



# KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

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**Special Issue: Masters Student  
Research Projects 2022**

Issue 33 | December 2022

**CONCERN**  
worldwide

**ENDING  
EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
IT TAKES**

If you have any contributions, ideas or topics for future issues of Knowledge Matters please contact the editorial team by email at [knowledgematters@concern.net](mailto:knowledgematters@concern.net).

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.

**Cover photo:** Community members, sheep camels and goats use the borehole water system project in Dhidhid, Borama District Awdal in Somaliland. Photo: Ed Ram/Concern Worldwide

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## From the Issue Editor:

Welcome to the latest issue of Knowledge Matters! This issue is a little bit different to our normal offering of Knowledge Matters. Usually we ask staff from our country teams to contribute articles about their learning and experiences in their work with Concern. But for this issue, we have gathered together articles from Masters student researchers about topics that are relevant to Concern's country programmes.

This year, five Masters level students conducted research projects with Concern. These came from the Masters in Development Practice (MDP) at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), the Masters in Food Security, Policy and Management at University College Cork (UCC) and the Masters in Conflict, Security and Development at the University of Sussex. I want to thank each of the universities and their academic supervisors for the collaborations. We are always interested in expanding the range of universities included, so for more information please contact [knowledgematters@concern.net](mailto:knowledgematters@concern.net).

We hope that Concern's staff in our country programmes, communities, local partners as well as interested parties further afield will find these articles thought-provoking, practical and useful for their ongoing work to transform the lives of people living in extreme poverty.

**Finola Mohan**, Programme Knowledge and Learning Adviser.

# Introduction to the Special Issue

Written by **Finola Mohan**

For several years Concern has engaged with universities in Ireland and other countries to work with Masters level students as they hone their skills in research, analysis and documentation on relevant development and humanitarian issues. This is in line with Concern's Organisational Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 which has an objective under Goal 2 (Driving Urgent Action on Hunger, Conflict and the Climate Crisis) to “propose solutions to long-term, complex challenges related to conflict, hunger and the climate crisis through focused thought leadership anchored in our action-research, experience and learning”.

Masters students' research projects contribute to this learning and the projects provide a helpful format which is mutually beneficial to our country teams and the students themselves. The students use them for their dissertation or final projects and our country teams get a relevant piece of work with the most up-to-date information available. The research topics are proposed by Concern's country teams and technical advisers, and the students select the topics based on their own personal interests and career aspirations.

Students are paired with a mentor in Concern, as well as being supervised academically from within their courses. Depending on the specific research topic, the students are introduced to key Concern staff in both Headquarters and Country Teams, given access to (anonymised) survey data that Concern has conducted as part of our routine programme monitoring, and assisted to carry out data collection themselves such as Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

The following articles are written by the students and are their reflections on the research projects they carried out. The articles in this issue do not present the official position of Concern on any topic, but we are publishing them in this special issue of Knowledge Matters in line with our accountability commitments to utilise and publish the results of our research, evaluations and learnings from our work.

# Promoting Nutrition-Sensitive Conservation Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa

Written by Paddy Hipple-Walsh

<b>Research title</b>	Promoting Nutrition-Sensitive Conservation Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>Masters programme</b>	Masters in Development Practice (MDP)
<b>University</b>	Trinity College Dublin
<b>Research questions</b>	<p>This research aimed to increase the understanding we have around the agriculture-nutrition nexus. More specifically, the primary research questions were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are the pathways for conservation agriculture impacting nutrition?</li><li>2. What factors influence the relationship between conservation agriculture and nutrition?</li><li>3. What can be done by organisations like Concern to maximise nutritional benefits of conservation agriculture?</li></ol>

With the impacts of climate change and land degradation mounting pressure on food security across Sub-Saharan Africa, wide-scale adaptation is needed to provide livelihood stability for agricultural households. Concern Worldwide alongside other development agencies are currently promoting conservation agriculture (CA) as a climate-smart technique in order to promote long term food security, alongside environmental sustainability. Conservation agriculture is a set of farming principles focusing on minimum tillage, continuous soil cover and crop diversification.

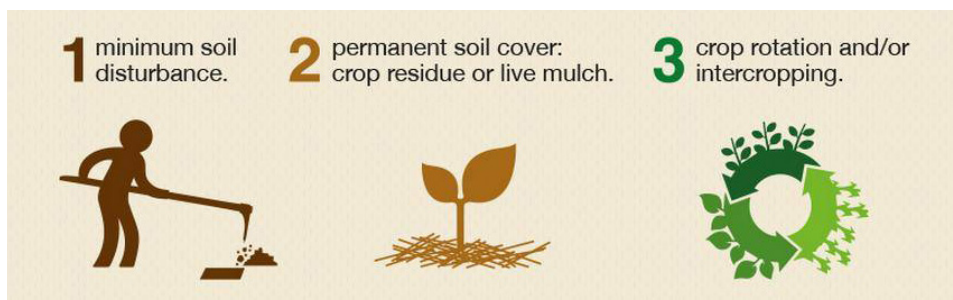


Figure 1- Three principles of conservation agriculture (UN FAO)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Link to UN FAO conservation agriculture graphic](#)

Concern Worldwide began implementing conservation agriculture programmes in 2004 in Zimbabwe. These programmes operate primarily through a lead farmer approach, but also utilise farmer field schools<sup>2</sup>. In 2020, Concern’s CSA programmes were able to reach 14,480 in Niger and 1,250 in Somaliland. CA is particularly applicable to these countries considering the vital need for water retention and high risk of soil degradation in these climates and soil conditions. An important consideration of all agricultural interventions is their nutrition sensitivity, broadly referring to agriculture’s ability to feed people sufficiently. The pathways between agriculture and nutrition are relatively well researched, however how these pathways are altered under conservation agriculture systems is unknown. Using key informant interviews from Niger and Somaliland alongside an in-depth literature review, this research aimed to understand these pathways in greater detail as well as provide recommendations for future agricultural interventions.

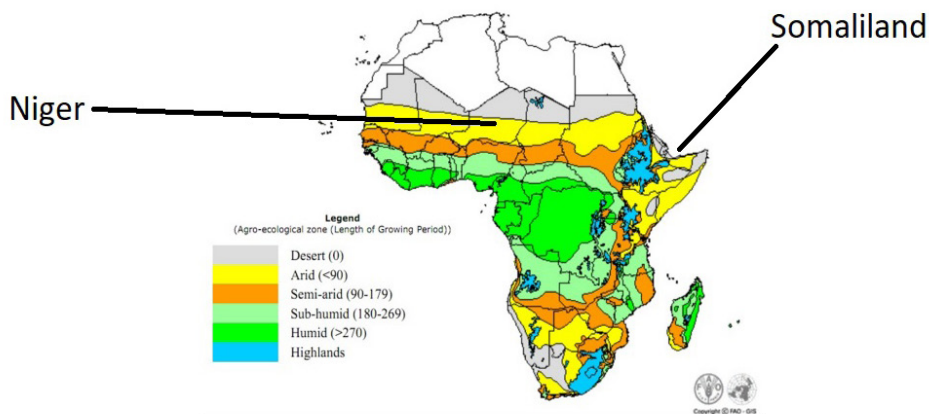


Figure 2- Agro-ecological zones of Sub-Saharan Africa (UN FAO, 2011)<sup>3</sup>

## Pathways between conservation agriculture and nutrition

The links between conservation agriculture and nutrition can be divided into three categories which primarily concern 1) food consumption, 2) income and 3) women’s empowerment.

Conservation agriculture impacts direct food consumption of farming households in a variety of ways. The diversification element of CA systems results in greater dietary diversity as well as greater consumption of foods with a high nutritional value such as legumes. The early planting required in conservation agriculture has also been found to reduce the hunger period for many farming households.

<sup>2</sup>. Lead farmer approach = Development agencies work directly with lead farmers who are responsible for transferring and disseminating knowledge and technology through their communities.

Farmer field schools = Development agency or any other facilitating agency guide farmers of a FFS through an experimental learning process to assist farmers in finding solutions to the most challenging issues they experience and prioritised to be addressed.

<sup>3</sup>. [Link to agroecological zones graphic](#)

The second pathway of agriculture for income is far less straightforward. This pathway is considerably dictated by the yield changes resulting from conservation agriculture, yet these changes have been shown to be highly variable. Greater yields can lead to more income generated from produce allowing for more to be spent on food, labour saving technologies, livestock and education which all benefit nutrition.

Households also report spending their increased income on accessing health services and assets that are needed for improved health such as soap and mosquito nets. The diversification principle also allows for new produce to be sold, and potentially greater income stability throughout the year but accessing viable markets for these diversified crops can be difficult.

The final pathway of agriculture and women's empowerment mainly focuses on changes in workload alongside how CA systems interact with pre-existing gender dynamics. The effect on women's workload is another highly variable characteristic of CA. Workload can be increased by rises in weeding pressure, greater time required collecting fodder and fuel, as well as more time spent on tillage and growing new crops. Conversely, workload can be reduced depending on what mechanisation and inputs farms can utilise, and also tends to be reduced at certain times of the year due to earlier planting. Changes in workload impact time available for childcare and feeding, as well as the nutritional status of women generally. CA also has the potential to promote women's empowerment through diversification of crops grown, which often increases the importance of traditional 'women's crops' such as vegetables and legumes, possibly providing opportunities for greater economic independence.

