks to their full engagement in society. Whilst it is important not to overburden programmes, we need to take a multi-layered approach; looking at what people are graduating in to and onto, and work in partnership, with public and private actors to achieve systemic change.

Working on the enabling environment and strengthening systems will also lead to the accrual of benefits more widely (beyond targeted households) thereby improving overall cost effectiveness. In DRC, for example, many non-targeted households will benefit from the improved access to markets. At the same time, safer drinking water and latrine use will improve the health and nutrition of the whole community, reducing the direct and indirect costs of ill health.

Addressing risk within Graduation programmes

Written by Abreham Menber and Sayeed Mahmud Riadh

The term ‘risk’ refers to the probability or chance that a shock/stress or hazard will cause harm. The harm done is determined by exposure and vulnerability.



In the contexts where we work, people face varying degrees of risk to a variety of hazards including flooding, river erosion, drought, fire etc. Hazards differ between urban and rural contexts, and whether they affect whole communities (covariate) or just individuals (idiosyncratic).

There are conditions that make people more vulnerable to these hazards such as lack of assets including land (quantity and quality) or shelter, low education levels, gender inequality, lack of access to basic services or social protection, lack of legal identity, lack of information etc. The less economic, political and cultural power people have before an event, the greater their suffering during and in the aftermath.

Risk management refers to activities or actions designed to reduce hazards, exposure or vulnerability, examples of which can be seen in the box below:

PROGRAMME ACTIONS

To reduce hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and biological soil and water conservation activities. • Training on natural resource management.
To reduce exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessments and risk management strategies. • Early warning systems and preparedness activities. • Contingency planning at micro, meso and macro level.
To reduce vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service mapping and linking participants with basic and financial services. • Livelihood diversification to reduce dependency on one income source. • Social safety net coverage.

A person's or a community's ability to deal with hazards is derived from interlinked anticipatory (ability to foresee and plan for), absorptive (ability to cope) and adaptive (ability to adapt or respond to change) capacities. Graduation programmes are designed to bring about sustainable changes in people's well-being; this implies a level of resilience. The following case studies highlight ways in which programmes in Ethiopia and Bangladesh are improving people's ability to deal with hazards.

Risk management in Ethiopia: The case of REGRADE

Our Graduation programme in Ethiopia is known as REGRADE (**RE**silience + **GRAD**uation + **E**vidence) (2017-2021). In addition to providing a comprehensive package of support to households and expanding their employment opportunities, we seek to ensure that extremely poor communities in South Wollo and Wolaita are better able to cope with a range of natural hazards.

Reducing hazards

REGRADE targets 11,660 households¹/59,185 people who reside, or whose farming plots are located, in 20 Community Micro-Watersheds (CMWs)² identified as the most vulnerable based on the frequency of occurrence of hazards, prevalence of malnutrition and receipt of aid. Targeting CMWs increases the integration of

¹ 5,634 households are targeted with a comprehensive graduation package and 6,026 households are reached through wider community activities including Natural Resource Management, Promotion of Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture, Maternal, Infant and Young Child Feeding (MIYCF) and Family Planning, and capacity building of cooperatives.

² The CMW selection and planning process followed the national Community-based Participatory Integrated Watershed Development (CBPIWD) guidelines.



activities, maximises the use of resources and promotes joint analysis and planning for sustainable watershed management, which is essential for ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

REGRADE builds on top of the national Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) therefore consumption support provided under REGRADE aligns with the same requirements of the PSNP, and is conditional on participants undertaking public employment on watershed restoration and building communal assets. Over the past four years, these actions have led to significant improvements in soil and water conservation and have had positive effects on livelihoods. Specific improvements (up to 2019) include³:

- A 52% reduction in soil erosion⁴.
- The rehabilitation of 2,316 hectares of unproductive degraded land.
- The planting of 2,255,088 tree seedlings (Moringa, Graviilea Robusta, Cassia Fistula, Acacia Saligna, Coffee Arabica, Avocado, Mango, Acacia Decerense, Lucerne Fodder, Juniperus, Hagenia Abyssinica).
- The regeneration of four springs, leading to increased water yield and reduced fetching times (from one hour to 10-20 minutes)

³ All figures are calculated from the baseline in 2017

⁴ Based on the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation – RUSLE model

- Reduced runoff, harvest loss and flooding. Accordingly, there was a 38% reduction in number of hazards reported and 33% of households and 32% of cropland were less affected.
- Improved crop yields as a result of improved soil moisture and nutrient levels. Productivity of Barley, Taro and Haricot beans improved by 38%, 22% and 122% respectively.

