

Report on

Final Evaluation of Resilience, Graduation and Evidence Programme

(Final 2)

(Executive Summary)

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Criteria	Score (0 min, 5 max)
Relevance	4
Effectiveness	4
Sustainability	4
Impact	3
Efficiency	3

Acronyms

CBDRR:	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction
CDMI:	Community Disaster Mitigation Index
CMW:	Community Managed Watershed
CPAMA:	Community Preparedness Actuate Malnutrition
CRM:	Compliant Response Mechanism
CSA:	Central Statices Agency
CWW	Concern Worldwide
DA	Development Agent
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHH	Female Headed Household
FS	Food Security
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HEW	Health Extension Worker
HH	Household
IAPG	Irish Aid Programme
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IUD	Intrauterine Contraceptive Device
IYCF	Infant and Youth Child Feeding
J-WAM	Joint Watershed Action Management
KII	Key Informants Interview
KOICA	Koria Funded Project
LCCI	Local Coping Capacity Index
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDD:	Minimum Diet Diversity
MHH:	Male Headed Household
MIYCN:	Maternal Infant, Youth Child Nutrition
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MT	Metric Ton
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Development -Development Assistance Committee
PPE:	Prevention and Protection Equipment's
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSNP:	Productive Safety Net Program
REGRADE	Resilience, Graduation and Evidence
RuSACCo	Rural Saving and Credit Cooperative
SDM	Standard Days Method (SDM)
SNNPR	Southern National Nationality and People Region
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
SWC	Soil and Water Conservation
VESA	Village Economic and Social Association
VSLA	Village Saving and Lending Association

Executive Summary

Concern Worldwide has been implementing Concern's Irish Aid programme named REGRADE since 2017 in seven Woredas of Amhara and SNNP regions of Ethiopia. The goal of the programme is to build livelihood security and improve nutrition outcomes among the extreme poor while its outcomes are to have resilient extreme poor communities to drought and other common environmental hazards, engage extreme poor households, market-driven livelihoods, strengthened capacity of meso level government institutions and cooperatives for sustainable health, nutrition, and livelihood services and enhanced evidence based structured dialogue with strategic partners and stakeholders for promoting resilience and equality..

The REGRADE programme model combines resilience programming with the graduation model and evidence building. It encompasses watershed approach, targeting communities living in natural watersheds with a package of complementary interventions and macro-meso-micro level enhanced evidence based structural dialogue, capacity building and promotion of equality. Hence, this final evaluation was conducted with the intent of assessing the overall impact of the programme based on the DAC criteria.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods of data collection and analysis was employed. The sample size (349) was determined at 95% degree of confidence and 5% of margin of error using the statistical model of sample size determination during the baseline. The structured end line survey was conducted on 310 out of 349 sampled households since Delanta was excluded due to security issue. Consequently, the margin of error has been increased from 5% to 5.25% which is smaller and insignificant to bias the result. Document review, focus group discussion, KII, outcome harvesting, observation and case study methods were employed for qualitative data collection. The household survey raw data was exported to SPSS and analysed while qualitative data were analysed using contribution analysis, process tracing, qualitative comparative analysis, outcome harvesting and appreciative inquiry tools. The final evaluation came up with findings which are summarized as below

Programme relevance (Score – 4)

The program fits to SDGs namely to end poverty in all its forms everywhere (goal 1), end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture(goal2), ensure healthy lives, and promote well-being for all at all ages (goal 3) and achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (goal 5).

Increasing the productive capacity and efficiency to reach the economy's production possibility frontier through concurrently improving quality, productivity, and competitiveness of productive sectors, promote women and youth empowerment, and build climate resilient green economy are areas where the programme is fitting to the Government of Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Programme (GTP)II. The result of focus group discussion (using 20 bean tool) with the targeted households reveals that programme objectives and interventions were relevant to their setting. FGD participants listed out that lack of asset and return on asset was their major need (47%) followed by exposure to risk and vulnerability (29%) during the programme outset. The programme responded pressing needs related to asset building (38%) and equality (25%). Building the capacity of the target community's resilience to shocks and vulnerability and enhancing the capacity of government and local structures are areas where the programme responded to their needs.