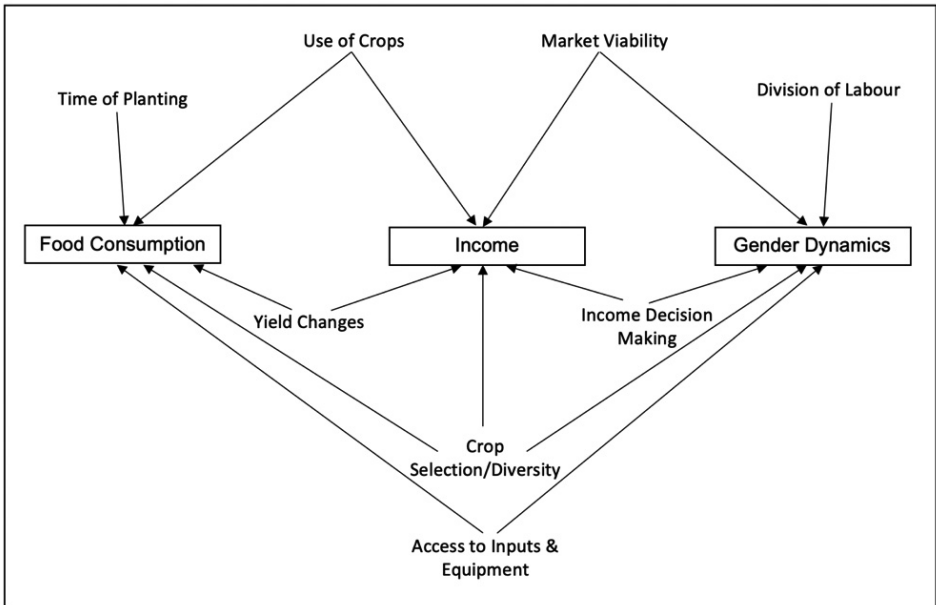


Figure 3- Factors influencing the three primary pathways between conservation agriculture and nutrition.

## Moving Forward

Using both the literature and the key-informant interviews, a number of suggestions can be made for optimising a nutrition-sensitive approach to conservation agriculture programmes. While several of these takeaways are already relatively well established around the agriculture-nutrition nexus, they still need tailoring to the specific circumstances found in CA systems. The key areas for improvement are:

1. Nutrition education
2. Gender empowerment
3. Addressing programme design challenges
4. Aiding efficient transitions to conservation agriculture
5. Making markets more viable for diversified produce

Education is of particular importance in CA programmes due to crop diversification which broadens the types of foods people are consuming. As a result, education is needed to provide basic nutritional knowledge of their new crops and also how to cook these novel foods, since they will often be sold if people are unaware of how to utilise them. Cooking demonstrations and teaching people how to use the entire crop are important facets of education, with some Concern staff saying beneficiaries of their programmes often did not know how to use certain pulses leading to them wasting significant amounts of their produce as a result. Cultural perceptions of food also need to be challenged, addressing the common view of cereals and staples (carbohydrates) and meat being of greater importance than vegetables and legumes. Emphasising the importance of nutrition should hopefully affect farmers' decision-making processes as well, potentially leading to the nutritional value of crops being taken into greater consideration.

Research has highlighted how reducing gender gaps in conservation agriculture systems has the potential to improve food security by 12-17%, as a result of the 20-30% predicted increase in production from women's farms (Nyanga, 2012). The first step in addressing this issue is through ensuring agricultural programmes are gender-sensitive which is critical considering women often do the majority of agricultural work, up to 72% in Somaliland for example. Promoting gender-transformative agricultural programmes is also essential in order to ensure the interventions do not result in more harm than good. For example, one study found an intervention involved providing higher yielding maize varieties, which benefitted men (as more produce was available to be sold) but disadvantaged women as the new varieties needed far longer cooking time, requiring more firewood leading to a higher workload (Jaenicke & Virchow, 2013). Engaging men and boys for gender transformation is necessary in order to foster more equitable gender dynamics in farming households, and ensure women are not disproportionately affected by changes to agricultural practices. Particular areas of importance are decision-making power, division of labour and control over resources.

When designing agricultural programmes that are nutrition-sensitive, a number of factors need to be considered to ensure their scope and impact are appropriately judged. In order for these programmes to contribute to long-term food security in the region, clear criteria are needed to target the most vulnerable groups and ensure that their needs are prioritised. Conservation agriculture programmes also need to be looking at indicators with direct relevance to nutritional outcomes. One interviewee noted how the emphasis placed on yield gains from agriculture programmes often leads to the knock-on effects being completely ignored and nutritional outcomes being disregarded. Assessing nutrition-related criteria before programmes are implemented can allow them to be tailored to address certain needs. Interviewees mentioned a number of



important nutrition-related indicators for agricultural programmes including:

- Food consumption score
- Dietary diversity
- Meals per day
- Negative coping mechanisms
- Hunger gap
- Women's workload
- Child stunting/wasting
- Changes in knowledge
- Micronutrient gap
- Proportion of produce that is sold v consumed

Aiding the transition to conservation agriculture, particularly the aspects with direct relevance to nutrition, is another key recommendation. One of the barriers repeatedly found for farmers is the difficulty in accessing seeds, particularly nutrient-dense legumes for rotations (Mayer, 2015). This is a considerable barrier to promoting nutrition, since diversification is one of the primary benefits of conservation agriculture for people's health. Programmes need a flexible approach in order to overcome the major issues with conservation agriculture such as herbicide-resistant weeds and soil compaction (Giller et al., 2015). Tailoring programmes for their specific context is necessary for implementing programmes that are impacted by so many conflicting factors. For example, assessing local nutritional needs such as nutrient deficiencies, can allow for seeds to be provided that are bio-fortified to combat this issue, which is a technique used by Concern in Niger to address iron deficiencies.

In order for farmers to capitalise on their new practices and increase their farm income, viable markets are needed so farmers can sell their produce at a fair price. Relatively novel crops used in rotations such as certain legumes (e.g., mungbean) are often not in high demand and thus the markets for these crops may need to be promoted with various

techniques such as premiums for produce with specific nutrient contents (Mayer, 2015; Jaenicke & Virchow, 2013). One interviewee noted how the market for diversified crops is often highly variable and dependent on rains, with availability often too inconsistent to support a viable market. Improved post-harvest techniques, particularly safe and efficient storage, is one possible solution for allowing food supply to be more consistent throughout the year, and was suggested by a number of interviewees.

The research has concluded that a number of steps can be taken by development agencies in order to make their conservation agriculture programmes more nutrition-sensitive, with significant potential to promote long term food security.

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# Exploring Opportunities for Disability Inclusion in Development Programming

Written by Clíodhna Malone

<b>Research title</b>	Exploring Opportunities for Disability Inclusion in Development Programming: A Case Study of Concern's Approach to Disability Inclusion.
<b>Masters programme</b>	Masters in Development Practice (MDP)
<b>University</b>	Trinity College Dublin
<b>Research questions</b>	<p>The research was motivated to answer the overarching question; How can disability inclusion be embedded in Concern's programming? It sought to delve into understanding the barriers and enablers within the organisation and sector. It was guided by the following sub-questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are current perceptions of disability inclusion and how are they determined within development contexts?</li><li>2. What approaches are currently being utilised, how do they effectively include people with disabilities (PWDs), and what barriers are preventing their adaption into mainstream organisations?</li><li>3. What is currently being done in Concern, what areas can provide entry points for the use of disability-inclusive approaches, and what is preventing the shift to disability-inclusive programming?</li></ol>

## Background

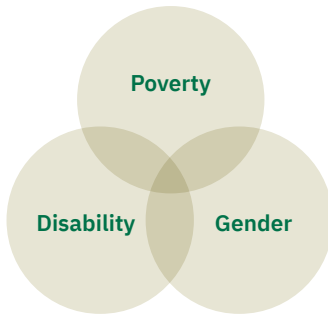
Since the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2008, there has been a cultural shift on national and international platforms. Disability encompasses more than just physical or sensory impairments. The UNCRPD uses the following statement to define and understand Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)<sup>1</sup>.

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Concern is in a unique position as the concentration placed on poverty alleviation and gender inequality lay the foundation for disability inclusion within its programmes. Poverty, gender, and disability are heavily intertwined. They intersect and can cause increased vulnerability and inequality for people. Therefore, to adequately address

<sup>1</sup>. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1 conceptualises People with Disabilities. There remains to be no definition of disability within this convention. United Nations (UN) (2006) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

poverty and gender inequality, emphasis must also be placed on understanding and including disability in practice.



- Two sets of interviews
  - 1<sup>st</sup> set of interviews were conducted with Concern staff. Four participants came from Concern’s Dublin HQ and three from Programme Countries: Bangladesh, Malawi, and Pakistan.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> set of interviews were completed with participants linked to humanitarian/development organisations. The participants came from Self Help Africa (SHA), Christian Blind Mission (CBM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Humanity & Inclusion (HI), and a Consultant/ Researcher based in Trinity College, Dublin (TCD).

## Design

- This research used two key methods: A policy-content analysis, which looked at the frequency that 3 key terms were mentioned within policies and frameworks: 1) inequality/inequalities, 2) gender, and 3) disability/disabilities. This provided an insight into current inclusion of disability within Concern, in relation to inequality, specifically gender inequality.