Reducing exposure

REGRADE facilitated the establishment of CMW Committees to manage and promote improved natural resource management practices. Over the past four years, these Committees have enhanced their institutional and operational capacities, and are now legally certified associations with by-laws and working structures for sustainable micro-watershed management. The Committees are also linked up with the *Kebele* and *Woreda* Government Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) structures and are responsible for mainstreaming DRR actions. Each Committee has developed unique preparedness, mitigation and contingency plans including the adoption of a crisis modifier⁵ acquired from the income generated from managing the watershed plus further contribution of the community.

Reducing vulnerability

Providing a comprehensive package of support to participating households is designed to improve their asset base and expand their livelihood portfolios, thereby making them less vulnerable to the impact of hazards. As a result of the programme, 1,549 households in cohort 1 increased their asset base by ETB 7,027 (US \$262) on average; which led to a graduation rate of

⁵ Crisis modifiers are ring-fenced budget lines built into multi-year programmes and are intended to facilitate early action when triggered by warning of an emerging crisis.

59% compared to the national average of 3% under the existing PSNP⁶ asset-based graduation criteria.

We also encourage households to spread risk by diversifying income sources and to save to enhance absorptive capacity. Improved access to information has led to households being able to adopt higher yield and more drought tolerant crops. Subsequently, the average number of months households are unable to meet their minimum daily food requirements has declined from four months to one month whilst improved saving behaviour has led to an average increase in savings held of ETB 1,246 (\$45). Participation in community-based saving and loan associations has also led to members contributing towards a social fund used to support each other in times of specific stress and overall, participants have reported improvements in positive coping capacity⁷ from 49% at baseline to 60% four years later.

Risk management in Bangladesh: The case of the Empowering Women and Youth through Graduation and Financial Inclusion (EWYGFI) programme

We were funded by Trickle Up and the Metlife Foundation to implement the EWYGFI programme in The Chars – a remote area of Bangladesh located on riverine sandbars. These isolated landmasses are home to more than six million people of which 48% suffer from food insecurity compared to 27% on the mainland⁸. The Chars are vulnerable to natural disasters

⁶ Graduation rate calculated according to asset holding under PSNP

⁷ Measured by the Livelihoods Coping Capacity Index (LCCI)

⁸ World Bank (2016) Interactive Poverty Maps <http://www.worldbank.org/en/data/interactive/2016/11/10/bangladesh-poverty-maps>



Pictures of flooding in Bazra, Kurigram District in 2020. Md. Asaduzzaman, Concern Worldwide July 2020

(flood, river erosion, drought, storm, extreme cold weather) whilst also being under-served by development actors including government structures. The population have inadequate access to basic services as well as being affected by poor distribution and utilisation of common properties e.g. Khas land⁹ and employment opportunities are limited.

The programme was implemented over the course of 3 years 2 months (Nov 2017 until Dec 2020) and reached 13,000 people living in Kurigram District. Of these, 600 ultra-poor people were targeted with a comprehensive Graduation package whilst 12,400 poor people were supported to access formal financial services. Given people’s exposure and vulnerability to natural disasters, risk management was a significant component of the programme and we focused on identifying and understanding the specific climate-induced hazards affecting people and making recommendations on how future programming could better help people mitigate or manage climate induced risk.

⁹. Khas land is government owned fallow land where nobody has property rights. It is available for allocation according to government priorities.

Reducing exposure

We conducted several actions to reduce participant exposure to climate-induced hazards, including:

- Facilitating the establishment of Ward Disaster Management Committees to lead and oversee disaster risk management processes.
- Assessing existing community disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies in consultation with the community and Self-Help Groups to consider appropriateness for mitigating risk.
- Collecting and sharing early warning information through mobile phone communication and community radio, better equipping communities to take early action.
- Training participating households on DRR strategies and supporting them to integrate strategies into their existing business plans (e.g. using flood-tolerant seed varieties, when to plant and harvest, and when to vaccinate poultry).

