

# KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

Advocating for change: experiences  
and learning



**Any contributions, ideas or topics for future issues of knowledge matters.  
Contact the editorial team on email: [knowledgematters@concern.net](mailto:knowledgematters@concern.net)**

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

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## **Knowledge Matters basics**

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**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 two or three 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 got 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 speakers, so think carefully about using idioms 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 Dochas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

**Cover image:** The photo shows discussants at the Chad Conference on resilience to food and nutrition crisis which took place in N'Djamena, Chad on 11-12 December 2013. Photo by Connell Foley

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## From the Issue editor

This edition of Knowledge Matters examines Concern's work on advocacy. Putting together this volume demonstrates the diversity of advocacy issues within Concern.

Each of the contributions presents a unique approach to advocating for change. The article from Bangladesh, illustrates the power of coalition building in ensuring that the rights of the extreme poor are respected.

A pragmatic and proactive approach to advocacy was taken by the Syria Crisis Communications and Advocay Group. This ensured that the group's work remained relevant to the ongoing crisis unfolding within the country.

The power of different agencies working together is central to the story from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The consortium model in that context is ensuring that the implementation of the water law takes place.

The Kenya example, illustrates how for our work on free primary education to be effective, it had to be undertaken with a clear advocacy outcome in mind. Concern was clear about its desired outcome (government provision for and regulation of education for children in informal settlements) and kept a focus on this over a lengthy period, lobbying effectively, adapting tactics, using research and evidence to reach this desired outcome.

The graduation article shows the relative success that the graduation programmes have had in advocating for the scale up and design of national initiatives based on our learning.

The contributions by Connell Foley, give the reader an overview of the advocacy journey within Concern. The also point to the future trajectory of advocacy within the organisation.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles, and that they give you a better insight into Concern's advocacy work. As always we look forward to hearing your thoughts and feedback.

**Roberta Cappieri**

# Introduction to Knowledge Matters on Advocacy



By **Connell Foley**

I am delighted to be able to introduce this edition of Knowledge Matters, the first one of the series dedicated to advocacy. In many of the previous thematic editions, there have been individual articles on advocacy within our programme work, reflecting the fact that Concern has been conducting various forms of advocacy in many of our country programmes over the years. But this edition is devoted to giving people a wider perspective of Concern's advocacy work and how the pieces should relate to each other.

## **A Potted History of Advocacy within Concern**

If one understands advocacy as “pleading for a cause”, then since its inception in 1968, Concern has been advocating for change, whether it be access of crisis affected people to humanitarian assistance (Biafra, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Rwanda...) or for changes in national policy to ensure food security or access to services for poor people.

The place of advocacy in Concern's work is embedded in our mission statement:

- Our mission is to help people living in extreme poverty achieve major improvements in their lives which last and spread without ongoing support from Concern.
- To achieve this mission, we engage in long term development work, build resilience, respond to emergency situations, and *seek to address the root causes of poverty through our development education and advocacy work* [emphasis added].

The 1994 and 2005 Policy Statements stated the same key areas of programme activity (excepting resilience building). We talked about them as three legs of the mission stool but while our humanitarian and long-term development work were strong legs, the third leg addressing the root causes of poverty (advocacy and development education) was always considerably thinner and shorter!

When the Policy Unit was set up in 1997, an advocacy officer position was included, focusing on campaigns like Jubilee2000 (on state debt) and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. This was a desk based position and not explicitly linked to Concern's overseas programmes. In the Strategic Plan (2002-2005), Concern formally adopted advocacy as a strategic objective. A policy was developed in April 2003 and an Advocacy Unit was set

up as part of the Overseas Department in 2005. The new Head of Advocacy conducted a survey across all the country programmes and came up with a long list of issues the country programmes were dealing with and conducting some advocacy on. Top of this list was the issue of land and land rights. Some disagreements arose as to how to move forward between the CEO's, Tom Arnold's, vision for hunger as a key theme for Concern and the Head of Advocacy's greater focus on human rights and a bottom-up approach. In the end, Concern deliberately cultivated a reputation as a strong advocate on hunger.

The Head of Advocacy moved on in 2007 and the place of advocacy became a bone of contention. In a minor restructuring in early 2008, advocacy was moved into the newly formed Strategy, Advocacy and Learning Directorate and it has remained there to late-2016, albeit with significant hubs of advocacy being created in Concern UK and in Concern US, particularly the former.

Alongside this, we have always been active in international fora on a range of other issues, the main one being humanitarian. Concern's voice is sought out and listened to because we are seen to represent a relatively neutral and impartial view of the situation on the ground and because we are seen as an agency that delivers even in the most difficult situations. However, our strong voice on humanitarian issues has tended to be reliant on a small number of experienced and knowledgeable individuals and we have not maximized our potential to seek specific change and pursue it, linking our on-the-ground experience, our learning, our policy analysis to the changes we wish to see. It has been as much about representation as it has been about policy change.



**Concern has been doing advocacy and advocacy related activities for decades but has not articulated them as key change objectives as we have done with our country programmes**

### **Review of Concern's Advocacy Function, 2015**

So Concern has been doing advocacy and advocacy related activities for decades but has not articulated them as key change objectives as we have done with our country programmes. As part of the third and very flimsy leg holding up our mission, it was always seen as something of an add-on or a luxury, even though we found our international advocacy staff numbers increasing over the years. This seemed an odd contradiction. In 2014, we commissioned a Review of the Advocacy Function and this was conducted in 2015 and came up with plenty of useful findings and recommendations.

To be succinct, the main ones were:

- People within Concern understood the importance of doing advocacy (82% of respondents).
- However, we do not have a culture of influencing and seeing advocacy as important.

