



**REGRADE**  
**RESILIENCE**  
**+ GRADUATION**  
**+ EVIDENCE**

**ABOVE:** Workie and her husband Ketema are programme participants in REGRADE. Here, Workie is showing the vegetables she grows and sells to support their family, next to their house which Ketema built after receiving support from the programme.

*Photo: Hailegebriel Endeshaw / Concern Worldwide 2021*

From 2017–2021, Concern Worldwide implemented an Irish Aid funded Graduation Programme entitled REGRADE: **REsilience / GRADuation / Evid**ence with the goal to ‘**build livelihood security and improve nutritional outcomes among the extremely poor households living in South Wollo and Wolaitta Zones in Ethiopia**’. Graduation programmes provide an integrated and sequenced package of support to create pathways out of extreme poverty. This includes:

- social protection
- livelihood promotion
- financial inclusion
- social empowerment

The approach helps programme participants meet their basic needs whilst allowing them the opportunity to invest in themselves and expand new or existing livelihood activities.

**DESIGN OF REGRADE**





**ABOVE:** The Disaster Risk Reduction Committee in Dugna Fango Woreda work carrying out watershed management work.

Photo: Hailegebriel Endeshaw / Concern Worldwide 2021

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Resilience and Graduation model has been tested and has shown significant impact. Components of the programme including effective targeting, cash transfer, coaching and mentoring, training, livelihood and diversification contributed to accelerating graduation out of poverty.
- The integration of multiple types of intervention (ie safety net + livelihood components) was essential for the success of the programme and more effective than each individual component would have been on its own.
- The watershed approach was found to be feasible and replicable. Using the micro watersheds as the level of targeting was novel and allowed an accrual of benefits such as soil and water conservation, rehabilitated water sources and vegetation cover and the improvement of soil fertility.
- Working with government is vital to ensure sustainability of social safety nets.
- Empowering communities to enforce the rules to protect the micro watersheds ensured buy in and ownership. Interventions need to be designed in partnership with those with whom they are intended to help and communicated in such a way that it is clear that the ultimate goal is self-reliance.

In addition to **building household assets**, the REGRADE Programme aimed to address the **root cause of poverty** in a given context and so it followed a **Participatory Community-Based Watershed Management Approach** in order to build the resilience of participating households and the wider community. This approach is a priority of the Ethiopian government and policy is guided by the Participatory Watershed Development Guidelines. Watershed Management is the process of managing human activities and natural resources within a watershed, taking into account social, economic, environment and community interests.

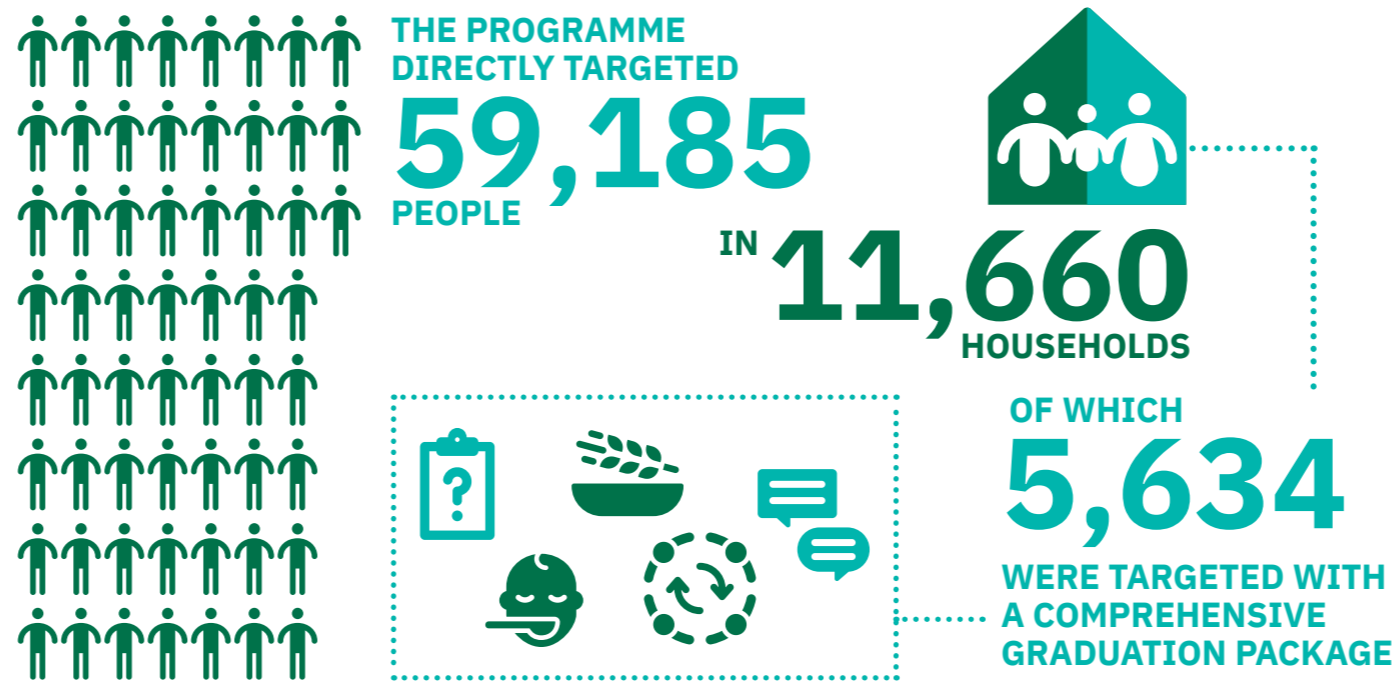
**GOAL: To build livelihood security and improve nutrition outcomes among extremely poor households in South Wollo and Wolaitta Zones**