- Interview participants’ roles included:

Internal	External
Gender, Equality, and Social Inclusion Advisor	Inclusion Advisor: Violence Prevention and Response Unit (IRC)
Equality Advisor	Inclusive Humanitarian Action Specialist (HI)
Inclusion and Livelihood Specialist	Advocacy and Inclusion Advisor (CBM)
Emergency Advisor	Gender and Inclusion Advisor (SHA)
Gender Advisor	Research/Consultant (TCD)
HR: Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Advisor	

Content-Policy Analysis	How Concern Understands Extreme Poverty (HCUEP) (2022)
	Equality Policy (2005)
	Equality Strategy 2020-2023 (2020)
	Approach to Targeting (2022)
	Targeting Types (2022)
	Targeting Process (2022)
	Poor-Vulnerable Index Report (2019)
	Context Analysis Guidelines (2021)

## Findings

### Tools for Inclusion

The research found that there are several tools already available to Concern for improving disability inclusion in programmes. These findings came from best practice in the sector, which was shared by participants in Concern and in other organisations.

## Data

The Washington Group (WG) on Disability Statistic have created sets of questions that gather data on disability and functioning, to provide information that can be compared internationally. The ‘Short Set on Functioning’ is commonly used for research, capturing disability-related data. The questions are an important tool for disability representation in data. Yet more information is needed on how to use the data in conjunction with qualitative data and cultural understanding. While participants also highlighted the need to recognise the communication barriers in using these questions.

The questions are used to gather initial data on the range of impairments and presence of PWDs, for programmes. The WG questions are used as a minimum requirement. One participant outlined that when they began increasing access for PWDs, they used this data to ensure funding for mainstream programme adaption was used to address the needs of the target population. Yet new and updated programmes should see disability considered from the beginning of the programme cycle and not require this approach.

## International Guidelines

The use of international frameworks, guidelines, and collaborations can be extremely useful. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines for the inclusion of PWDs in humanitarian action outlines four key actions which are used throughout project cycles to ensure disability inclusion in humanitarian programmes;

1. Data collection
2. Partnerships with Organisations for People with Disabilities (OPDs) and participation,
3. Addressing barriers
4. Empowerment and capacity-strengthening

Guidelines used across technical subsectors are hugely beneficial for achieving the organisational aims. This is called ‘intersectional collaboration’, whereby technical sectors work harmoniously to ensure that barriers to inclusion are mitigated. It prevents inclusion being left solely to education, protection, or health, etc, encouraging all technical fields to work together to address these needs.

## Library of Disability-Specific Guidance

Interview participants wanted to know more about programmes with accessible and inclusive frameworks. Therefore, a library of disability-related information or, for Concern, the addition of disability-related content to Concern’s Knowledge Exchange Library and the appropriate and clear labelling of disability-related documents can be hugely beneficial to the organisation. Examples of useful documents include:

- Case Studies and examples from Concern and the sector
- Policies, Frameworks, and Toolkits. Examples include:
  - CBM’s Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit<sup>2</sup>
  - CBM’s Inclusion Made Easy guide to programming<sup>3</sup>
  - International Disability and Development Consortium’s manual for advisors in disability mainstreaming<sup>4</sup>

2. Al Ju’beh, K. (2017) CBM Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit. Christian Blind Mission. Available at: [https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/CBM-DID-TOOLKIT-accessible.pdf](https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/CBM-DID-TOOLKIT-accessible.pdf)

3. CBM (2012) Inclusion Made Easy, a quick program guide to disability in development. Christian Blind Mission. Available at: [https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/cbm\\_inclusion\\_made\\_easy\\_a\\_quick\\_guide\\_to\\_disability\\_in\\_development.pdf](https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/cbm_inclusion_made_easy_a_quick_guide_to_disability_in_development.pdf)

4. International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). Making Inclusion a Reality in Development Organisations: A manual for advisors in disability mainstreaming. (2012) IDDC. Available at: <https://www.iddcconsortium.net/blog/librairie/making-inclusion-a-reality-in-development-organisations/>

- Practical and specific guides for various technical sectors (e.g., emergencies; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); livelihoods)
- Guidance for project cycle elements (Consultation, Feedback, Context Analysis, etc.)
  - The International Rescue Committee's feedback mechanism review<sup>5</sup> used the UNCRPD and international guidelines to positively change the feedback mechanism to include the voices of PWDs in a more collaborative way.
- Organisational standards for inclusion – the Age and Disability Capacity-building (ADCAP) programme<sup>6</sup> with Concern Pakistan and Kenya and Pakistan's pilot programmes of the humanitarian inclusion standards<sup>7</sup> can highlight ways to change organisational policies and approaches to be more inclusive.

advocacy and inclusion, knowledge sharing, and programme capacity.

- Collaborations with disability movements and advocacy bodies.
- Collaborations with other marginalised groups. An example provided included the collaboration between PWDs and Indigenous peoples, advocating for climate change awareness and proactive responses.
- Other partnerships included donors, disability-specific humanitarian agencies, mainstream actors, UN bodies, and sectoral clusters.

One example of partnerships was a Disaster Risk Reduction model used by CBM in Gaibandha, Bangladesh<sup>8</sup>, where OPDs and PWDs were encouraged to join disaster management committees and actively participate, where they could engage in proactive planning and risk reduction.

## Partnerships

Partnerships comes in a variety of forms.

- Organisations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) collaborations are common as they are diverse and represent disability issues, ensuring

## Targeting Approaches

Targeting was regarded as a responsibility of organisations where they actively and consciously target PWDs to ensure their inclusion in mainstream programming. Targeting should be based on understanding barriers and opportunities for the target population, like the specific barriers for people with physical, sensory, and learning disabilities alongside mental health conditions and other disabilities.

Biases and assumptions about disability become a barrier for meaningful inclusion. This is seen through misunderstanding the term 'disability' to just refer to physical disabilities. For example, if physical access is provided but inaccessible communication

<sup>5</sup>. Thivillier, P. and Shafina, V. (2020) 'Walking the talk: a participatory review of the IRC's feedback mechanisms', Disability inclusion in humanitarian action. Edited by Humanitarian Practice Network, (78), pp. 38–43. Available at: <https://odihpn.org/publication/walking-the-talk-a-participatory-review-of-the-ircs-feedback-mechanisms/>

<sup>6</sup>. Akerkar, S. and Bhardweij, R. (2018) Good practice guide: embedding inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian policy and practice | Lessons learnt from the ADCAP programme. Oxford: Age and Disability Consortium. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/good-practice-guide-embedding-inclusion-older-people-and-people-disabilities>

<sup>7</sup>. Age and Disability Consortium (2018) Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities. Oxford: Age and Disability Consortium. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/humanitarian-inclusion-standards-older-people-and-people-disabilities>

<sup>8</sup>. Programmes were implemented by CBM and two local partners, The Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) and Gaya Unnayan Kendra (GUK) in Gaibandha, Bangladesh. Christian Blind Mission (CBM) (2021) 'Bridge the Gap, Ethiopia'. Christian Blind Mission. More information available at: <https://www.cbm.ie/bridge-the-gap>

techniques are used, it can result in including those with physical disabilities but excluding those with sensory or learning disabilities. All programmes regardless of the type have a target population, yet the programme type highlights how that group's needs are met.

- Targeted
  - Actively seeks to include PWDs.
  - Centres programmes on the needs of PWDs.
  - Isolates PWDs and has limited reach to create change in social understandings of disability.
- Mainstream
  - Seeks to include PWDs into established programmes.
  - Inclusion in programmes of different designs
  - Some programme designs can be inaccessible and require adaptation.
- Twin-Track
  - Uses mainstream and targeted approaches
  - Encourages accessibility in mainstream programmes
  - Promotes the adaptation of current programmes for PWDs, ie changes to programme design or package size/ type.
  - Promotes cultural and social change, to change perceptions of PWDs and disability.

Targeting should ensure the population is reflected and basic access to programmes is granted, aware of specific intersectional factors. Understanding barriers and opportunities for PWDs is important to create and ensure inclusion and participation.

Targeting requires accessibility. Such areas for consideration within Concern include:

- Accessible buildings (ramps, lifts, wide doors, accessible bathrooms, etc.)

- Accessible transport
- Accessible location of meetings, programmes, and employment (availability of transport, accessible and flat roads, etc.)
- Accessible communication (alternative communication including sign language and braille, participatory research methods including mapping and walking tours)

## Best Practice Programming

Mainstream Programmes

Advocacy Programmes

Community-Based Inclusive Development

This research uncovered various approaches that can be utilised for programming.

### Mainstreaming approaches:

- Utilise pre-existing programmes ie food security programmes, gender advocacy programmes, or Graduation programmes, etc.
- Examples include gender-specific programmes like the Gender Action Learning Systems<sup>9</sup> (GALS) and the Family Life Model<sup>10</sup>.
  - Encourage cultural shifts and changes in relationships.
  - Promote self-advocacy and active participation.

<sup>9</sup> Reemer, T. and Makanza, M. (2015) 'Gender Action Learning System | Practical Guide for Transforming Gender and Unequal Power Relations in Value Chains'. OXFAM NOVIB. Available at: [https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/English/publications/150115\\_Practical%20guide%20GALS%20summary%20Phase%201-2%20lr.pdf](https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/Redactie/Downloads/English/publications/150115_Practical%20guide%20GALS%20summary%20Phase%201-2%20lr.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Self Help Africa (2020) 'The Family Life Model | A guide to implementation'. Self Help Africa. Available at: <https://selfhelpafrica.org/ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/11/SHA-Family-Life-Model-web.pdf>

### Advocacy programmes:

- Inter-agency and cross-sector collaborations.
- Partnerships with disability movements and OPDs.

### Community-Based inclusive development:

- Community orientated change and programmes
- Example includes Bridge the Gap<sup>11</sup> by CBM.
  - Concentrated on capacity-strengthening.
  - Focusing on the community and local authorities.
  - Engaged PWDs in self-advocacy, highlighting barriers to education and health.