- Concern has in place many elements that should enable advocacy to be effective (good programmes, international credibility, many capacities...) However, these are not being joined up effectively, and a series of strategic, management and organisational cultural challenges hamper Concern's ability to conduct really effective advocacy.
- Weak leadership of advocacy.
- We are quite risk-averse in our external positioning.
- We need to embed national influencing and advocacy into our country programmes much more (a regular criticism from Irish Aid also).
- People felt that we needed clearer focus in our international advocacy.
- We needed to be much clearer on the focus and nature of our humanitarian advocacy.
- We need to be joined up in our external voice, between communications and advocacy and public engagement and seek opportunities to use public campaigning as a key tool to do this.
- There is a strong common vision among Concern staff that suggests that "... Concern could, and should, be doing more to leverage our programme learning and credibility to try to bring about wider scale change. To be more effective at advocacy and achieve wider change, Concern needs to embed influencing work into its core business. Much of this is about leadership. Leaders must create a more prominent focus on advocacy, clarify accountabilities, and personally play an active role in delivery of advocacy plans."

### **First External Evaluation of Concern's International Advocacy, 2015**

In late 2015, we also had the first evaluation of our international advocacy work, conducted by two external consultants chosen by tender. Interestingly, they were highly positive about Concern's influence and advocacy on hunger (food and nutrition security) where the emphasis had been placed. They concluded that we had influence way beyond that which our size might suggest. Reading between the lines, this was largely down to the "insider advocacy" and relationship-building approach taken by Tom Arnold, his personal influence and reach into many global hunger fora, and to the support he received by a small number of international advocacy staff and from a relatively small number of country programmes. The evaluation was critical of the poor communication internally of our international advocacy work and not using successes and key initiatives as a means of cementing the place and importance of advocacy within Concern.

Plans were developed in early 2016 to act on the recommendations of both the Advocacy Review and the Evaluation of International Advocacy. An important one of these was to ensure that national influencing was included in the country programme proposals being submitted for Irish Aid funding and this is being followed up even in late 2016. Another was the outlining of positions on a range of topics in preparation for the World Humanitarian

Summit, which began a process of examining the focus of our international humanitarian advocacy. The recent cuts to the International Advocacy Team mean that we need to re-examine the plans and see what can be achieved with fewer resources.

### **Need to Build on Advocacy Workshop, Kampala, 2013**

We need to build on an excellent Advocacy Workshop in Kampala in October 2013 which brought together 23 staff members from 12 country offices and eight staff from HQ. We need to engage with the astonishing amount of advocacy work being done in-country in order to maximize its utility and our organizational influence. While country teams were doing a lot of advocacy, a limited amount was embedded in our programmes and this is the connection we need to make. The articles in this edition of Knowledge Matters will hopefully point to different ways forward.

The intent of Knowledge Matters is to share evidence of what works in our programmes as well as *learning* about what works and what does not work. We are trying to keep it results focused as a means of incentivizing our staff to produce what other agencies and donors are looking for from agencies like Concern. Measuring results is particularly difficult in advocacy since the causality chains are very complex. It makes proving attribution extremely difficult. However, I personally have listened to our programme staff who have been saying for years that we should manage our advocacy like any of our programmes, with clarity of purpose and analysis of how to achieve that purpose. We need to be able to say if we have achieved success or not and understand why or why not. It is important, therefore, not to constantly mix it up with “representation” and turning up at meetings to “give updates on the situation on the ground”. Both of these are important but, as activities, need to be framed within clear objectives. Some of these may be advocacy objectives; others may not. Let us not mix them up.

I think that it is also fair to say that Concern is in its infancy in relation to clear, systematic, sustained advocacy work. Other NGOs have been more focused on the policy areas for decades; indeed, many of us feel that some of the larger INGOs have moved too far to the policy level and have lost their grounded value. So we need to look at this Knowledge Matters as reflecting where Concern currently is on its advocacy journey. The 2015 evaluation suggests that we are doing well on hunger but that people internally do not know enough about it. We have much to learn.

I look forward to hearing from many of you about the often brilliant influencing work that you are doing but that is not well documented and that becomes hard to share. When we last reported on advocacy progress to Concern's Board of Directors, I found a number of what appeared to be genuine success stories in our country advocacy. Very few of them have been written up in any coherent way, which is a real shame and a lost opportunity. Given that this is the kind of information donors and others seek, we really need to work together to make sure that we get the important information documented into digestible and easily shared forms.

# Advocacy for the implementation of the Water Law in DRC



By Stephen Jones

## **Background – a WASH sector with weak institutions and outdated sector policies**

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector has a history of predominantly short-term humanitarian interventions in a context of “weak institutions and outdated sector policies” (AMCOW, 2011). This context makes it difficult for citizens to hold service providers and government actors accountable for delivering long-term sustainable WASH services. In particular, the country had never had a Water Law defining the overall responsibilities in the sector. In late 2015, discussions and different drafts on a new Water Law had been going on for over ten years without resolution.

This is the context in which the DRC WASH Consortium, a programme of five international NGOs led by Concern Worldwide, works with local health services and other local government actors to support over 500 rural villages and 500,000 beneficiaries. The Consortium is currently funded through a grant of £24m running from 2013 to 2018 from DFID (UKAid), which is also the principal donor of the national rural WASH programme through the Ministry of Health. The key reasons DFID funds the Consortium in addition to the national programme are: to support other government structures (not just the Ministry of Health); to enable International NGOs (INGOs) to shift from humanitarian interventions to longer-term development; and to promote innovation and learning (DFID, 2013). Our advocacy work is a key part of this.

## **Action and implementation – advocacy and sharing experiences at national level**

One of the WASH Consortium’s key tools for promoting innovation and learning is sector “Technical Reviews” which we organise twice a year. These events are platforms for sharing experiences and expertise which bring together a variety of actors working on WASH in DRC. This includes national, provincial and local authorities, members of the user community, donors, United Nations, the private sector, NGOs, and civil society.

In late 2015, we were planning our next event on the broad theme of WASH governance and accountability, we decided to develop a more specific advocacy message which could be linked to the event. The Consortium led a group of national and international NGOs to sign a



letter to the National Assembly and the Senate officially calling for the adoption of the Water Law. The Water Law was signed and then promulgated on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2016. In order to use this timing to further push for the implementation of the law, we organised the January 2016 Technical Review on the theme “The Water Law: challenges, successes and opportunities for the rural WASH sector in DRC”.