Reducing vulnerability

Support to access financial services was designed to reduce the vulnerability of households to a multitude of hazards. We facilitated the creation of a Rotational Savings and Business Initiatives (ROSBI) model whereby participants save a small amount of money each month. Each month one member is able to access the total amount as credit to invest in economic activities until all members have received the amount once. Skills training and additional seed capital further strengthen human capital and capacity. We also promoted livelihood diversification, depending on the assessment of risk in different areas - non-farm activities (e.g. tailoring and bamboo basket weaving) were promoted in areas where there was high risk of flooding and river erosion; poultry farming, and livestock in mid-risk areas and on-farm activities in low-risk areas.

Having savings means that should incomes be disrupted, households have greater absorptive capacity and are less likely to revert to negative coping strategies, such as distress sale of assets. Under the ROSBI, participants managed to save BDT 32,079,290 (€372,191) in total / BDT 2,497 (€28.97) per participant over the 3 years. However, the rotational model meant that whilst people were able to save, monies were not always available to support people in times of crisis. This led to some groups also establishing an emergency fund which people could access in such times. There was also evidence of informal coping strategies, such as *Mushti chal* 'handful of rice' whereby participants put aside small amounts of rice every day, gradually building up substantial reserves, to support group members who had not managed to increase incomes to a level where whereby they could buffer the impact of the event.

Finally, we facilitated access to basic services through undertaking a thorough service mapping and sharing that information to all

groups; orientating members on the available services and access requirements.

During the implementation of the programme, there were several natural hazards which affected participants, including devastating floods (July/August 2019, 2020) and the COVID-19 health pandemic and subsequent restrictions (Mid-March 2020). Whilst, the increased financial and technical capacity of participants enabled them to adapt to these events there is still high-dependency on agricultural-based livelihoods and the community is still vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly flooding and drought.

Summary

Our experiences from Ethiopia and Bangladesh highlight ways in which Concern's programmes are helping communities and wider social structures to manage risk. Building household assets and incomes enhances the absorptive capacity of participants - their ability to cope in the face of climate extremes and disasters. Additionally, improved savings, ability to diversify livelihood activities as well as increased social networks and associated support systems all contribute to people's ability to adapt when events occur and communities are displaying positive adaptation strategies. However, adaptive capacity takes time and there may be more to gain in the short term by improving anticipatory capacity through targeted responses that concentrate on specific known shocks and stresses. An example of this is the use of early warning systems to help people forecast and plan for the impact of specific hazards. There is also a need for a more adaptive model of Social Protection, better integrating social safety nets, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

Improving people's access to income and returns on employment activities: Experience from Burundi and Haiti

Written by Kwan Li Kladstrup and Theophile Bujeje

Being able to earn a living and generate income, either through self- or waged-employment, is generally a necessity for survival. Graduation programmes are designed to improve people's access to, and return on, employment activities. The majority of our Graduation programmes currently support self-employment both on- and off-farm though, with our growth in urban programming, there has been more scope for facilitating access to formal waged-employment.

Graduation programmes provide people the space, and resources, to invest in livelihood promotion – whether this be through expanding an existing activity or kick starting something new (or a mix of both). Programmes crucially look to understand labour market dynamics and support participants to identify viable employment opportunities. We help to address constraints to labour market engagement through providing skills training and capital, and facilitate access to valuable information and societal networks. This article looks at our experience of supporting income generation in Burundi and Haiti.

Income generating activities (IGAs) in Burundi

We have been implementing the *Terintambwe* Graduation programme in Burundi since 2012 and the programme now covers three provinces (Cibitoke, Kirundo and Bubanza) and reached 208,300 households / 39,010 direct recipients over nine years.