## **Barriers**

This research uncovered two main barriers to disability inclusion. The first is a mismatch between donor demands and organisational capacity, especially within programmes using a results-based model. It outlined the pressure on organisations to meet programme aims within their capacity, constrained by time, funding, support, and physical and human resources. For Concern, collaboration with disability-specific NGOs, OPDs, and disability advocacy bodies can bridge the capacity gaps through collaboration of ideas and sharing of resources. They can provide a wide range of services that meet the specific needs of the population.

The second barrier to inclusion is misunderstanding and a lack of awareness of the experiences of PWDs. Associating PWDs with assistance, an inability to participate, or as ultra-poor/vulnerable prevents meaningful inclusion. Such associations prevent PWDs from accessing

programmes or employment opportunities in NGOs and elsewhere. Opportunities for Concern lie in engaging in disability-sensitive training, collaboration, and partnerships with OPDs and PWDs, and encouraging more inclusive programming and employment opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

This research uncovered a variety of opportunities within the development and humanitarian field for disability inclusion. There are many opportunities for Concern specifically to include disability within every aspect of their programming:

- Inclusion of disability-specific resources and examples within Concern’s Knowledge Exchange library, recognising current programmes and examples from the sector.
- Ensuring accessibility for programmes, including within data collection methods and information sharing with special emphasis on communication, participatory methods, and physical access.
- Forging partnerships with OPDs in programme countries and engaging PWDs within programming – especially in all aspects of the project cycle.
- Encouraging employment opportunities for PWDs, working to uncover barriers to accessibility.

This research highlighted positive areas for Concern to engage in. It also explored current practice and programmes that are already disability inclusive. Examples internally and externally are important to show the potential of inclusive programming and the capacity of Concern to engage in such practice.

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<sup>11</sup> Christian Blind Mission (CBM) (2021) ‘Bridge the Gap, Ethiopia’. Christian Blind Mission. More information available at: <https://www.cbm.ie/bridge-the-gap>

# LGBTQIA+ People / SOGIESC Minorities and the 2022 Emergency Response to Russia's War on Ukraine

Written by Kevin Dowling

<b>Research title</b>	LGBTQIA+ people / SOGIESC minorities and the 2022 emergency response to Russia's war on Ukraine.
<b>Masters programme</b>	Masters in Development Practice (MDP)
<b>University</b>	Trinity College Dublin
<b>Research questions</b>	<p>The project is guided by three research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are the unique vulnerabilities and needs of LGBTQIA+ people / SOGIESC minorities in Ukraine since Russia's 2022 invasion?</li><li>2. To what extent does/could Concern account for the vulnerabilities and needs of LGBTQIA+ people / SOGIESC minorities in their emergency response policies and programming?</li><li>3. How can the above two considerations inform means of inclusively incorporating the vulnerabilities and needs of LGBTQIA+ people / SOGIESC minorities into future emergency response?</li></ol>

When conflict breaks out in a society, its impact affects different people differently. The way that conflict affects people depends on their identity and their position within society. For example: firstly, women and girls are some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society in peacetimes, and as a result experience disproportionate hardship in times of conflict. This can range from limited resources to escape dangerous settings, to an increased vulnerability to gender-based violence. Secondly, people with disabilities experience unique difficulties in the context of mass displacement due to restricted freedom of movement from accessibility issues. Thirdly, racial or ethnic minorities are often deprioritised

in emergency response efforts compared to those within the majority or dominant subgroup of the population.

With this understanding, this research project focused on a specific marginalised group of people that similarly experience unique impacts in conflict-affected settings. The population subgroup in question is that of 'SOGIESC minorities'. The term 'SOGIESC' refers to **s**exual **o**rientation, **g**ender **i**dentify and/or **e**xpression, and/or **s**ex **c**haracteristics, and minorities of this type are often known collectively as LGBTQIA+ (or LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBT+, or various other combinations of these letters). This acronym stands for **l**esbian, **g**ay, **b**isexual,



transgender, queer, intersex and asexual, with the '+' accounting for any additional sexual and/ or gender minority identities. Put simply, both 'SOGIESC minority' and any combination of 'LGBTQIA+' refer to people who either:

1. experience romantic or sexual attraction other than only in heterosexual ("straight") ways;
2. have a different gender to the gender assigned or documented at birth; or
3. are born with natural biological sex characteristics that are different from conventional norms of maleness and femaleness.

Within this subgroup there is great variation in the ways that people differ from what is considered 'normal', and the specific identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual do not represent this diversity. For this reason, 'SOGIESC minority' is becoming increasingly used to describe people in this group. The term is valuable because it does not specifically name any identity group, and so it is less likely that people will be excluded or deprioritised from discussions on the topic. Additionally, 'LGBTQIA+' and the components of the acronym are Western terms and fail to accurately represent the uniqueness and diversity of local understandings of SOGIESC around the world<sup>1</sup>. And so, the term SOGIESC minority was adopted for this study. It is important to note that every person has SOGIESC, and those who do not identify as a

<sup>1</sup> In the Basotho region of South Africa, for example, certain practices of eroticism between women cannot appropriately be referred to as 'lesbianism', as it is not considered locally to be a sexual or amorous practice, and is deemed to be unrelated. Similarly, in Bangladesh, the non-binary 'hijra' gender identity is widely understood within its own community around a distinct concept of a 'third gender'. In such ways, the application of Western understandings of 'LGBTQIA+' onto traditional or emerging SOGIESC identities elsewhere does not account for the diversity and uniqueness that actually exists.

SOGIESC minority have what is typically, but problematically, referred to as "normative" SOGIESC.

The impact of conflict on SOGIESC minorities is gaining increasing attention within the development and humanitarian sectors. There are three primary ways in which this subgroup is typically affected in such settings. First, they experience the same impacts as the wider population. Second, there is typically a collapse of the informal, yet uniquely important, network of peer support that SOGIESC minorities generally have to build and rely upon for everyday life, leaving them without the support systems that they would otherwise turn to. Third, a set of vulnerabilities and needs that are unique to SOGIESC minorities are generated. While these are discussed in detail in the full paper, Figure 1 below highlights the ways in which SOGIESC minorities are left vulnerable in conflict-affected settings, increasing their experiences of violence, discrimination and exclusion.

The aftermath of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine was seen as a present-day opportunity to explore the impacts of conflict on SOGIESC minorities during a live ongoing war. With Concern implementing an emergency response to Ukraine, choosing this case study allowed for valuable insight from its operations to be included within data collection and analysis. The project was guided by three research questions:

- I. What are the unique vulnerabilities and needs of SOGIESC minorities in Ukraine since Russia's 2022 invasion?
- II. To what extent does/could Concern account for the vulnerabilities and needs of SOGIESC minorities in their emergency response policies and programming?
- III. How can the above two considerations inform ways of inclusively incorporating the vulnerabilities and needs of SOGIESC minorities into future emergency response?

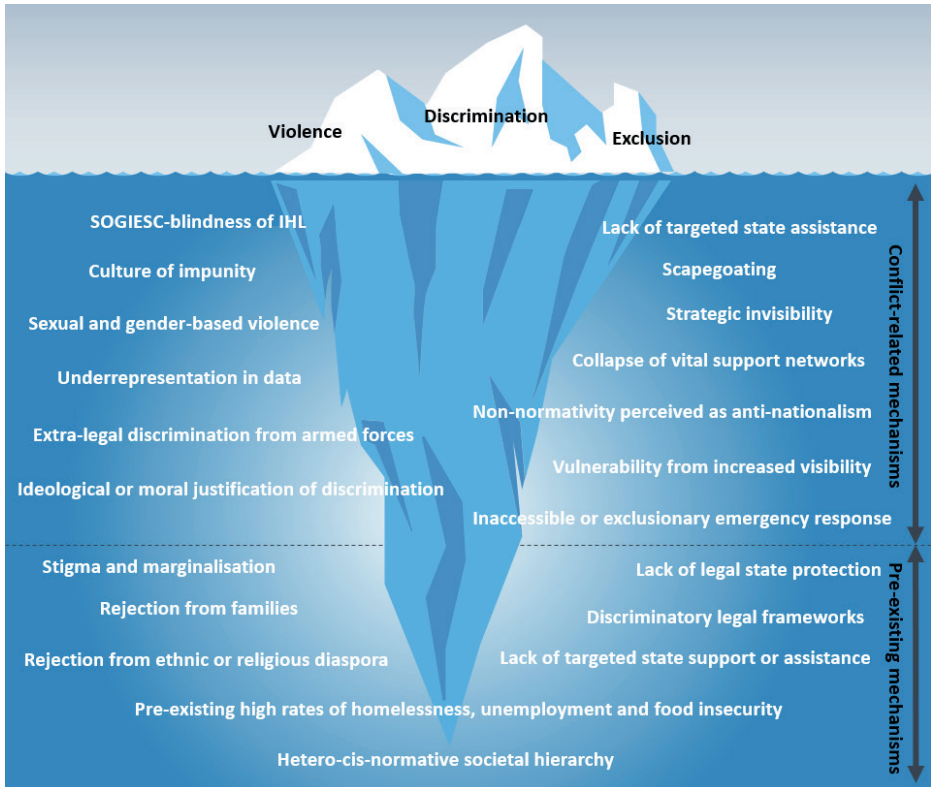


Figure 1: The ways in which SOGIESC minorities are left vulnerable to violence, discrimination and exclusion in conflict-affected settings.

To answer these questions, primary data was collected using interviews with Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities and Concern staff, as well as an analysis of Concern’s key policy and strategy documents relevant to emergency response. The resultant lessons learned about this group of people in this specific context are hoped to help inform and promote inclusion within future emergency responses to other crises.