|                  |  |  |
|------------------|--|--|
| <b>OUTCOME 1</b> | Extremely poor communities in South Wollo and Wolaitta are resilient to drought and other common environmental hazards   |  |
| <b>OUTCOME 2</b> | Extremely poor households will be engaged in sustainable, market-driven income generating activities   |  |
| <b>OUTCOME 3</b> | Strengthened capacity of meso level government institutions and cooperatives for sustainable health, nutrition, and livelihood services  |  |
| <b>OUTCOME 4</b> | Enhanced evidence-based structured dialogue with strategic partners and stakeholders for promoting resilience and equality. Joint planning, structured dialogue, and review for learning, improving and sharing good practices in resilience and equality. |  |



**ABOVE:** Ketema and his wife Workie, programme participants in REGRADE, show us their vegetable garden and one of their cows, next to their house, all of which came about through their hard work, with support from the REGRADE programme.

Photo: Hailegebriel Endeshaw / Concern Worldwide 2021



Overall, the programme directly targeted **59,185** people in **11,660 households**. Of these **11,660** households, **5,634** were targeted with a comprehensive graduation package; **6,026** households were reached through wider community activities including Natural Resource Management, promotion of Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture, Maternal, Infant and Young Child Feeding, Family Planning, and Community-Based Saving. Other guidance provided to programme

participants included the promotion of gender equality, conflict resolution, works required by the community for disaster risk reduction (DRR), how to access the complaints response mechanism (CRM) messages on the risks of HIV and AIDS and, more recently COVID-19 prevention and control methods. The programme was implemented across two cohorts, with the first commencing in 2017 and the second in 2019.



**RIGHT:** Abi Yimer of Legambo Woreda, South Wollo Zone, Amhara Region, SNNPR is a farmer and programme participant in REGRADE, pictured here with his wife and grandchild.

Photo: Concern Worldwide

## COMPARISON OF REGRADE AND PSNP

Concern worked closely with the Zone, *Woreda* and *Kebele*<sup>1</sup> relevant sector offices and Food Security Task Force on implementation and took part in the annual government-run Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) reverification process when households are assessed as ready or not to exit the programme (graduate). This led to the development of new, jointly agreed criteria (and

thresholds) upon which households are assessed. The 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.