The law clarifies some of the roles and responsibilities in WASH management in DRC, and gives large prerogatives to the country’s 26 provinces and 680 Decentralized Territorial Entities (the lowest level of local government). However, for the moment, the low levels of capacity and coordination within the WASH sector pose challenges for full implementation of the law. Therefore, the Technical Review provided a forum to discuss practical experiences and ways to start addressing such challenges. We brought together shared experiences from many actors who have worked with decentralised and deconcentrated entities (within and outside the WASH sector) such as UNDP, GIZ, SNV, national NGOs, as well as presenting the WASH Consortium’s own experiences so far.

### **Key successes – linking local voices to national debates**

One key challenge for our advocacy is the limited mandate and capacity of the Consortium to take a lead on debates at national level. Instead, we have to find creative ways of influencing other actors who are in a position to lead on such debates, while retaining our advantage of bringing in voices from the field to ensure national discussions are grounded in reality.

One of the key reasons for the Consortium’s success is in the variety of actors it brings together. No other forum in the sector provides such an opportunity for sharing experiences and making sure that voices from the field are heard. To maximise this, we organised a preparatory day with about 30 representatives from local governments, health zones and provincial authorities to discuss the key implications of the new law from their perspective. This enabled key messages from these actors to be fed into the main event itself of almost 100 participants.

The reflections from our event were used to feed into the national debate which took place during the first Kinshasa International Water Forum in February 2016. This meant emphasising the feedback from local governments themselves on the practicalities of implementing the law. During this Forum organised by the National WASH Action Committee, the DRC WASH Consortium, in collaboration with the Decentralization Ministry and the WASH donor group presented the main outcomes and recommendations of the Technical Review. This demonstrates the credibility that we have developed for the Consortium in a relatively short time and our ability to bring a multitude of voices together.



**In these cases, we could present our own work and show leadership in the sector**

## **Lessons learned – the importance of building credibility in a sector and then convening different actors around a key issue**

One key lesson we have learned is how to have influence even without being the experts in a particular field. For the previous WASH sector Technical Reviews we organised in 2014 and 2015, we focused on themes where the Consortium was developing key research and innovations itself (for example, on community mobilisation and social marketing, or on the life-cycle costs approach for WASH). In these cases, we could present our own work and show leadership in the sector. However, on the subject of WASH governance, accountability and the water law, we had much less to show in terms of our own activities and results. Therefore we focused on bringing together many different actors who had started work in this area and had experiences to share. This was possible because of the credibility and professionalism we had already built up in the sector through the previous Technical Reviews.

Another key lesson is the importance of personal relationships with key individuals. We had already built up close relationships with key representatives of government and donor agencies who were involved in advising on the water law and its implementation. It was essential to have insider knowledge of what was likely to be really possible related to the law (or not). This is particularly important when the key Concern Worldwide staff leading the Consortium's advocacy (the Director and the Communications, Learning and Advocacy Coordinator) are expatriate positions, who therefore have less insider knowledge of the DRC sector.

## **Concluding thoughts and next steps – developing practical tools to implement the law**

The Consortium will now take this initiative forward by supporting the development of a guide for local authorities and their partners on how to put the new law into practice. This will build on the existing tools and experiences shared by different actors during the Technical Review, and further adapt them according to the specific details of the new law. The Consortium will test this in its own areas of intervention, and continually feed the results up to national level. This will be done through existing mechanisms: such as linking to the sector working group which will develop a national public water service policy, presentations to the rural WASH coordination meetings, and through more of our own events. This approach will also form a key part of additional funding that we are seeking from the donor, in order to better support the enabling environment around our WASH interventions.

At the same time, we are using these detailed discussions to inform the next debate. This revolves around the development of a national public water service policy, based on the water law. As discussed above, the Consortium does not have the mandate or capacity to take a lead on this. However, with the credibility we have developed so far we are well placed to make practical contributions to the debate from the point of view of local actors trying to implement rural WASH services.

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# Effective advocacy on education in Kenya



By Roberta Cappieri with Wendy Erasmus

## Background and introduction

Education is one of the highest-funded sectors in Kenya, receiving about 20 percent of the national budget on an annual basis since the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003. This significant investment has had a positive effect on education outcomes. Gross enrolment at schools increased from 7.2 million in 2003 to 9.9 million in 2011, while transition rates from primary to secondary schools improved from 42.7 percent in 2003 to 76.8 percent in 2012<sup>1</sup>. However, challenges remained especially with respect to school enrolment in urban informal settlements in places like Nairobi. The enrolment rates in urban informal settlements have remained low<sup>2</sup>. Aware of this, Concern Kenya undertook a concerted advocacy drive to influence the Kenyan Government's policy. This article will discuss how the advocacy approach unfolded and the key lessons to share.

## The invisible urban poor

Nairobi's informal settlements consist of 3 million people (60 percent of Nairobi's population) spread across 180 informal settlements scattered throughout the city.<sup>3</sup> Living conditions within these settlements are dire, characterised by dense and overcrowded housing, very high levels of poverty and destitution, poor sanitation and very limited government services, including education. These settlements are not formally recognised by the government.

It is estimated that approximately 40,000 children were without access to formal education within these informal settlements<sup>4</sup>. A number of informal/nonformal schools opened to meet some of this demand, run by a variety of religious orders, community groups or for profit entities and individuals. These schools function without support, quality control or financial aid from the government. All these factors have a negative effect on the educational outcomes of children.

## Laying the groundwork: 2004 – 2007

In 2004, the team launched its advocacy drive to improve the education opportunities available to those living in urban informal settlements. This phase of advocacy was focused on lobbying the government to provide capitation grants to informal schools. Capitation

grants are the provision of a certain amount of money per child to support the provision of books, school materials and overall maintenance of the school. They are critical to the functioning of schools. Concern was able to persuade the government to provide grants to 343 schools. While this was a step in the right direction, informal schools only received 50 percent of what public schools received. Additionally, in order to qualify to receive this grant, schools had to meet minimum standards which served to exclude most informal schools. Discussions with the Ministry of Education revealed that there was no legislative framework to support informal schools with the education budget. This clearly presented challenges which had to be addressed in the next iteration of the advocacy roadmap.