The interviews with Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities identified that the war in Ukraine is having far reaching effects on this vulnerable group. While some of these effects are shared by the wider general population, the majority are unique to SOGIESC minorities’ marginalised position

within society. Figure 2 below illustrates the key recurring effects that were identified.

Upon further analysis, seven key need areas of Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities were generated, each with aspects unique to “non-normative” SOGIESC – (1) barriers to crossing, and discrimination at, internal and international borders; (2) inadequate medical supplies and services; (3) violence and discrimination; (4) trauma and psychological harm; (5) unsafe shelters due to the associated proximity of SOGIESC minorities to intolerant civilians; (6) collapse of vital peer networks; and (7) a particular vulnerability to the effects impacting the wider general population due to their pre-established marginalised position within society.

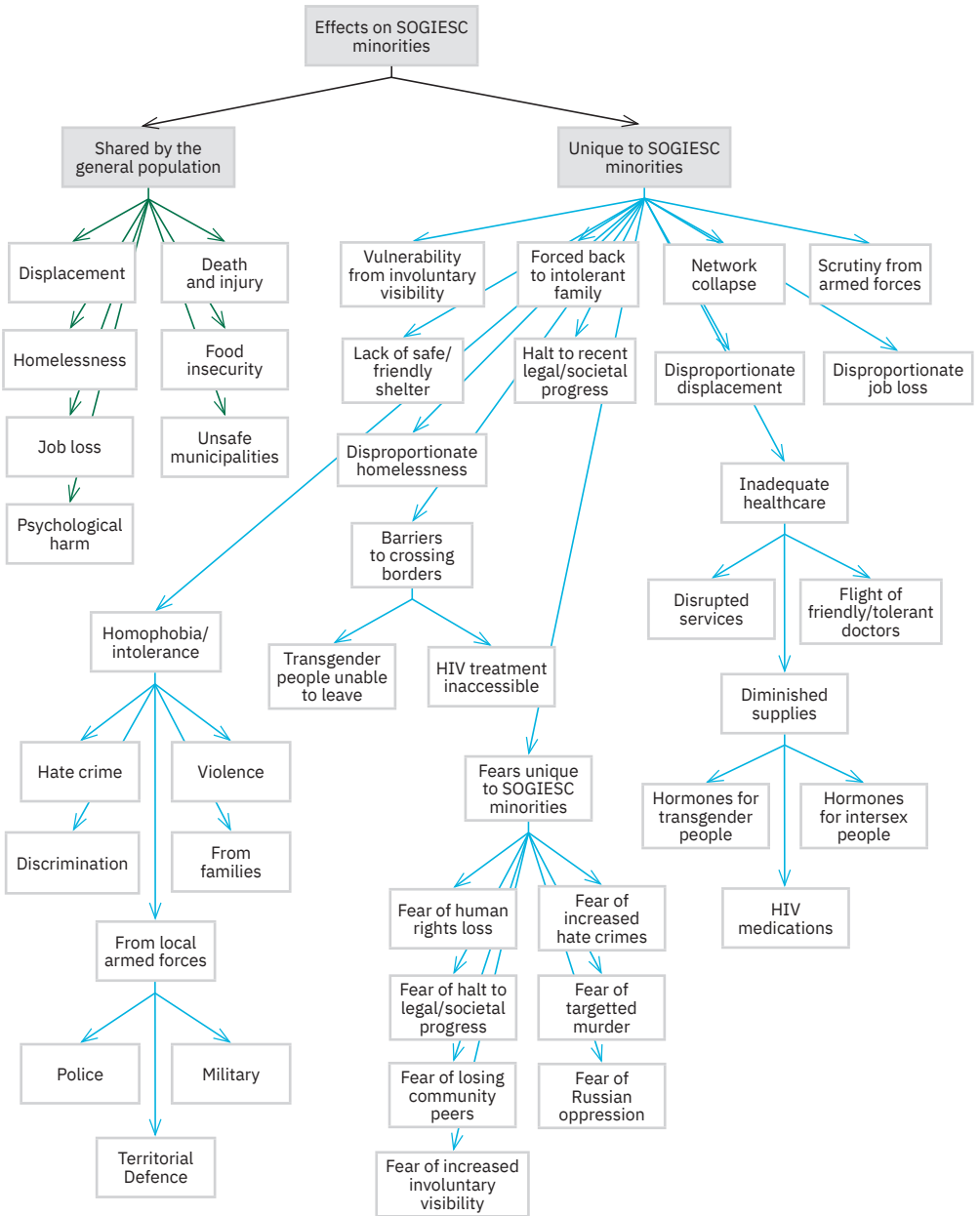


Figure 2: The key effects of the war on Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities. Green arrows correspond to effects that are shared by the general population and SOGIESC minorities, while blue arrows represent those effects which are unique to SOGIESC minorities.

The results of the needs assessment clearly demonstrate that this vulnerable group has exacerbated and unique needs in times of conflict that warrant intervention from humanitarian actors. Analysis of Concern’s documents and interviews with its staff identified, however, four key factors which might influence an organisation’s readiness or willingness to address specific needs of SOGIESC minorities – (1) local legal framework and cultural context; (2) the value of organisations’ speciality areas; (3) the perception that basic needs are the same regardless of one’s identity or position within society; and (4) the need for organisation prioritisation. While each finding is outlined in detail in the full report, the remainder of this article will focus on the paper’s discussion point around basic needs.

Concern’s approach to emergency response revolves around the provision of assistance for basic needs. A narrative around this that emerged from the project is that all people have the same basic needs and so emergency response interventions designed for the general population will also adequately serve SOGIESC minorities. However, this study makes the argument that while there are, of course, basic needs that apply to both SOGIESC minorities and the rest of the population alike, there is often inequality in different groups’ ability to benefit from assistance. It is a question of access. Even if the needs are general and shared, the ability to access assistance is often limited because of one’s “non-normative” SOGIESC. For example, Ukrainian participants expressed safety issues with shelters that are provided for the general population. Living together with the general public in a country where homophobia and intolerance are common, and at a time when lawlessness and injustice are increased, leaves SOGIESC minorities extremely vulnerable.

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*“They can’t use these services, for example, because they could be outed<sup>2</sup> easily...they could be threatened”* - Ukrainian participant

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*“Ukraine is still a very homophobic and transphobic country, and for some people, it’s not an option to sleep [in these shelters]”*  
- Ukrainian participant

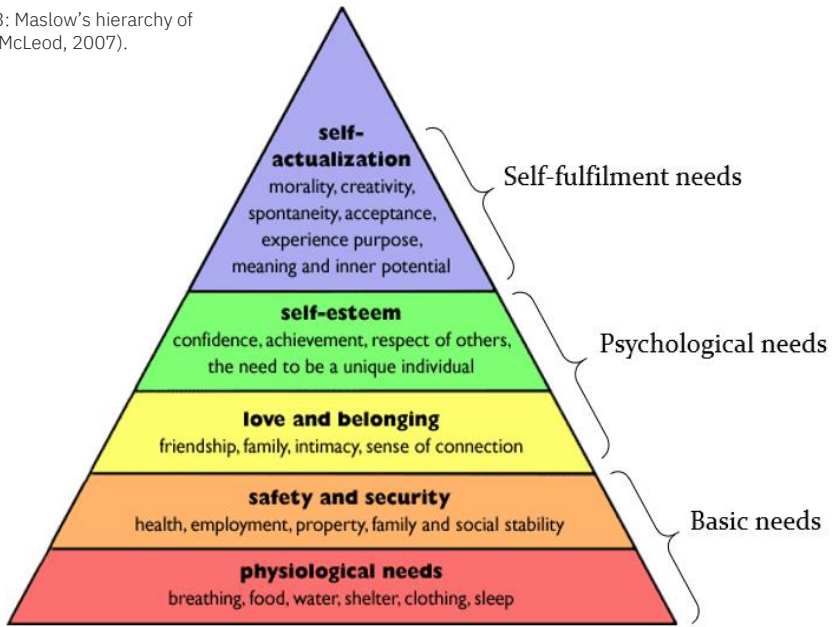
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The fear of discrimination, violence and ‘outing’ that goes hand in hand with their increased visibility in shelters was reported a key motivation for avoiding such facilities. And so, though the basic need for safe and dignified shelter is the same regardless of one’s SOGIESC, the ability to access assistance for it is not.

In addition to recognising that access to general assistance is limited for SOGIESC minorities, it must also be accepted that this vulnerable group have an additional set of basic needs that are unique from the wider population. Interviews with Concern’s staff suggested an understanding that the unique needs of SOGIESC minorities typically fall under ‘higher’ levels of need. However, by aligning each of the seven need areas identified by Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities with a corresponding basic need area of Maslow’s ground-breaking hierarchy of needs<sup>3</sup> [Figure 3], Figure 4 demonstrates

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2. ‘Outing’ refers to the act of exposing someone’s SOGIESC minority identity to others without their permission. This can have devastating consequences as SOGIESC minorities must often rely on strategic invisibility to survive within cultures where they would otherwise experience violence, discrimination or exclusion for their “non-normative” identities.
  3. ‘Maslow’s hierarchy of needs’ has been one of the most influential contributions to the behavioural sciences, outlining that people are motivated by five consecutive levels of needs, namely: physiological, safety, belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs. To demonstrate, Maslow proposed that “It is quite true that man lives by bread alone — when there is no bread. But what happens to man’s desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled? At once other (and “higher”) needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still “higher”) needs emerge and so on” (Maslow, 1943, pp. 375).