We undertake a comprehensive market assessment in order to identify viable economic opportunities – exploring market dynamics and considering requirements for entry including potential barriers. The assessment conducted during phase 1 of the programme (2012-2016) identified potential opportunities in the following value chains: cassava (dried and fresh), banana, vegetables and selling airtime for mobile phones. Participants used this market information to make decisions on preferred economic activities and, with the support of Case Managers, to develop simple business plans. For the most part, participants expanded existing activities such as diversifying crop production but some looked to engage in new sectors or activities. In both cases, we recommend that participants look to diversify their income sources to spread risk.

BUSINESS SKILLS TRAINING

We use the 17-point rulebook, developed by Concern colleagues in Rwanda, for training participants on business skills.

The guide provides step-by-step instructions for business skills training of micro-entrepreneurs and takes into account existing life and business experience as well low levels of literacy and numeracy. It covers Training of Trainers (ToT) and Programme Participant Training (PPT) and uses role-play as a core training approach.



Gerard Ndabahekeye (28) with his new hoe bought with the profits of his business, a small shop, which he was able to set up due to the investment of the Graduation Programme. Photographed in his cassava field near his home in Bukinanyana, Cibitoke, Burundi. Photo: Abbie Traylor-Smith / Concern Worldwide

Participants then received relevant technical and business skills training. We also provided participants with a capital transfer of BIF 150,000 (\$110¹), paid in two or three instalments, to increase their productive asset ownership.

The sequence of activities is similar in the second phase of the programme (2017-2021) though there has been increased use of group structures (in addition to existing community-based saving and loan associations) that has further contributed to individual success. In Kirundo, groups of ten participants have combined financial resources. Each member contributes money each month and one member is able to withdraw funds to purchase a larger asset. The next month another member takes their turn to withdraw funds and so on. This means that after ten months all members have been able to purchase assets that they would not have been able to do otherwise. In addition, there have been positive divisions seen in the existing community-based savings associations, where smaller groups of people (three - five) come together to support each

other with labour such as brick making, house construction and farming – each day is dedicated to one participant and a certain activity. In Bubanza, participants formed more formal groups to develop economic activities. Groups (between three and 30 people) engaged in collective farming activities (tomato, watermelon, cabbage, rice, pineapple) and animal husbandry (cows and goats). These group structures not only helped with providing coaching but also led to improved returns on assets as well as providing a valuable social network.

The expansion of group structures has had significant impacts on livelihood promotion. In 2020,² 30 participants contributed BIF 30,000 (\$15.75) each and purchased land to farm pineapples whilst 21 members contributed BIF 20,000 (€10.50) each to farm rice and received a three-fold return at harvest - BIF 412,000 (€216).

There has been significant learning along the way:

- Initially, the range of economic activities supported was limited though this led to market saturation.
- There is a need to encourage and nurture innovation to create competitive advantage.
- Whilst we facilitated links to other market actors, participants faced physical barriers to accessing physical market places for buying or selling goods.
- The scheduling of capital transfers needs to happen before the end of consumption support phase to avoid diversion of capital transfer to basic needs.
- Livelihood diversification is key to reducing the vulnerability of participants to different hazards and allow them to spread risk.

¹. EURO €70 – US conversion rate taken from 01 January 2012

². US \$ exchange rate used from 01 January 2020

- Certain Income Generating Activities (IGAs) have high capital requirements and group formation is a useful way to pool resources and provides peer learning and solidarity.
- In Burundi, most participants are engaged in self-employment and sometime have issues accessing social protection. Events that prevent people from working have a significant impact on livelihoods. Within the programme, we have a contingency budget line that allows us to provide additional support to participants in order to protect development gains during the programme cycle. For example, if someone passes away then the whole family takes one week off to mourn. In this instance, the programme provides additional income support for that week.

The role of partnership in facilitating access to employment: The experience of Haiti

Our current Graduation programme in Haiti (2017-2021) is being implemented in eight neighbourhoods in Cité Soleil, one of the biggest slums in Port au Prince (260,000 inhabitants) and where there is a presence of armed groups and a high level of violence. Cité Soleil has largely been neglected by the state and there are multiple systems level challenges, with weak and/or inaccessible basic services (health, education), economic and financial and risk management systems.