### **Ramping up efforts: 2005 – 2009**

Official statistics regarding the number of children in specific informal settlements excluded from education are not collected. To overcome this, Concern used a study conducted by Centre for Education Policy Analysis and Research (CEPAR) to engage the Ministry for Education (MoE) in talks. The study revealed that between 25-40 percent of school age children were not enrolled in any form of government or private schools in the informal settlements. To widen the evidence base, Concern conducted a rights study called “Falling Short”, which confirmed that children in informal settlements are invisible in terms of recognition by the government<sup>5</sup>. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) had no data on schools in the slums. It also confirmed that everywhere in the country saw an increase in enrollment, following the presidential decree for free primary education, except in Nairobi. Having all this evidence was great but persuading policymakers of the need for change was proving to be difficult since there were other vested interests seeking to maintain the status quo. But things were to change in 2010.



**Advocating for change is not a linear process. One must remain agile and respond to a changing environment**

### **The importance of serendipity: 2010 – 2013**

In 2010, the passing of a new Kenyan Constitution presented an opportunity for the advancement of educational rights. This meant that any new education bill would need to align itself to the new constitution. Concern adapted its advocacy plan to fit this new reality. The team supported the drafting of a shadow bill, lobbied ministers, and launched media campaigns. Following this, an education act was passed with specific provision for education of vulnerable children. It clearly recognized that there are vulnerable children who are not provided for in either the definition of a public school, or the definition of a private school, and that a special provision needed to be created. Advocating for the creation of a special provision would consume our advocacy drive in the next phase.

## **Consolidating the gains: 2014-2016**

While education for vulnerable children was enshrined under law, the guideline for this was under the discretion of the Minister of Education. Concern Kenya faced a serious counter lobby in trying to get the Minister to use his discretionary powers for this purpose. There were various vested interests, e.g. those of for-profit providers, which stood to lose from the full implementation of the law. We engaged in two key strategic actions to overcome this obstacle.

Firstly, we undertook further research to highlight the scale of the problem. A mapping of all informal schools across the country was conducted, and integrated into the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The results of this mapping exercise were very controversial. It showed that more than 400,000 children fell outside the system<sup>6</sup>.

Secondly, a budget tracking exercise to ascertain how much was spent on the education of poor children versus wealthier children was undertaken. This showed a clear disparity in the allocation of funds<sup>7</sup>. The study generated a media storm which prompted the government to act. The Ministry of Education invited Concern to develop guidelines for the registration and regulation of slum schools. Concern supported the Ministry in building consensus around the content of the guidelines. The end result was the publication of the 'Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training' guideline in March, 2016.

## **Key lessons**

### **Flexibility in approach**

Advocating for change is not a linear process. One must remain agile and respond to a changing environment. For example, in 2010 we tweaked our advocacy plan to ensure that it took advantage of the new policy environment. This allowed us to work with government partners who shared a similar desire to bring about positive change.

### **Strategic use of research**

Despite the problems that beset the education sector in Kenya, a lack of data and evidence meant that the issues could be avoided. The use of primary and secondary research allowed us to effectively lobby government stakeholders at opportune times, such as in 2010 when the new Constitution was promulgated.

### **Consistency in effort**

While we were steadfast in our determination to improve the educational outcomes of those living in informal settlements in Nairobi, the journey was not always easy. Numerous factors (staff turnover, short wins, and competing demands) can see advocacy sidelined within an overall programme. To overcome this, there needs to be a continuous allocation of resources and staff time.

## Concluding thoughts

In conclusion, the process to bring about change was long and arduous. For example, some of our staff members were threatened. But investigations into the threats found that while they were unpleasant, they were not of a serious nature. This illustrates the need to critically analyse all stakeholders involved, and pay close attention to the engagement of those who may be lost out, or perceive themselves as losing out, by the proposed change. For our work on free primary education to be effective, it had to be undertaken with a clear advocacy outcome in mind. Concern was clear about its desired outcome (government provision for and regulation of education for children in informal settlements) and kept a focus on this over a lengthy period, lobbying effectively, adapting tactics, using research and evidence to reach this desired outcome.

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# Addressing the policy invisibility of the extreme poor in Bangladesh



By Asif Imran Khan

## Background

Advocacy is a difficult endeavour, particularly when advocating for the extreme poor in a developing country, where the policy and institutional frameworks are often underdeveloped to serve them. Unlike service delivery based projects, the results of advocacy are difficult to measure, but the impact that can be achieved through this approach is far greater than localised direct service provision.

Through its strategic advocacy, Concern Worldwide Bangladesh has been working to have the needs of the extreme poor recognised. Working for some of the most marginalised, vulnerable, and disregarded populations across identified poverty pockets in Bangladesh, Concern developed focused, multifaceted advocacy strategies, which have yielded positive results.

The article is composed of two case studies. The first will discuss the challenges, processes & advocacy efforts in the rural context of the Chars. The second case study will look at similar efforts in an urban setting.

## Advocating for the Extreme Poor Char Dwellers

The *Chars* are riverine islands, the isolated landmasses scattered across 32 districts, where around six million people live. The livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of impoverished char dwellers' are constantly disrupted by climate change induced flood and river erosion. Poor infrastructure, lack of basic social service provisions and weak governance further exacerbate the situation.

Initially, Concern's advocacy work focused on consulting and lobbying with the local level government officials and line ministries to ensure direct socio-economic services for programme participants. The media was also engaged through the airing of a two year long television programme on char development.

Despite the above efforts significant challenges remained. The biggest challenge relates to the lack of a specific char policy. This has meant that a coordinated development effort cannot be galvanised. Because of this Concern, decided to re-think its advocacy efforts.



This involved bringing together char development related donors, INGOs, NGOs, civil society, journalists, and academia to form the National Char Alliance (NCA). The NCA is a national level advocacy platform. Simultaneously, Concern strengthened its meso level advocacy by forming 10 local char alliances (LCAs) comprising local opinion leaders, respected individuals and char people that lobby for poor char dweller's services. Issues and bottlenecks identified by LCAs are then addressed by NCA at the national level.

One of the major initiatives of the NCA was the 1st National Char Convention in 2015 that brought together more than 70 organisations and 1,200 people. The convention drew unprecedented national attention<sup>1</sup> to the neglected chars, and publically elicited commitments from the Speaker of the National Parliament, prominent ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs). In order to translate the policy-makers' commitment into action, a 14-Point 1st National Char Convention Declaration was prepared by a national committee comprising INGOs, NGOs, civil society leaders and char representatives.