|  | PSNP-IV  | REGRADE   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Targeting</b>                                 | 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 Kebele 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.  |
| <b>Consumption support</b>                       | 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 works. For REGRADE these are related to soil and water conservation within the community watershed. |   |
| <b>Technical &amp; business skills training</b>  | Training is provided on one of three livelihood pathways: livestock and crop production, off-farm and waged-employment. The curriculum covers entrepreneurship, business and marketing and is delivered by a mix of livelihood experts and Agricultural Extension Workers.   | Technical and business skills training was provided on eight different occupations (e.g. modern livestock and crop production, masonry, barbery). Training was delivered directly by Concern staff in partnership with Zonal/Woreda government experts. Where skills do not exist in-house, services were sourced externally from other training providers. |
| <b>Coaching &amp; mentoring</b>                  | Households are supported by the Government Agricultural Development Agents (DAs) through general extension services. Each DA supports around 250-300 households.   | Households were supported by full-time locally-based Household Case Workers (HCW) employed directly by Concern. Each HCW supported around 50 households. Coaching was delivered through individual household visits (2 per month) and in groups of 10 (4 sessions per month) to nurture positive behaviour change.  |
| <b>Facilitating access to financial services</b> | Households are linked to the government-supported Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives (RuSACCOS) and Microfinance institutions (MFIs)   | Households were linked to government-supported Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives (RuSACCOS). Where infrastructure is limited, participants were supported to establish Village Economic and Social Associations (VESA) to bridge the gaps.   |
| <b>Asset/capital transfer</b>                    | Households receive a transfer of approx. ETB 7,000 (US \$250) on a loan basis. Funds are delivered through MFIs and must be repaid in full.  | Households received part-grant (70%) and part-loan (30%) <sup>2</sup> . Grants were made directly by Concern whilst loans were made through RuSACCOS and were repayable. The value of support varied by livelihood activity (up to a maximum of ETB 6,000 US \$222).  |
| <b>Other key design features</b>                 |  | Activities were designed to address gender inequality, reduce Gender Based Violence, improve 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 Under Cohort 1 the division was 50% loan and 50% grant however, participants successfully negotiated to reduce the loan requirement further

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF REGRADE

The programme demonstrated that the Graduation model can accelerate, in only a few years, households' food security.

The graduation rate of participants of the RE-  
GRADE programme was **59%**

while the national average, SNNPR and South Wollo rates are 3%, 3% and 7% respectively.

The community micro watershed management interventions contributed to the improvement of production, productivity, and environmental conservation. The area of reclaimed land increased from

**330** hectares at baseline to  
.....→ **2,316** hectares at end line.

Key informants, observation and soil erosion measurement results confirmed that conservation works reduced run off, soil erosion and associated downstream siltation, increased vegetation cover and surface roughness. Through the programme period,

soil erosion was reduced by **70%** in South Wollo  
and **27%** in Wolaitta.

The implementation of DRR activities has enhanced the capacity of kebele and woreda level committee. From a baseline of zero, by the end of the programme

**91%** of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Committees were found to have developed a mitigation plan.

Concern's experience and lessons learned from REGRADE were considered and included in the proposal for PSNP Phase 5 in Wolaitta. Concern's practice of employing local case workers to coach and mentor programme beneficiaries was recognised as a key component to achieve impact such that the case worker position has been included in the Government of Ethiopia's PSNP 5 proposal.

From baseline to endline, the number of

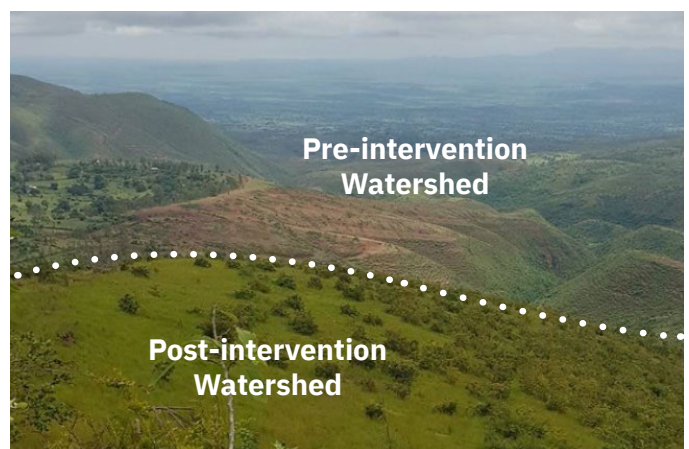
hazards beneficiaries were exposed to

reduced by **38%** and the  
number of households affected by disaster  
hazards reduced by **32%**

The endline evaluation found a

**positive change in specified gender role attitudes**

specifically gender division of labour, access to and control of resources, power and decision-making, legal rights and women's priorities, constraints and motivations.



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**CONCERN**  
worldwide

ENDING  
EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
IT TAKES