The urban setting for our programme offers huge scope to work with, and through partners to effect change particularly on livelihood promotion. The programme works closely with partners Entrepreneurs du Monde and Committé D'Action Pour L'Avancement Du Cap-Haïtien (CAPAC) on the provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), business skills training, literacy and numeracy training and the provision of capital transfers.

During the first year of the programme, we undertook a market assessment to identify viable economic activities in the eight target neighbourhoods. This assessment also looked at skills required by the labour market and possibilities for training. As part of participant orientation, we conducted psychometric testing to consider what types of employment would be most appropriate for individuals based on existing skills, capabilities and interest. Participants were then grouped according to activities. These group structures were used for providing training – those pursuing self-employment were provided technical and business skills training from Entrepreneurs du Monde, whilst those pursuing waged-employment were provided with vocational training in areas such as cosmetology, sewing, cooking and driving of heavy machinery by CAPAC. All participants received life skills training and those with low literacy and numeracy received appropriate professional courses. In addition to skills transfer, participants received a capital transfer of around \$200³ to enable them to invest in productive assets.

Gernante Thelusma is a single mother who, prior to her participation in the programme, ran a small cosmetics business to meet the basic needs of her and her children. Under our programme, Gernante participated in vocational training so that she could pursue her passion of sewing. Gernante also received life-skills training on interpersonal relationships, nonviolent communication and stress management. Despite many participants dropping out of vocational training due to personal challenges, Gernante never missed a class and tried to encourage her peers to stick with it. Out of 19 students, Gernante was one of the five programme participants who completed the course. After receiving her diploma in August 2019, Gernante started to make school uniforms and she is now one of the main school uniform designers in Cité Soleil.

³. €188. US equivalent based on exchange rate on 01 January 2017



“ My [family] did not understand this choice given my conditions. I was criticized for opting for something whose results will be seen in the long term against the strengthening of my small cosmetic business. However, for me, knowledge has no limit and I know I will be more proactive when practicing my passion. The results will be much more sustainable even if not immediately visible”

Gernante Thelusma. Kieran McConville,
Concern Worldwide, 2019

Social and economic exclusion poses many barriers in moving vulnerable households out of extreme poverty in Cité Soleil. A lack of formal waged employment opportunities, in particular for women, affects the sustainability of income generation but also results in intergenerational transmission of poverty – households are unable to provide an education for their children and therefore children and youth are particularly vulnerable to recruitment into gangs and engaging in criminal activity including violent crime. Through facilitating links between individuals and labour markets, our programme has provided pathways for individuals out of poverty. Overall, the programme has reached 1,159 project participants (900 women and 259 men) and led to improvements in economic opportunities, savings levels and self-esteem. In 2020, 66% of participants reported being able to increase the value of their savings due to income generating activities. The livelihoods component provides the most vulnerable men and women in Cité Soleil with economic opportunity and builds hope for a more prosperous future however, systemic barriers remain.

Summary

This article provides diverse experiences in terms of income generation. In Burundi, participants are mostly engaged in self-employment activities and, whilst in Haiti there is greater scope for waged-employment, systemic barriers remain.

An important aspect identified by both programmes is the need to have a thorough understanding of the market system (including specific value chains) and market dynamics in order to identify opportunities for engagement and any barriers to entry (both on the supply and demand side).

Different livelihood pathways (self-employment, waged-employment, on- and off-farm) require distinct support and engagement with market actors. It is important to consider what skills and capabilities people already possess and look to strengthen participant’s capacity to make sound decisions regarding the sustainability of different activities including economic viability, social and environmental impact.

How participants manage livelihood-related risks is also crucial. One way of managing risk is the diversification of income generating activities (usually within the same sub-sector, rather than completely different sectors) though there is also potential to improve people’s ability to manage risk either through internal efforts (saving) or external efforts (greater coverage of safety net programming). Finally, we recognise that whilst much of our livelihood portfolio is focused on supporting people engaged in self-employment, not everyone is an entrepreneur and in some circumstances it would be more appropriate to facilitate access to waged-employment (ideally formal). Where doing so we need to look at the nature of employment and our role in advocating for decent work conditions.