The logical model particularly the Theory of Change is found to comprehensively illustrate the desired changes on the ground and tested workable. The actual results are as the intended result chain path with some challenges like the hunger gap. Similarly, the assumption made were valid; there was collaboration with government Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), cooperatives channelled the inputs, RuSACCos enhanced access to saving and credit service, government support maintained, and lessons learnt were documented and shared. This finally resulted in accelerated in graduation of beneficiaries.

Effectiveness (Score –4)

Micro watersheds were selected, and stakeholders sensitized, mobilized, community watershed planning teams trained, and watershed development plan developed. We confirmed that the planning process was participatory, rigorous and in line with the Ethiopian government Community Based Participatory Watershed Development Guideline issued by Ministry of Agriculture; 2005. Physical and biological Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) measures were constructed on 2,213 ha and 2,146 ha of degraded land respectively which was above the set target: 1500 ha. However, we noted that the lower parts of the micro watersheds have not yet covered by SWC conservation measures though the programme performance was above the target. We hope that the local government and community finalize the remaining works in the future. Nursery sites at some instances limited their production to tree seedling and fodder while fruit trees seedling which can contribute to household food and nutrition security was overlooked at some areas though agreement was reached with partners to use the nursery sites for IGA from production of fruits seedlings. Generally, participatory planning created fertile take off land for the implementation of the programme. Moreover, the community micro watershed management interventions have contributed to the improvement of production, productivity, and environmental conservation.

The implementation of DRR activities has enhanced the capacity of kebele and woreda level committee. Consequently, they have developed their annual risk profile and mitigation plan which contains among others the type of disaster, activities to be implemented and priority mitigation measures. We noted that the committees were strong on response to disasters while the early warning side of the equation was soft which needs strengthening. One of the possible ways of strengthening them could be by improving communication with digital solution for timely data collection and reporting. The initiation of carbon credit feasibility assessment was concluded with low opportunity and midterm evaluation recommended terminating any proceeding activities. However, there were possibilities to include other planet positive interventions which can supplement the programme activities such as composting, intercropping, natural pesticides etc.

The introduction of drought/moisture stress/frost tolerant/resistant crops was a positive step toward mitigating the impact of environmental hazard. Accordingly, Taro, Haricot bean and Potato were introduced and resulted in better yield. However, we noted that the productivity of these crops is reducing with time which calls for timely replacement of old generation with youngest. The role of cooperative in stocking youngest generation at some interval is noted as key area to maintain the increased production and productivity of these crops.

Beneficiary for Cohort 1 were selected amongst PSNP 4 participants using participatory rural appraisal (PRA) tool of wealth ranking method. Further screenings were done through community appraisal at kebele level either by posting their name for comment and or presenting the list at the community meeting. Furthermore, Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) was put in place to minimize exclusion and inclusion errors. The selection process was rigorous and participatory. Cohort 2 contains some non PSNP beneficiaries identified through wealth ranking and rigorous selection methods where the required number exceeds PSNP 4 registered households.

It was noted that the government supported PSNP 4 beneficiaries for 6 months (January to June) per year and the programme leverages the effort and made cash transfer for the following 6 months (July to December) in two rounds. The value of payments was aligned with that set out under the PSNP consumption provision (ETB 39 per day). The number of household members considered by Concern was 2 while government considered up to 5. Beneficiaries confirmed that the intervention supported them to maintain their asset from depletion. Coaching and mentoring were done by case workers and the experience of Concern was taken as good lesson and included to PSNP 5 proposal at Wolaita.

Concern identified eight viable livelihood pathways for REGRADE participants which was three in case of government PSNP. Beneficiaries trained in the identified livelihood pathways, business plan developed for each beneficiary and approved by FS task force. Moreover, they were linked with RuSACCOs, received cash as grant (70%) and loan (30%)

though Concern was the source for all funds, engaged in IGAs and are generating income and diversifying income sources. The grey area noted over here was the free provision of pullets at South Wollo while government is providing in loan. Such arrangement can contaminate their work and needs care.