## **Concern's advocacy efforts saw the allocation of BDT 500 million or about USD 63.7 million for char in the National Budget 2014-2015**

Concern's advocacy efforts saw the allocation of BDT 500 million or about USD 63.7 million for char in the National Budget 2014-2015. However, the amount remains unspent in the absence of a central government agency dedicated to the development of the Char region. Building on the momentum generated by the convention, the NCA met with key ministers, MPs and Speakers of the Parliament to discuss the establishment of a central government agency. As a result of this meeting, the parliamentarians brought the issue up in the general discussion of the 2016-2017 budget session of the National Parliament. A lively and engaging discussion took place on the floor of parliament in relation to the Char budget and the proposed central government agency.

The National Char Alliance is on track to ensure that the commitments made by the policy-makers are translated into action. The establishment of a government agency for char development is a clear manifestation of this.

## **Ensuring Citizen Rights of Pavement Dwellers**

Within urban Bangladesh pavement and squatter dwellers are considered to be invisible in the eyes of the state. This is due to the fact that this grouping doesn't possess Identification Cards (IDS). The lack of ID cards means that individuals are unable to claim any rights from the state. With their basic human rights denied any sense of dignity and respect is also negatively impacted. This was the context of Concern's advocacy efforts in the urban areas of Bangladesh.

Concern worked with a number of agencies such as the City Corporation to improve the lives of the (hidden) pavement dwellers. As a result of Concern's concerted advocacy efforts with the City Corporations and the Election Commission 4,745 pavement dweller's children received birth certificates. This enabled the children to enrol in schools giving a pathway out of poverty. Furthermore, 2,973 adults registered as voters and received national ID cards. Becoming registered voters will ensure that their voices will be heard during local and national elections. On the part of the City Corporation land and funds have been provided on which a centre has been built for the pavement dwellers.



Fuleton, Surza Begum and Khorsheda Begum with their National ID Cards, Photo by author, 2015.

## “““

**To ensure that the rights of the pavement dwellers are further strengthen an All Party Parliamentary Group on Extreme Poverty and Urban Pavement Dwellers was formed**

To ensure that the rights of the pavement dwellers are further strengthen, an All Party Parliamentary Group on Extreme Poverty and Urban Pavement Dwellers was formed. Through this group we have successfully lobbied for the recognition of pavement dwellers in a significant national policy paper, namely, “The City Corporation Ordinance”. When formally approved by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Cooperatives, the inclusion of these simple words will ensure that pavement dwellers can get access to the vital social services that they so desperately need.

## Lessons Learned

### Lesson 1: Coalition building as key to advocacy

Whether working at the macro or meso levels, Concern Bangladesh works in a collaborative and accommodative manner to lobby for change. Given that advocacy is essential a political endeavour, we have found this approach to be most effective in achieving results. Concern has established itself as a leader in national civil society based advocacy through its accommodative and collaborative approach.



Pavement Dwellers Centre established on City Corporation Land. Photo by author, 2015

### Lesson 2: Build Strategic Partnerships

The success of advocacy efforts also depends on building strategic partnerships with key stakeholders. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Extreme Poverty and Urban Pavement Dwellers is one such strategic partnership. This partnership has been pivotal to giving a voice to the pavement dwellers.

### Lesson 3: Stay focused on results

Often advocacy initiatives lose momentum when the commitments of policy makers, and service providers, are not actively monitored. Concern Bangladesh has attempted to avoid this pitfall by staying focused on the desired outcome, and holding various stakeholders to account for their commitments.

### Lesson 4: Always be open to new ideas and learning

Advocacy initiatives need to allow for flexibility and adaptability to changing contexts. The approach that works in haor, might not work for chars. Therefore, it is important to have the propensity to learn and build on the experiences of success and failures.

## Conclusion

Concern Bangladesh's experience shows that advocacy, indeed, works. Pro-poor advocacy poses massive challenges that are sometimes disheartening, outcomes difficult to discern immediately, yet when advocacy works, the results are often monumental, sustainable and worthwhile. Our work with the pavement dwellers is a case in point.

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# Vision for Country Level Advocacy: The foundation of Concern's international advocacy on hunger



By **Connell Foley**

This article is designed to provide a vision for the kind of focus Concern should have in its advocacy. It is specifically focused on our hunger advocacy strategy, not on our humanitarian advocacy, although some of the principles and points may well be transferable.

The greatest potential for Concern's advocacy on long-term development is a common vision for stronger programme country to global connections, for advocacy messages to be derived from Concern's strength, its country programmes, to continue to be seen as a leader in hunger and to focus on a small number of themes.

## **The Critical Link between Policy and Practice**

There is a long chain linking the intention articulated in policy to actually getting poor people out of extreme poverty or hunger. This is outlined in Table 1 and links global policy to donor policy to developing country policy as well as identifying how policy is implemented through strategy to action on the ground. At the policy level, Concern is generally in agreement with the major donors. So if we wish to advocate for change, it means that it is mainly about implementation of policy. Given the groundedness of agencies like Concern, donors and global policy experts need to hear the realities on the ground and some level of analysis of that reality to inform support they give to implementation by country governments. Concern's contribution is about lessons on how to support government and other local actors to be as effective as possible. This is represented by the red rectangle in the table. It is about helping extremely poor people to have a voice, to participate in decision making; it is about supporting local civil society to be heard and to have an effective voice on local practice; it is also about building capacity of local government for better services.

**Table 1: Concern's added value in policy influencing and debates**

	<b>Global Policy*</b>	<b>Donor Policy**</b>	<b>Developing Country Policy</b>	<b>Civil Society Actors</b>	<b>Extremely Poor People</b>
<b>Input</b>	Global intent Leadership	Policy as intent Leadership	Policy as intent Leadership		Consultation
<b>Output</b>		Strategies in LDCs Joint Assistance Strategies SWAps	National strategies National Action Plans Costed SUN plan		Voice/ participation
<b>Intermediate Outcome</b>		Funding instruments	Improved delivery capacity of government departments	Capacity building of local institutions	Influence
<b>Long-term Outcome</b>			Responsive, effective services	Facilitation of co-created solutions via 'joint analysis' and joint action.	Influence and agency
<b>Impact</b>			Delivery	Facilitated delivery	Hunger eliminated  Poverty eliminated

\* Policy Frameworks such as SDGs, HFA, COP21

\*\* Examples: EU Council Conclusions on Resilience, EUCC on Food and Nutrition

  Concern's contribution to policy debates about realities of implementation of policy

  Concern's significant added value in building capacity to identify and "co-create solutions" to delivery failure.