Monitoring Graduation programmes: The experience of Malawi

Written by Gift Mwembe and Áine Magee

The multisector nature of Graduation programmes means that monitoring is not straightforward and involves numerous indicators and data collection tools to track whether all elements of the programme are implemented effectively and yielding results. To further complicate things, households are often supported in different cohorts, whilst the intense individual support which is fundamental to the Graduation Approach and designed to bring about positive changes in well-being over-time, requires longitudinal data. Lastly, as with all programmes, monitoring of activities, outputs and outcomes is essential to ensure the logic of the intervention is correct and the assumptions made are valid. To manage these complexities a clear and detailed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan is essential. The plan should detail tools, sampling and frequency of all data collection processes. It is also important that the M&E plan is a live document and updated as changes occur during implementation. This article highlights some key components of a Graduation programme monitoring system and how our programme in Malawi has implemented them.

Multisector Activity Monitoring

A key component of the Graduation Approach is coaching, whereby a Case Worker provides targeted and tailored support to participating households. Case Workers actively follow up on household engagement in programme activities from recording attendance at

trainings, to monitoring progress on income generating activities. In Malawi, we have aided that interaction by developing a digital monitoring form that Case Workers complete during each household visit. This tool captures key information on interactions and allows M&E staff and programme managers to see how many visits are made, what is being discussed and the level of participation in various trainings and groups.

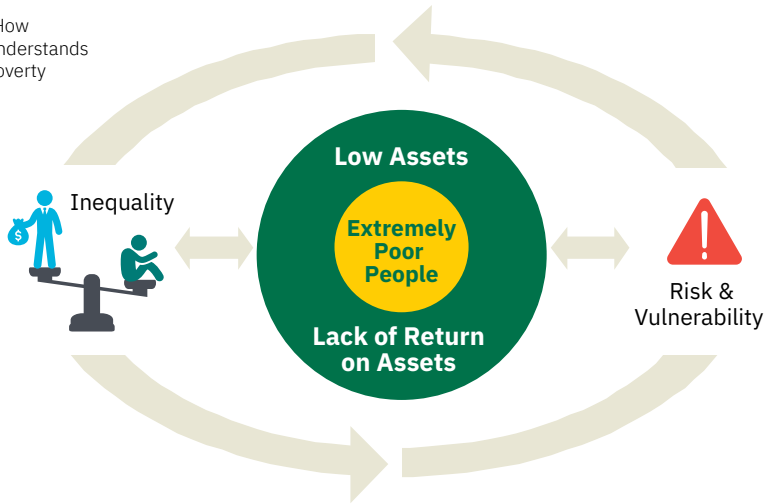
Multisector Output Monitoring

In addition to regular activity monitoring, we conduct quarterly output level monitoring at the household level. These assessments, which are also digitalised, serve as quality control and verify the information obtained in the Case Worker monitoring form as well as capturing participant satisfaction with coaching. It reflects on output level progress and includes questions on the application of trainings, progress on income generating activities (IGA) and levels of saving and spending patterns. It also includes standard post distribution monitoring questions relating to how households use financial support provided under the programme.

Monitoring Outcomes

To measure overall changes in well-being, we use indicators grouped under the three main dimensions of How Concern Understands Extreme Poverty (HCUEP): Assets, Risk and Vulnerability and Inequality (see Figure 1). In Malawi, we also include a

Figure 1: How Concern Understands Extreme Poverty



fourth indicator that measures the success of the programme in influencing systems and structures, in this instance informing government policy and programming. The types of indicators used include income levels (average income from specific IGA), material deprivation (measures expenditure and is a proxy for income) and asset ownership (asset index is also a proxy for income); food security (household dietary diversity and hunger gap); and livelihood resilience (livelihood coping capacity index). All indicators are monitored across each cohort, enabling us to look at cohort progress over time.

Longitudinal Monitoring

Graduation programmes are designed to bring about sustained changes in well-being, therefore we need to monitor individual progress over time. This is known as longitudinal monitoring and requires us to maintain a database of interactions with, and progress of, individual households. This is a complex process and requires a good data management system and processes. In Malawi, we made an effort to digitize this process using iForm Builder however,

we faced a number of challenges. Whilst it was possible to collect and record data on individual participants through the use of a unique ID number, assessing individual performance was more difficult without having advanced data analysis skills. Concern’s investment in a new beneficiary and transfer management system (to be rolled out in 2021) will hopefully provide a solution to this.