We noted a shift from using Micro Finance Institution (MFI) as financial intermediaries to RuSACCOs which was a positive step to empower local community and enhance sustainability. Working with RuSACCO has multiple advantages; they are owned by members where all benefits go to them in the form of dividends, interest rate is lower, and the revolving fund remain with the community which might not be in the case for MFI. VESA and VSLA which are informal financial institutions that can cultivate the culture of saving and credit were brought on board. However, linking these informal institutions with RuSACCOs needs strengthening.

The finding of this evaluation confirmed the presence of collaboration of the programme with PSNP resources as beneficiaries received resource from both Concern and the government. Moreover, MoU on collaboration issues was signed among government offices and Concern and implemented. Furthermore, cooperatives (multipurpose and potato seed producers) were capacitated and linked with market. This smoothens asset transfer and speed up graduation. However, there is a need for close follow up and strengthening the linkages in the future similar interventions as multipurpose cooperatives are running after multiple business and might overlook this aspect.

The programme demonstrated that graduation model can accelerate graduation of households to food secure status within a couple of years. According to the case study report by Concern, April 2020, the graduation rate (based on government criteria of asset holding of ETB 9,000 ETB in South Wollo and ETB 3,000 in Wolaita) was 59% while the national average, SNNPR and South Wollo was 3%, 3% and 7% respectively.

The practice of IYCF promoted in the target area as the proportion of children who met minimum dietary diversity increased from 21%(baseline) to 28% (end line). However, the proportion of respondents who knows at least 3 modern contraceptive methods increased from 34% to 41% by 2019 and then reduced to 25% by the end of the programme. The reduction might be due to quality of household data or from the tool and its administration or COVID 19 which restricted gathering since knowledge can't be eroded within such short period. The finding was not in line with the secondary data. According to the annual statistical abstract of Wolaita for 2018/19 the minimum percentage of HH from the 4 Woreda who practiced family planning were 78% which challenges the HH survey finding. Concern participated in number of GO-NGO forum at different level and shared lessons learnt. Moreover, the study conducted on graduation model and risk reduction has been documented. Programme offices did operational research like the case of Wolaita on challenges related to loan repayment rate and shared.

Programme Sustainability (Score 4)

Micro watersheds were selected and developed with full participation of beneficiaries and local government at kebele and Woreda level. Moreover, interventions are packaged and integrated with sequenced and layered manner. Consequently, strong sense of belongingness was developed. Watershed committees have been formed, legalized, and linked with kebeles. Hence, it is likely sustainable but needs follow up and support from government. In the case watershed which falls in more than one kebele, there is neither defined organizational structure nor signed MoU which can bide kebele administrations to work jointly on the watershed. In fact, Wolaita started developing the MoU which is a positive step. Hence, the sustainability of these category of Watersheds is at risk unless and otherwise considered during handing over. DRR committee, RuSACCO, multipurpose cooperative and, health and nutrition are part of the government structure, and their sustainability is likely. On the other hand, VESA and VSLA have no legal back up, relay on social bondage which can crack at any time. Moreover, support from government is limited and their sustainability is unlikely.

The sustainability of introduced improved variety of crops much depend on the capacity of cooperative to revolve the seed and inject youngest generation when the old exhaust. Similarly, the sustainability of the SWC structures is likely but highly depend on the commitment of the committee, kebele administration and respective Woreda.

Generally, the capacity of local partners has been enhanced, community developed sense of ownership around the watershed and the programme was streamlined with government structure and works. There were better work relationship and collaboration with the government offices since the programme was integrated in the government works. Hence, most of the programme results and activities are likely sustainable.