Figure 3: Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2007).



that the needs that are specific to SOGIESC minorities are, in fact, basic needs – basic needs that are different from those of the wider population and arise because of their “non-normative” SOGIESC.

Need area (with dimensions unique to SOGIESC minorities)	Basic need area
Barriers to crossing, and discrimination at, internal and international borders	Personal safety Security in health
Inadequate medical supplies and services	Security in Health
Violence and discrimination	Personal safety Security in health
Trauma and psychological harm	Security in health
Unsafe shelter due to the vulnerability associated with living alongside intolerant civilians	Shelter Personal safety
Collapse of vital peer networks	Security in health Social stability
Particular vulnerability to the effects impacting the wider general population	Social stability Security in employment Shelter

Figure 4: The need areas of Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities and their corresponding placement within Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

And so, it is clear that the war in Ukraine has generated a unique set of basic needs for Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities. This demonstrates the intersectional<sup>4</sup> nature of need. Recognising that different population subgroups have different basic needs is key to ensuring that no one gets left behind by emergency response. And while this project emphasises that SOGIESC minorities unfortunately remain largely out of sight and underrepresented in the humanitarian sector, there is opportunity to promote more inclusive practice readily within pre-existing programmes. Figure 5 presents the seven unique need areas once again, this time aligned with relevant programmatic areas of emergency response operations.

Need area (with dimensions unique to SOGIESC minorities)	Programmatic area
Barriers to crossing, and discrimination at, internal and international borders	Protection Health
Inadequate medical supplies and services	Health
Violence and discrimination	Protection
Trauma and psychological harm	Health
Unsafe shelter due to the vulnerability associated with living alongside intolerant civilians	Shelter WASH Protection
Collapse of vital peer networks	Protection
Particular vulnerability to the effects impacting the wider general population	Shelter WASH Nutrition and food security

Figure 5: The distinct need areas of Ukrainian SOGIESC minorities and their corresponding emergency response programmatic areas.

This shows that it is possible for humanitarian actors to meet the needs of SOGIESC minorities within established programmes, rather than needing to design completely new programmes. By finding entry points within existing operations, inclusion can be promoted within an organisation’s own speciality area. This too can help to overcome the legal and cultural barriers to meeting the needs of this vulnerable group when direct and open targeted intervention is less possible or desirable.

The war in Ukraine is an important opportunity for humanitarian organisations to recognise that SOGIESC minorities are in serious need of inclusive assistance, and that practice must be adapted to achieve this.

*“The meaning of this humanitarian aid is not only material help. It also has some symbolic meaning, and it has some emotional and moral meaning. Moral value...Even if it is a small help, even if it helps to fulfil some emergent needs, it’s not only about some material aspects, but also about something intangible” – Ukrainian participant*

<sup>4</sup> ‘Intersectionality’ refers to the way in which one’s layers of social identity (e.g., race, age, SOGIESC, disability status, language, etc.) combine and interact to generate privileges and disadvantages to form systems of oppression, discrimination or domination.

# Environmental Resilience and Gender Equality in Water Interventions in Somaliland

Written by Erik Lever

<b>Research title</b>	The Bridge Is Repaired Only After Someone Falls in the Water: Water Interventions and the Security-Development Nexus in Somaliland
<b>Masters programme</b>	Masters in Conflict, Security and Development
<b>University</b>	University of Sussex
<b>Research questions</b>	<p>The main research question was ‘To what extent can capacity-building interventions confront the challenges arising from climate change in Somaliland?’ This was further broken down as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Analyse the impact of rain-fed water interventions and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) initiatives on local livelihoods, migration patterns and hygiene conditions.</li><li>2. Assess the effectiveness of soil conservation and regeneration natural resource management (NRM) strategies in improving ecological restoration and arable land reclamation, and the impact of ‘climate-smart’ agricultural training on local livelihoods and climate-resilience.</li><li>3. Investigate the cross-cutting benefits of sisal planting initiatives for local ecosystems and livelihoods.</li><li>4. Consider how Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are changing local gender dynamics, liberating women’s time, improving women’s socioeconomic status and contributing to livelihood resilience to environmental and economic shocks, and the impact of synergies with NRM projects.</li></ol>

## Introduction

This article focuses on the findings of the research on how community-based disaster management and Self-Help Groups can help improve environmental resilience and gender equality in Somaliland.

## Background

Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) offer capacity-building solutions which are attentive to both nature and gender and have proven to have resilience-building effects in communities impacted by extreme weather events. Since 2017, Concern Worldwide in collaboration with Irish Aid has been implementing the 'Strengthening the Poorest Households' Economy & Resilience to Shocks (SPHERES)' programme to enhance the capacities of the extremely poor and vulnerable populations in Somaliland through five envisioned outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** Strengthened, diversified livelihood opportunities.

**Outcome 2:** Equitable access to safe quality primary education.

**Outcome 3:** Improved access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities and adoption of sound hygiene practices.

**Outcome 4:** Increased participation and influence of women and men from marginalised groups in leadership and decision-making.

**Outcome 5:** Improved management of natural resources and community-based disaster management (CBDM).

## Definitions

The CBDM approach forms part of the fifth outcome of the programme and uses rain-fed berkedes<sup>1</sup> and two forms of NRM techniques to mitigate the effects of drought and flooding:

1. *Soil restoration techniques* constructing gabion check dams<sup>2</sup> to reclaim arable land and planting sisal shrubs and grass along gullies and slow soil erosion.

<sup>1</sup> Large concrete underground tanks to capture and store rainwater runoff.

<sup>2</sup> A series of dams constructed with gabions, metal cages filled with stones, at intervals in a gully.

2. *Soil conservation techniques* raising soil bunds designed to slow rainwater runoff and conserve soil moisture.

The CBDM approach also employs two forms of capacity-building mechanisms to support these techniques:

1. *NRM through Cash for Work (CfW) schemes* sensitises beneficiaries to NRM techniques by partly constructing the gabions and soil bunds, and planting sisal.
2. *The Lead Farmer approach* involves Concern agricultural experts teaching climate-smart agronomic methods to local farmers who then pass the training along to fellow farmers.

SHGs form part of the fourth outcome and function as a platform for women's empowerment through routine awareness sessions, access to credit facilities, business start-up grants and training.<sup>3</sup>

Combined, CBDM projects and SHG implementation serves a capacity-building function by providing beneficiaries with the skills, knowledge, and financial support needed to confront the socioeconomic challenges imposed by water shortages in Somaliland.

## Impact

### Community-Based Disaster Management

#### *Berkeds*

The construction of berkedes has had a significant impact on local livelihoods. Seasonal water replenishment and storage has increased local resilience to climate-induced shocks by extending the water accumulated during the rainy season for

<sup>3</sup> Abdulkadir Ibrahim, Mariam A. Mohamed, Faduma A. Mohamed, 'Evolution of Financial Inclusion for Women in Business in Somalia', *Knowledge Matters Magazine* 29 (2022), pp. 29-30.





Figure 1: Soil bund built by Concern and beneficiaries from Korji village in Gabiley, Somaliland. The bund traps water on the farmlands, as you can see to the right of the mound. And to the left of the bund you can see the crops growing as a result of the increased soil moisture. Photo: Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim/Concern Worldwide

use into the dry season. Concern teaches households to follow seasonal calendars in order to use the water catchment and storage facilities efficiently during the dry season and avoid water shortages.

Concern has also formulated a cost-sharing modality which has helped familiarise locals with the construction process. The modality engages communities in the excavation process whilst Concern supplies the materials for construction. The location for the berkedes is informed by engagement with Village Development Committees (VDCs) which include key members from the community, and with the guidance of the Ministry of Water in the department of Water Engineering. Concern mitigates risk of oral-faecal contamination by conducting routine annual water quality tests, distributing emergency aquatabs<sup>4</sup> and creating local water management committees where WASH trained volunteers promote the correct use of water points to sensitise users on safe hygiene practices.

<sup>4</sup> Chlorine tablets used for water purification.

In another programme, Concern and the German Federal Foreign Office (AA) are in the process of constructing an even larger dam as part of the 'Gocon-dhaale water pan project' designed to capture 12,000 cubic metres of surface runoff. WASH Engineer, Haron Emukule, from Concern explains that 'if it rains [enough to fill the dam], a community will never have problems with water [throughout both the rainy and dry seasons]'. The project is still in its infancy but is expected to greatly reduce rural communities' water insecurities and allow for sustained water utilisation throughout the whole year.

### *Soil Bunds and Lead Farmer Agricultural Training*

Soil bunds in tandem with Lead Farmer agricultural training have helped communities develop resilience to both economic and climate induced shocks to their livelihoods. Soil bunds are raised around crop fields to retain 'green water'<sup>5</sup> soil moisture levels and reduce water run-

<sup>5</sup> 'Water held in the soil and available to plants.

off from farmlands, thereby enhancing land productivity and resilience by capturing irrigation water which would otherwise have carried valuable topsoil away during flooding. Concern agricultural expert, Mohamed Ibrahim, stated that the soil bunds have led to better grain quality and increased crop quantity significantly since their construction.

The Lead Farmer approach complements the creation of soil bunds by teaching local farmers how to use crop rotation, contour farming and mulching to increase soil fertility, and plant diversification and intercropping to increase crop saleability and resilience against drought periods. With the help of Concern’s agricultural experts, farmers have lessened their dependence on monoculture crops, such as maize and sorghum, and instead grow a variety of cash crops, such as tomatoes, garlic, and mango for sale at local markets, providing locals with a more reliable source of income.