**Concern's potential for greatest added value involves being more visionary and innovative about how to effect change at this local level**

## **Greatest Added Value of Concern in Advocacy?**

Perhaps we can go further than this. Perhaps Concern's potential for greatest added value involves being more visionary and innovative about how to effect change at this local level. This acknowledges the suggestion of Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock around the lack of functionality of local government in Africa and the need for "doing development differently". This involves what they call "Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation" (not a very catchy name!) and testing actions to get services incrementally improved.

Concern has often focused on "community systems strengthening", looking at ways to involve traditional institutions and community groups in changing norms and behaviours. However, civil society actors often work very separately from government and vice-versa and they tend to be suspicious of each other. What I suggest is needed to build resilience and tackle hunger on the ground in poorly resourced environments, is a new form of partnership, a partnership of diverse ground-level actors whose starting and endpoints are shared: "joint analysis" and "joint action". Given the need for multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral action to build resilience, then this new form of partnership is all about "co-creating solutions" to the challenges faced at local level (green box in Table 1). The solutions can range from practical fixes to very practical obstacles, all the way to genuine innovations. This is what policy makers are crying out for.

However, these kinds of learning and breakthroughs take time, are hard won and are richly contextual. This means that Concern should balance its 'policy analysis' and dogged pursuance of certain policy agendas with this production of rich grounded solutions. Our results frameworks should reflect this balance.

## **Strengthening our Micro-Meso Link and Documenting**

Very often, the reality on the ground in fragile contexts is that many services are ineffective and almost invisible at local level. The remote, poor female smallholder farmers we work with do not get much support from the state, and feel neglected and marginalised and having no voice in the planning and working of ministries. As such, it is one of the key roles of international NGOs to mobilise, organise and convene the poorest people, usually through local civil society, to find and use effectively their own voice as legitimate stakeholders. This investment in local institutions of poor people and representative civil society allows local voices to legitimately and skilfully navigate the difficult waters of national influence. Supporting the poorest to have their views and priorities embedded in local plans and programmes is a first step in getting civil society to seek a more "joint analysis – joint planning" way of working. Another step is to make sure that jointly-developed projects are properly designed to ensure that learning is documented and shared.

I hope that this article stimulates a discussion among the Concern country teams about our added value and especially about what kind of learning and "evidence" we can bring to those in power and policy makers.

# Reflecting on the experiences of the Syria Crisis Communications and Advocacy Group



By Peter Doyle

## Introduction

Concern began its response to the Syria crisis in 2013 and is currently working in Syria, Turkey and Lebanon. Due to the size and nature of the crisis, as well as the complex and insecure contexts, it was decided to set up a working group to complement the programming in each of the three countries. The group brought together key actors in the management and delivery of programmes, advocacy and communications across the three response countries as well as the Dublin, London and New York offices.

The Syria Crisis Communications and Advocacy Group (SCCAG) first met in April 2014 to share information about the humanitarian and political situation related to the Syrian crisis and to strategically direct, coordinate and implement Concern's public communications and advocacy work on the Syrian crisis.

A terms of reference was developed and regular, usually fortnightly, conference calls were held where information on the latest developments and challenges from the three countries were shared, as well as updates and discussions on communications and advocacy opportunities. Due to the extreme sensitivity regarding public communications around our work, particularly inside Syria, strict communications guidelines were developed and have been updated by the group.

The group initially undertook advocacy with a range of stakeholders at various levels, mostly on an ad hoc basis. Some of the key initial successes involved bringing our field experience to bear at a higher strategic level in our countries of operation. This included the Concern Country Director (CD) in Lebanon becoming a steering committee member of the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF) whom she represented at the October 2014 inter-governmental Berlin conference on supporting stability in the region. Also, our CD in Turkey has represented INGO's on the Humanitarian Liaison Group (HLG) as well as the steering committee of the NGO Forum for Turkey.

## Results of the SCCAG

A cross organisational advocacy workshop was held in Beirut in April 2015 to develop an advocacy strategy and identify opportunities for engagement at various levels informed by

our programme work in response to the crisis. The workshop was facilitated by an external consultant and included the participation of the Programme Managers, Country Senior Management Teams and the regional desk. The CEO also attended which highlighted the importance given to the topic. Following this workshop the advocacy strategy along with key messages was finalised. Three key advocacy goals were identified;

1. An immediate & lasting political solution to the conflict based on inclusive dialogue
2. People displaced by conflict in the Syria region receive protection in line with international refugee law
3. The humanitarian system efficiently and effectively responds to the needs of those affected by the Syrian crisis

A detailed action plan was developed with activities and messages identified for each office around each key goal. These key goals have been the basis for all further advocacy work. For the first goal Concern has used every available opportunity to call for a political solution to the conflict and has participated in various joint initiatives with other organisations, one example is the letter published in the Irish media signed by the three CEO's of Ireland's largest NGO's; Concern, GOAL and Trocaire, on the fifth anniversary of the start of the Syrian conflict. For the second goal, Concern has engaged heavily with the LHIF in Lebanon in calling for a revision of the process to obtain legal status for refugees and for their access to livelihoods and education.

For the third goal the Syria advocacy group identified *The Supporting Syria and the Region* pledging conference, hosted by the UK, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the United Nations, on 4 February 2016 in London as a key opportunity. The work around the conference has presented perhaps the best advocacy success so far for the group. Concern's objective around the conference was to advocate to conference participants to deliver real and significant progress for the most vulnerable Syrians (both within Syria and refugees). Concern identified that most evidence and discussion was around future pledges, and following discussions in the UK with Crisis Action and other NGO's, it became apparent that a gap existed for a piece of work around the realisation of funding commitments to the Syria crisis. This led to the production of a report entitled "*Paying the Price: Why donors must take a new approach to the Syria crisis*".