Programme Impact (Score 3)

The programme intervention brought positive impacts. The number of hazards, households affected by disaster/hazards and soil erosion reduced by 38%, 28% and 52% respectively as compared to baseline value. The number of hazard, household affected, and soil erosion at the base year was 26 hazards, 9819 people and 59.6 MT/year/Ha respectively. Area of crop land damaged due to disasters and the number of people who received food aid reduced. Area of reclaimed land increased from 329.55 hectare (baseline) to 2,316 hectare (end line). Consequently, soil fertility increased explained by increment in the productivity of selected crops; haricot bean from 8.12 Q/ha to 18Q/ha, Taro from 275 Q/ha to 336Q/ha and potato from 13Q/ha to 113Q/ha. The productivity of some crops like haricot bean was above the national small producer's average productivity. Moreover, natural resources like springs regenerated.

According to the 2021 CDMI survey 91% of the DRR committees have developed mitigation plan which meet the minimum standard. Of the DRR committee 94% have joint Watershed action management plan which reflect their priorities. Consequently, the number of hazards and people affected reduced. An average monthly income from the IGAs reached USD 26 per month in 2020 which was nil at the beginning of the programme. On the other hand, the hunger gap increased from 3.84 months to 4.0 months which was mainly due to the failure of last (2021) *belg* rain and reduced purchasing power of money as witnessed by highest inflation rate (42% for food items in September 2021).

In relation to coping strategies, LCCI percent to cope livelihood shocks increased from 48.59% to 61.8%. The score for the insurance strategy, emergency and distress strategies showed slight change/progress and the use of severe coping mechanisms reduced. Cooperatives have been strengthened and 33% of the targeted cooperatives sold their produce in the new market in 2020 which resulted in improved access to inputs by beneficiaries.

Gender equality was promoted, demonstrated by increase in gender role attitude score from 7.35(base line) to 7.95 (end line). Moreover, a positive change was reported in the attitude around gender division of labour, access to resource, power and decision making, legal rights and status, and women's priorities, restraints, and motivation.

Efficiency

The programme allocated 7,508,595 Euro for 2017- July 2021 of which 89% was utilized. The programme committed for the possibility of scaling up through soliciting additional funds and realized since the budget increased from 5 million to 7.51 million euro. The solicited fund was allocated for operation which was a positive step. The programme was streamlined with Concern and government structure and such arrangement allowed cost saving, sharing experience among projects and logistics. The direct programme beneficiaries are 11,660 and the unit cost per beneficiary was 570.4 Euro which works out to 114.08 per person per year. Considering the impacts of the programmes as stated under impact part of this report and the unit cost, it can be concluded that the programme addressed value for money.

Cross cutting issues

The result of the survey showed that the programme has synergy and linkage with Concern works like with Leave No Girls Behind, Bakalar water supply, CPAMA II, ADM/LEAF and KOICA Livelihood projects. It was also linked/streamlined with government structure and activities. Such linkage and integration can contribute to reduced cost and enhance sustainability. Cross cutting issues like gender, DRR, CRM, Safeguarding and People with Disabilities were well integrated and adhered to programme participants' protection policy. Community and KIs confirmed that the integration enhanced transparency and reduced inclusion and exclusion error.

Lessons learnt, conclusion and recommendation

The overall conclusion of the evaluation is that the programme progressed toward the stated outcomes and positive results have been achieved. The watershed and graduation approach demonstrated the possibility of building resilience and pulling out extreme poor from poverty. Effective targeting, consumption smoothing, skill training, asset transfer and livelihood diversification are noted as important parts of graduation engine which accelerated graduations. The finding also showed the need for government to maintain the momentum to ensure sustainability of changes since the continuity of the mechanics part of the programme much depend on the government structure and their functionality. The evaluation also generated lessons and recommendations which are contained in this report.

The report displays the DAC appraisal scale at the beginning of each DAC criteria. The evaluation was made from 5 where the minimum point was nil as displayed below.

- 5: Outstanding/Exceptional Performance
- 4: Very good overall performance (above expectation)
- 3: Good overall performance s (as expected)
- 2: Acceptable performance but with some shortcomings
- 1: Barely acceptable performance with some major shortcomings
- 0: Totally unacceptable performance or insufficient data to make an assessment