Cash for Work (CfW) schemes within NRM implementation have had a knowledge-building effect in target communities. Through the schemes, Concern gives monetary incentives to able-bodied but socio-economically vulnerable community members to construct 85% of a gabion or soil bund, whilst the community builds the rest as a community contribution and are involved in every step of the construction process to sensitise them to the techniques. This has strengthened the sustainability of the projects in targeted communities, who are now able to maintain and replicate the interventions themselves.

### *Gabion Check Dams and Sisal Planting*

Gabion check dams have proven to be a cost-effective and relatively simple solution to mitigate and repair the damages of soil erosion to arable land and vegetation. Soil restoration measures involve constructing gabion check dams in gullies to prevent excess water from escaping during flooding



Figure 2: Gabion check dam near Korji village, Gabiley, Somaliland. The dam ledges shown above assist the accumulation of soil behind the gabions. Photo: Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim/Concern Worldwide.

and accumulate sediment behind the stratified gabions to steadily rebuild the eroded land to pre-flood levels.

These dams have reclaimed arable land lost to soil erosion and have captured run-off water which has contributed to increasing the surrounding vegetation levels. The interventions are cost-effective because the gabions can be replicated by hand using locally sourced materials. A great example of this is in Satiile village where locals have expressed that participation in the programme has been a game-changer for the community, who can now construct the soil bunds and gabions without tractors in order to reclaim and rejuvenate their land lost to desertification. These techniques have rejuvenated and strengthened communities' agricultural foundations and improved locals' environmental resilience to drought and flooding.

Planting of sisal around gully-affected areas has also contributed to slowing soil erosion by extending roots into the earth which increase soil integrity and 'green water' moisture levels in the surrounding areas, which then contributes to increasing vegetation growth. Concern has planted 10,000 sisal plants in 2022 with the help of local communities through CfW in CBDM implementation. Sisal also provides beneficiaries with fibre for making rope which helps local construction of houses and livestock fences. The shrubs are naturally self-replicating and thus provide target villages with a cost-effective and sustainable technique to curb soil erosion and increase vegetation levels.

### *Self-Help Groups*

Concern contributed significantly to the strengthening of livelihood activities for women through the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The groups consist of 20-25 members, assembled from nearby households of the same income group in target communities, and function as a

platform for strengthening women's access to power and control over resources, and increasing women's participation in household and community decision-making processes.

Concern has sought to improve women's access to power and control over resources by providing entrepreneurial and agricultural training, and routine awareness sessions to SHG households. An entrepreneurial training package provides women with small-business start-up grants and training which includes income-generating activity (IGA) management lessons and 9 months of literacy and numeracy classes. SHG project officer, Ayanle Farah, has expressed that the skills training has contributed to more women becoming breadwinners of their households, which is also being appreciated by the men in the households. The training has made significant improvements to women's socioeconomic status and livelihood resilience, increasing household incomes and providing women with direct access to power and control over resources by mobilising SHG credit facilities.

This Programme has increased the participation of women in decision-making both at the household and community levels. Women's involvement in the SHGs and agricultural activities has empowered women, both personally and socially. The perceptions of men towards women's contribution in the household and community has also changed, with men becoming more open to women's participation. With income from SHGs, the women have begun to contribute to household financial decision-making processes, which could never happen before. It is all because of the Programme.

**- Focus Group Discussion session with VDC members in Gees Dheere Village**



Figure 3: Gabion check dam showing partly replenished soil levels near Satille village, Borama, Somaliland. Photo: Mohamed Ahmed Ibrahim/Concern Worldwide.

Concern also provides SHG members with a sharia-compliant model for savings and loans in order to enable the women to grow their savings. During periods of drought, Concern staff have observed that women in SHGs have reserved a portion of their business savings as a safety-net to help the wider community cope with economic shocks during periods of water scarcity, highlighting how women's empowerment benefits the whole community. Women were also shown to participate more in agricultural activities due to agricultural training, growing cash crop vegetables in home gardens whilst the men were engaged as lead farmers on the larger fields.

Awareness sessions targeting gender-related attitudes have been successful at changing men's perceptions on traditional labour divisions and have empowered women's decision-making capabilities and socioeconomic status. The sessions have had a personal and societal effect for women participating in the SHGs by enhancing leadership skills and cementing

their role in decision-making processes at household and community levels. Concern coordinated joint attendance meetings and field days between SHGs, VDCs and government authorities, which has also empowered women in local decision-making processes and led to cascading changes to gender attitudes from community to household levels.

## Conclusion

The research has shown that Concern has used capacity-building interventions to strengthen communities' resilience against both environmental and economic shocks brought on by extreme weather. The Community-Based Disaster Management approach and Self-Help Groups have equipped vulnerable communities with the knowledge, skills, financial tools and institutional connections to not only improve their resilience against such events, but also to face the challenges to their livelihoods themselves.

# Dairy Value Chain Techniques in Food and Nutrition Security Analysis in Somaliland

Written by Shweta Joshi

<b>Research title</b>	Dairy Value Chain techniques in food and nutrition security analysis in poor households in Maroodijeex region in Somaliland.
<b>Masters programme</b>	Masters in Food Security, Policy and Management
<b>University</b>	University College Cork
<b>Research questions</b>	<p>Main Question - To what extent, can improved preservation, processing, and storage units in dairy value chains contribute to food security and nutrition among poor households in Somaliland?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the current potential of milk production among smallholder farmers in the research area?</li><li>• What role does the dairy industry play in the milk value chain in the study area?</li><li>• What are the key factors that affect livestock milk production? And how does it impact the milk consumption pattern of pastoral households?</li><li>• What quality control measures are followed by the actors in the value chain?</li><li>• What role did women play in the milk value chain?</li></ul>

## Aim

The study aimed to explore to what extent the introduction of advanced and affordable production, processing and storage methods in dairy value chains would help to reduce food and nutrition insecurity among smallholder farmers/pastoralists in Somaliland. The study also provided valuable information on the milk value chain, allowing various organisations to fill gaps identified through this research to improve the livelihoods of smallholder dairy farmers and other chain actors in the research mandate areas. The findings of this study

will help those working with smallholder dairy farmers to improve their livelihoods in the milk value chain by encouraging the adoption and appropriate use of low-cost, easy-to-use technologies for improved on-farm milk storage and processing.

## Research Methodology

- The study was conducted from May to August 2022, and focused on three livelihood groups 1) Pastoralist, 2) Agro-pastoralist and 3) Urban population in Toon and Salahley villages of Maroodijeex district in Somaliland.

- The literature review consisted of a review of the relevant documents, including existing project documents and other background information such as previous research papers, internet resources, Government and UN body reports etc., in respect to the study.
- The research used mixed methods including both quantitative and qualitative research.
- The quantitative data included data collected at the field level (survey data) using a survey questionnaire and was analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) tool and Microsoft Excel.
- The qualitative data included: focus group discussions (with men and women); the use of data from SMART<sup>1</sup> surveys previously conducted (anthropometric surveys) focused on women and children; market surveys and assessments (milk vendors, wholesalers and suppliers); key-informant interviews (senior female-led households, female group leaders, community leaders, extension workers, business representatives, volunteers and staff, livestock association representatives); and an evidence-based/desk-based study (existing literature such as reports, articles, research papers, internet etc).

## Findings and Discussion

The research focused on people whose main livelihood is centred on full nomadic pastoralism and agro-pastoralism. The fact that women made up the majority of survey

respondents suggests that women have a predominant role in the dairy production in the area. Even though the dairy sector has a good potential in the region, most dairying activities are working under capacity and face challenges associated with access to inputs and resources to improve their production and income. It was expressed during the key informant interviews that the dairy production in the region is neglected and needs support to improve production. There are programmes that are working in supporting pastoralism but no direct implementation had aimed to support the dairy sector. Livestock and livestock product sales is one of the major sources of income in the region, along with casual labour, but with the underperforming dairy sector the farmers are not able to generate a sufficient amount of income from livestock product sales during times of crisis. Apart from this, the survey data also revealed that none of the households in the region receive any in-kind assistance (donations, relief aid) during the dry season. The major source of income was found to be either casual labour or the sale of livestock/ livestock products.

## Findings from fieldwork

Availability of land and land use are major factors that contribute to dairy farming. In the region most pastoralist and agro-pastoralist people use communal land<sup>2</sup> for livestock grazing and fodder production. The use of communal land for these purposes is shared among both types of pastoral groups with no private ownership of these lands, which indicates low land ownership among the households in the region (Figure 1). Dairying in the region is easily accessible to farmers but lack in facilities such as storage, water availability and electricity. Milk processing units are also not available in the

<sup>1</sup>. Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) methodology is an improved survey method that balances simplicity (for rapid assessment of acute emergencies) and technical soundness to assess the nutritional status of children under five years of age and the mortality rate of the population.

<sup>2</sup>. Communal land is a (mostly rural) territory in possession of a community, rather than an individual or business owner.

## LAND TYPE

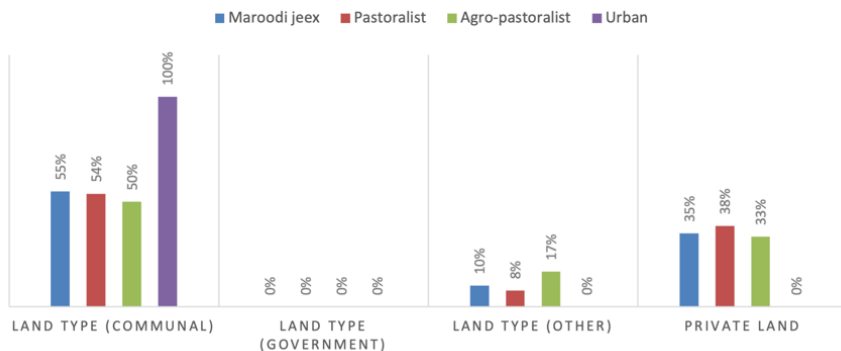


Figure 1: Available Land Types (Quantitative survey: Maroodijeex)

area. Survey findings showed that women play a crucial role in milking animals, milk storage, transportation, and sale as well as decision-making regarding the usage of milk and income from milk in the region.