Cohort Tracking

In Malawi, our programme is implemented sequentially across three cohorts. The use of cohorts was not only beneficial for managing implementation, due to high human resource requirements, it also facilitated programme learning and evolution between each cohort. See Figure 2 for the cohort management across Concern’s current graduation IAPF II-funded portfolio. In terms of monitoring, we had to consider data collection for each group as there were multiple baselines and end lines and it had to be possible to disaggregate and present data by cohort. We also needed to agree in advance with donors how data would be reported. Different countries

may end up reporting differently, as we see across Concern’s current Graduation portfolio (See Table 1). Some programmes report on only one cohort throughout the entire programme cycle, which includes the post implementation period and speaks to the matter of sustainability whilst other programmes report data for each cohort, which means yearly targets fluctuate

depending on which cohort is currently receiving support and where they are in their journey. There is no right or wrong approach and each has pros and cons, whichever approach is chosen, it is essential to document it clearly in the M&E plan, tag data according to which cohort it refers and to reflect the approach in the setting of annual targets.

Country	Number of Cohorts	Duration of support (months)*	Y1 2017				Y2 2018				Y3 2019				Y4 2020				Y5 2021				Y6 2022			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Ethiopia	2	Cohort 1 (28m)																								
		Cohort 2 (31m)																								
Malawi	3	Cohort 1 (24m)																								
		Cohort 2 (18m)																								
		Cohort 3 (18m)																								
Rwanda	3	Cohort 1 (33m)																								
		Cohort 2 (27m)																								
		Cohort 3 (27m)																								
Burundi	4	Cohort 2 - (24m)																								
		Cohort 2 - (30m)																								
		Cohort 3 - (27m)																								
		Cohort 4 - (33m)																								
Haiti	4	Cohort 1 (18m)																								
		Cohort 2 (24m)																								
		Cohort 3 (19m)																								
		Cohort 4 (19m)																								
DRC	5	Cohort 1 (24m)																								
		Cohort 2 (24m)																								
		Cohort 3 (24m)																								
		Cohort 4 (24m)																								

Table 1: IAPF II (2017-2021) Graduation programmes: Cohort Management

Cohort Reporting Through Irish Aid Results Frameworks						
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Haiti	Cohort 1					
Malawi	Cohort 1					
Ethiopia	Cohort 1					
Burundi/ Rwanda	Cohort 1					
				Cohort 2		
DRC	Cohort 1					
			Cohort 2			
				Cohort 3		

Table 2: IAPF II (2017-2021) Graduation programmes: Cohort reporting

Measuring Graduation

The term 'graduation' is synonymous with the term 'exit', implying that participants have reached a certain level of well-being whereby they no longer require support. Our programme is implemented over a fixed period of time therefore, regardless of socio-economic status, participants will stop receiving programme support at the end of the programme cycle. Nonetheless, monitoring graduation rates is useful for communicating, in simple figures, how many people are no longer considered to be living in extreme poverty.

There is no specific tool for measuring graduation, nor specific criteria to use. The simplest way is to apply thresholds to specific criteria (such as outcome indicators) and, at regular intervals, look at the proportion of participants who have met or surpassed these thresholds. It is important, that criterion consider the multi-dimensional nature of poverty rather than just looking at economic measures (income, asset ownerships) and that thresholds applied are context specific. It is possible to combine a set of criteria into an index and apply thresholds for each - participants are required to meet thresholds across all criteria to be considered 'graduated'. This requires quite a high level of analysis and so should be taken into account when setting up monitoring tools so that it can be automated as much as possible.