The report revealed that the response during the last few years inside Syria and the region remains woefully underfunded; that donors' commitments are not being honoured; and that donor countries have not effectively adapted their funding approaches to respond to the protracted crisis. The report also highlighted that the three key sectors of the response under discussion by governments at the London conference (education, livelihoods and protection) are the least well-funded.

The Head of Advocacy at Concern Worldwide UK led the production of the report. The assistance of an external consultant was engaged, as internal capacity was not sufficient

due to the workload involved, and also the tight time constraints. A sub-group of the larger working group was formed to focus on this task. In order to be relevant and target the conference outcomes, the report deliberately addressed the three key sectors of the conference. Information was gathered from the various countries in the region to support the production of the report. The report was then disseminated to the target audience, in particular the most powerful stakeholders at the conference: governments and donors, prior to the conference. The report also got significant media coverage, through the likes of Reuters, the Daily Mail, Yahoo and Presstv. An op-ed by the Executive Director of Concern Worldwide UK appeared in the Belfast Telegraph.

The UK Secretary of State for International Development made a speech at a pre-conference NGO side event, which seemed to be informed by some of the content and language of the report. Similarly the BBC Radio 4 Today programme coverage of the conference kicked off with a point which appeared direct from our report.

Whilst difficult to attribute impact to particular pieces of advocacy work, we were pleased that most of what we asked for was delivered by governments at the conference. Over US\$ 11 billion was raised in 47 separate donor pledges, \$5.8 billion of this was for 2016 and a further \$5.4 billion for 2017-20 to facilitate longer-term planning. There were also a host of policy commitments made by donors and host governments.

The first progress monitoring data of the commitments was released in early May and reviewed at the first official check point at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). Concern built on its previous analysis and report by reviewing progress so as to visibly hold donors and host governments accountable for their financial and policy commitments. A follow on report entitled "*Still Paying the Price? Progress on addressing the Syria crisis since the London Conference*" was produced through a similar process as the first report, but also including support with conducting surveys from Christian Aid and Islamic Relief.

The report showed that while a record sum of \$12.1 billion was pledged at the London conference, of the \$6 billion promised for 2016 so far only \$1.16 billion had been committed. The report also highlighted that despite the huge need inside Syria donors are allocating a larger percentage of funds to the regional response. The report was shared by the CEO during his discussions at the WHS and received positive feedback. The report also received significant press coverage in the UK with prominent stories in the Guardian and Telegraph.



**Implementing programmes on the ground and participating in country-level initiatives builds experience and credibility for international level advocacy**

## Conclusions

The key lessons learned so far, and recommendations to others that are considering a similar initiative are that, having an advocacy strategy developed through a participative process and clearly defined messages are crucial. These guide the advocacy work and form the basis for all initiatives. Having an engaged and motivated country management as well as those driving international advocacy helped this group work well, one without the other is challenging. Despite the rapidly changing context Concern's core messages have stood the test of time, although they require some adaptation for specific opportunities.

Having such a cross-organisational working group helps ensure a common understanding and a coherent approach across the various functions and geographical locations of the organisation. Implementing programmes on the ground and participating in country-level initiatives builds experience and credibility for international level advocacy. The group has needed to be flexible and agile in order to take advantages of opportunities as they arise, especially as timeframes tend to be very tight. Ensuring resources were available to pursue those opportunities was crucial for success. This particular model of working group could be replicated for other countries facing a similar scale of crisis.

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- *Still Paying the Price? Progress on addressing the Syria crisis since the London Conference* (2016). Concern Worldwide. The publication is available on Knowledge Exchange

# Making the case for graduation with government



By Jenny Swatton with Claver Kabuhungu, Odette Kampirwa Kweli, Zenebe Mekonnen and Ciaran O'Reilly

## Introduction

Concern has been implementing graduation programmes since 2008, as a means of sustainably addressing extreme poverty at the household level. In each programme context, where the graduation approach is applied (currently Burundi, Haiti, Rwanda and Zambia) it is tailored to the contextual realities and needs of the targeted population. More detailed information on Concern's graduation model can be found in Issue 9 of Concern Worldwide's Knowledge Matters series<sup>1</sup>. This article reflects on how Concern used advocacy as a tool to persuade the governments of Zambia, Rwanda, and Burundi to incorporate a graduation approach into existing social protection systems.

## Why do we need to advocate?

The graduation approach<sup>2</sup> is based on an understanding of the cyclical and complex nature of poverty, and can complement traditional social protection instruments, such as social transfers, by providing an integrated and sequenced package of support (social assistance, livelihood development, referral to social services, access to financial services) to facilitate a pathway out of extreme poverty.

Programmes are designed not only to move an individual or household above a specific income threshold, nor remove people with specific vulnerabilities from social assistance, but address the root causes, and obstacles that prevent people from escaping extreme poverty. For example, in Rwanda our graduation programme works with local partners to engage men and boys on women's empowerment and gender equality; whilst in Burundi we aim to reduce risk and vulnerability through promoting better quality housing and working with communities to develop disaster risk reduction plans.

Graduation approaches have been shown to be particularly effective in supporting households reach broad thresholds of graduation. For example, participants of Concern's programme in Rwanda registered lower levels of deprivation after joining the programme. Deprivation is an inability to meet basic needs and was measured by a deprivation index, which considered the ability of households to afford enough food, pay for the government's health insurance scheme and purchase medicines. The fact that most participants in Rwanda renewed their health insurance cards after the graduation programme ended is an indicator of sustainability<sup>3</sup>.

The governments of Burundi, Rwanda, and Zambia are at various stages of implementing social protection policies and programmes. Concern has sought to advocate for the inclusion of a graduation approach within a broader system of social protection in these countries. This has to be done sensitively as, whilst the approach is effective and politically attractive, there is still a risk that unforeseen shocks could cause reversal of gains over time. In Haiti for example, despite 31.2 percent of participants continuing on an upward trajectory following the end of the programme; registering a higher score on a poverty scorecard 4 years after the programme concluded in 2012<sup>4</sup>, 29.9 percent registered a significant decline<sup>5</sup>. Whilst indicators in Rwanda remained significantly above baseline levels four years after joining the programme, some of these gains started to decline after the households stopped receiving regular income support. Therefore, there is also a need to advocate for consistent and universal social protection to support households, who face specific vulnerabilities and may never be self-reliant.