The preferred milk type in the region was camel milk followed by goat. None of the households preferred cow milk as very few of the households owned cows. Cows are mainly used for social and cultural purposes. The reason behind the preference of camel milk was its high market value and camels' ability to produce high volumes of milk in the dry season. Excess milk is usually fed to children or sold in the market. Camel accounted for the highest milk production per day during both rainy and dry seasons. Goats were the preferred livestock type among both pastoralist and agro-pastoralist groups for destocking<sup>3</sup> purpose during the dry season, and goat was also the preferred meat type.

Milk consumption in the household was largely dependent on milk availability. During the dry season, total milk consumption was low due to less milk availability. As milk sale is a major source

of income, a higher amount of milk is usually sold, leaving less available for household purposes, thus reducing milk consumption. Major causes of low milk production in the region were limited availability of resources such as water and fodder, as well as livestock disease and death. Even though livestock health services are available in the region, accessing these services becomes challenging due to migration of the population during dry seasons. During the focus group discussions (FGDs), respondents also mentioned lack of accessibility to veterinary services in the region, which results in a high prevalence of livestock diseases and mortality. Respondents also mentioned they were only able to spend USD \$5 per year on average on livestock healthcare, which is usually not sufficient. Due to milk shortages during the dry season, the coping mechanism used among households was that adults go without milk, and use milk alternatives such as packaged drinking milk (milk powders), butter and butter blends, which lack in nutritional value.

Undernutrition in Somaliland during the dry season is very high. The SAM (Severe Acute Malnutrition) and GAM (Global Acute Malnutrition) level in the majority of regions in Maroodijeex were between 5-9.9%

<sup>3</sup>. Destocking refers to reducing animal stocks during drought.

## PREFERRED MILK-TYPE

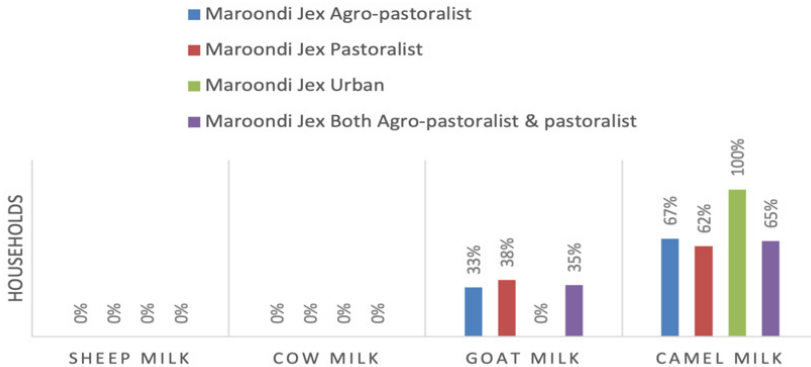


Figure 2: Preferred Livestock Milk (Quantitative survey: Maroodijeex).

(alert), and 10-14.9% (serious) range (FSNAU, 2022). The survey conducted in the region showed only moderate knowledge of milk nutrition benefits and infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF) among the people. The majority of female respondents reported not having enough information on child health and nutrition. Concern's Nutrition Advisors reported in the key informant interviews that the main cause of malnutrition among children in the region were underlying causes such as lack of education, unhealthy sexual practices leading to teenage pregnancies, gender inequality, poor maternal health and healthcare facilities, poor dietary diversity, traditional/cultural beliefs related to food etc. The main source of information on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and nutrition was imparted either by community health workers or through radio, health clinics and community leaders. WASH practices were generally known among the population but there was practically no use of soap. No milking hygiene was practiced while milking livestock, which were usually hand milked. The sheds where animals are kept were not cleaned regularly. Methods of washing that are not properly hygienic for dairy production such as use of sand

and water are usually practiced among the households to wash hands and milk apparatus. Plastic jerry cans and traditional gourds were the most common equipment used for milk handling, storage and transportation. Boiling of milk was practiced among the households, however repeated boiling was the only method practiced for preserving milk. None of the households had refrigeration facilities or access to cooling facilities in the area despite high temperature and humidity in the region, leading to milk spoilage. The spoiled milk does not get farmers a high price in the market, thus impacting on household income. The majority of the households reported that when they experience a shortage of income they are neither able to spend on livestock health care nor are they able to purchase sufficient food for all household members, thus making the household food insecure.

There are three main activities that drive the milk value chain in the region: 1) collection/gathering, 2) transportation and 3) trading. All three activities are mostly performed by women in the region. Milk collection is carried out at the collection point usually located far from the villages and the most





A camel on the road between Hargeisa and Qaloocato in Odweine, June 2022. Photo: Ed Ram/Concern Worldwide.

common means of transportation is on foot or bicycles. Most of the collection points lack cooling facilities and milk processing equipment are also rarely available. This results in the majority of the milk becoming spoiled before reaching the point of sale/cooperatives.

In the region, dairy farmers are also involved in side selling of milk - selling milk to private collectors or buyers. This is also the reason why dairy production is compromised in the region, due to insufficient supply. Milk prices are largely dependent on seasonality and vary with milk type. Community members in the region also reported changes in milk prices. During dry seasons with low availability of milk and high milk prices, milk becomes unaffordable, depriving the households of the nutritional value of milk consumption.

## Recommendations

- Improved milk value chains and dairy interventions are not only essential for improved milk consumption or broadening milk nutrition benefits but with improved techniques such as availability of cooling units near collection points to maintain milk quality.
- Proper milk storage should be provided during dairy production for storing milk and for animal feeds, which can be used during feed shortages.
- Communal feeding points and pastures should be established in order to improve pasture production.

- In the region, during milk shortages, households used milk substitutes such as ghee, butter and packaged milk as a coping strategy that increases the need of developing processing in the region.
- Dairy interventions can also attract youth and offer employment, which further helps in generating income for the household. With employment, the food security in the household also increases.
- Along with these interventions, trainings and workshops related to child health and nutrition, WASH and milking hygiene need to be incorporated.
- Humanitarian assistance as a form of crisis modifier or social protection should be provided to households during dry seasons in order to maintain their nutritional status in the short term, alongside other measures to improve incomes and sustain livelihoods in the longer-term.
- Training on income management should also be included in the intervention, so that poor households can manage and spend their income wisely.
- Establishing community-based water schemes or policies to sustain water availability during dry seasons will help prevent households from migrating, which will reduce the chances of livestock diseases and death.
- Promoting the use of aluminium jars/ cans for storage and transportation of milk.
- Government should implement dairy sector development policies and impart knowledge of existing/ available livestock and milk production policies.
- Any programme that is to be implemented in future should have a community-based approach, to maximise the intervention's positive impact and sustainability, while also improving the resilience of households involved.

# Contributing Authors and their Concern Mentors

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## **Paddy Hipple-Walsh:**

‘Promoting Nutrition-Sensitive Conservation Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa’, Masters in Development Practice, Trinity College Dublin – Mentored by Regine Koppf, Senior Adviser Food and Nutrition Security.

## **Clíodhna Malone:**

‘Exploring Opportunities for Disability Inclusion in Development Programming’, Masters in Development Practice, Trinity College Dublin – Mentored by Bernadette Crawford, Equality Adviser.

## **Kevin Dowling:**

‘LGBTQIA+ People / SOGIESC Minorities and the 2022 Emergency Response to Russia’s War on Ukraine’, Masters in Development Practice, Trinity College Dublin – Mentored by Finola Mohan, Programme Knowledge and Learning Adviser and Saara Bouhouche, Humanitarian Policy Adviser.

## **Erik Lever:**

‘Environmental Resilience and Gender Equality in Water Interventions in Somaliland’, Masters in Conflict, Security and Development at the University of Sussex – Supervised by Kenneth Oyik, Area Coordinator, Somaliland.

## **Shweta Joshi:**

‘Dairy Value Chain Techniques in Food and Nutrition Security Analysis in Somaliland’, Masters in Food Security, Policy and Management at University College Cork – Mentored by David Traynor, Agriculture Advisor.

## For whom is the publication?

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

## What this publication includes

- Promising practice
- Organisational learning
- Promotion of multi-sectoral and integrated approaches to programming
- Links to full reports

## What it doesn't include

- Targeted recommendations
- Additional evidence not included in the papers cited
- Detailed descriptions of interventions or their implementation

## EDITORIAL WORKING GROUP

- **Finola Mohan:** Editor-in-Chief and Issue Editor

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### Republic of Ireland

52-55 Lower Camden Street  
Dublin 2  
00 353 1 417 77 00  
info@concern.net

### Northern Ireland

47 Frederick Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2LW  
00 44 28 9033 1100  
belfastinfo@concern.net

### England and Wales

13/14 Calico House  
Clove Hitch Quay  
London  
SW11 3TN  
00 44 207 801 1850  
londoninfo@concern.net

### Republic of Korea

(04034) 5 fl, 12, Yanghwa-ro  
11-gil, Mapo-gu, Seoul,  
Republic of Korea  
00 82 324 3900  
www.concern.kr

### USA

355 Lexington Avenue  
16th Floor  
New York  
NY 10017  
00 1 212 5578 000  
info.usa@concern.net

[www.concern.net](http://www.concern.net)

# KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

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IT TAKES