In Malawi, we have been using a qualitative approach to measuring household performance and have developed a 'Progress Assessment Tool' where programme staff assess household progress on several aspects including income generation, business skills, asset ownership and food security. It also considers participant progress towards their household contract, an agreement developed between households, local authorities and Concern at the beginning of the programme and setting out household goals and how each party will work together to achieve

these. We measure household performance six months before the end of the programme in order to tailor support for households that might be moving more quickly or slowly through the process. Households deemed to have made very little progress will continue receiving two coaching visits per month for the final six months, whereas those with few issues will receive only one coaching visit per month for the final six months. Coaching at this time focuses on specific barriers that households face to progression whilst they may not have 'graduated' by the end of the programme cycle they have an action plan to help them to continue moving forward.

Data utilization

The best data collection system and tools are worthless if the data is not used. With the complexity surrounding the monitoring of Graduation programmes, there is a risk that systems can become overly complex and unusable. To mitigate against this, teams in Malawi and HQ worked together to develop automated dashboards for each of the main data collection tools. The image below shows the dashboard for the quarterly output-monitoring tool, specifically it shows the frequency of different topics discussed between case workers and households. The coloured lines represent specific topics, the horizontal axis shows the data collection period and the vertical axis shows the proportion of household where each topic was discussed. This chart is a useful management tool and can show a programme manager very quickly which topics are/are not being covered and allow them to adjust their programme accordingly.

Once set up, dashboards automatically populate as new data is entered and, providing tagged correctly, they automatically disaggregate data by cohort. Despite the ease of use, it was challenging to convince programme staff to shift away from static reporting and actively use these dashboards.

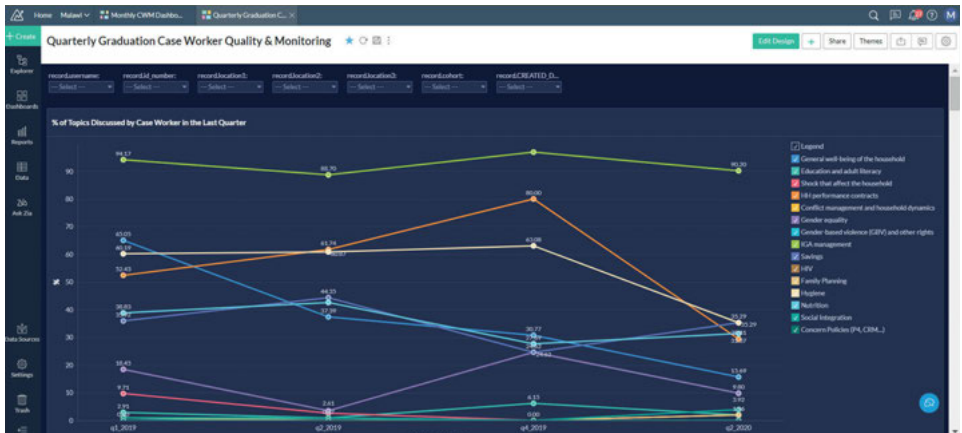


Figure 2: Quarterly output monitoring tool dashboard showing frequency of topics discussed between case workers and households.

It required intensive training to help programme teams realise the advantages of the system as a flexible reporting tool.

Summary

- Monitoring of Graduation programmes is more complex than for other types of programmes, due to the comprehensive package of support being provided, the sequencing of activities and the use of cohorts. Measuring graduation is more than just looking at improvements in economic status (income, asset ownership) and considers the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and that each household is on its own journey out of extreme poverty.
- The use of cohorts and sequential implementation has enhanced the opportunity for learning and adaptation particularly with regards monitoring processes.
- The ‘Progress Assessment Tool’ which assesses the individual progress of participating households and allows the programme to tailor support needs is a good example of where the team (field staff and M&E staff) have worked collaboratively to design a monitoring

“ Project monitoring using dashboards has been a very effective way of viewing project results in a very holistic way. With dashboard reporting, we have been able to filter results by location and staff... and use them to identify issues that require urgent action in order to increase performance. This was not possible with general reports produced before. As a supervisor, I have been able to pick and visualize results for specific officers and support them accordingly.”

Levy Kabvala-Team Leader-Mangochi District, Malawi

tool that meets specific programme requirements.

- The development of user-friendly Zoho Dashboards has increased utilisation of data amongst all programme staff. Dashboard-generated reports have supported learning and enabled timely decision-making. They have also reduced time pressures on Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) staff, avoiding the need to generate multiple programme reports.

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

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