## Case studies

Despite the positive results registered by Concern's graduation programming there is a clear need to engage in advocacy efforts. This often involves illustrating the benefits of providing a full package of support as opposed to a single component, and addressing concerns around cost and human resource requirements. Based on learning from our programmes, we have been particularly successful in advocating for the scale up of graduation approaches, and informing the design of national social protection programmes that incorporate a graduation component. The following country case studies are illustrative of this.

### Rwanda

In Rwanda, as a result of learning from the 'Unleashing the Productive Capacity of the Poor' programme and successful advocacy, graduation is now a prominent part of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP)<sup>6</sup> - National Social Protection Programme.

CWR's graduation programme is aligned with the Government of Rwanda (GoR)'s national priorities as set out in the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) II and the National Social Protection Strategy (as operationalised by the VUP). In 2013, when (EDPRS) I was being reviewed, the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), prioritised graduation as an objective. During a recent evaluation government officials confirmed that upon seeing how Concern was targeting the extreme poor with labour capacity it 'inspired us to use graduation'<sup>7</sup>.



### DFID consulted closely with Concern Worldwide Rwanda (CWR) on the development of a technical note on measuring and monitoring graduation

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) is providing technical assistance to MINALOC on the design of a minimum package of graduation. DFID consulted closely with

Concern Worldwide Rwanda (CWR) on the development of a technical note on measuring and monitoring graduation in Rwanda, and visited participants of Concern programmes which resulted in lessons from CWR's programme directly feeding into this work.

CWR is also an active member of the Social Protection Working Group (co-chaired by DFID and MINALOC) where findings from operational research and the graduation programme more generally are regularly shared with stakeholders. In 2014, CWR was also invited to present the Graduation Programme to the Permanent Secretary of MINALOC, DFID, UNICEF, and all of the Vice Mayors of each of the thirty districts in Rwanda.



## Learning from the Terintambwe programme has also been instrumental in increasing political acceptability for programmes that provide income or consumption support

### Burundi

In Burundi, learning from the Terintambwe 'Take a Step Forward' programme is informing discussion on the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), including the design of a new national pilot programme which is to be funded by the World Bank. The Terintambwe programme is aligned with the priorities of the Government of Burundi, as set out in the country's poverty reduction strategy paper: Cadres Strategique de Croissance et de Lutte Contre la Pauvrete (CLSP) II. CLSP II has a particular focus on strengthening social protection.

Concern Worldwide Burundi (CWB) has been invited to present the Terintambwe programme to the National Social Protection Commission, and to become a member of the Technical Working Group on Social Protection.

Learning from the Terintambwe programme has also been instrumental in increasing political acceptability for programmes that provide income or consumption support, through cash transfers and the use of electronic payment systems.

### Zambia

Concern Worldwide Zambia (CWZ) recently piloted a graduation approach as part of a broader five-year integrated development programme. Programme experience and evidence from a



Thaddée Niyonzima, programme participant of the Graduation Programme Burundi, withdrawing this Cash Transfer of 25.000 Fbu (€12) at the post office in Mugina Commune in Cibitoke Province. Photo by Jason Basso, Video Consultant, March 2014.

subsequent evaluation of the pilot is informing the design of a new programme under pillar 3 (Livelihoods and Empowerment) of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP).

The Graduation Model Pilot project is aligned to the priorities of the Republic of Zambia, as set out in the Revised Sixth National Development Plan (R-SNDP), in particular the macro-economic objectives. Further evidence of this alignment can be seen in the fact that in 2015, the Concern country office was invited to present their experience of graduation approaches to the National Social Protection Sector Advisory Group.



**There is a need to set out a clear business case for governments to invest in graduation as part of a system of social protection but not in place of social protection**

### **Advocating for graduation**

In all three examples, national-level engagement has been facilitated by strong research, which has led to a body of evidence upon which messages are built. But recent evaluations from all three programmes highlighted a number of ways in which Concern Worldwide can improve its advocacy efforts:

1. By developing **clear advocacy messages** around graduation and social protection for both national and global audiences. For example:
  - a. The success of the graduation approach is due to the full package of support being delivered and not to any single component.
  - b. Building household assets alone will not lead to sustainable graduation. In order, for programme outcomes to be sustained it is necessary to look at what households are graduating into and onto; the external environment.
2. By developing **advocacy plans** which support country advocacy strategies to guide engagement activities, and support the development of tailored communication materials. Messaging should include, advocacy for the continued support for labour-constrained households (often referred to as direct support clients within social protection programmes) and ensure consistency in terms of terminology and how graduation is conceptualised.
3. In **Rwanda**, where the economy continues to grow and diversify there should be advocacy for the allocation of resources for social protection, including both the graduation programme and direct support. Too much focus on the success of graduating people out of the lower Ubudehe categories (wealth ranking upon which targeting of the VUP is based), may undermine the objective of sustainably moving people out of poverty, and increasing their resilience, and ability to withstand shocks.

4. In **Zambia**, additional areas could be identified where CWZ learning from the Graduation Pilot project can inform and support implementation of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP). This should be based on the activities set out in the NSPP implementation plan.

## Summary

Overall, this article shows the relative success that Concern Worldwide graduation programmes have had in advocating for the scale up and design of national initiatives based on our learning. This happened as a result of the relevance and effectiveness of graduation programmes to national priorities. However, there is potential for greater influence particularly, at meso and macro levels. Finally, there is a need to set out a clear business case for governments to invest in graduation as part of a system of social protection but not in place of social protection.

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1. For an internal audience this can be found on the Knowledge Exchange and for external readers via <https://www.concern.net/insights>.
  2. The Graduation Approach was pioneered by BRAC in Bangladesh and subsequently replicated in pilot projects in eight countries (Haiti, India, Pakistan, Honduras, Peru, Ethiopia, Yemen and Ghana) supported by the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and the Ford Foundation.
  3. Full details of the findings from Concern's programme in Rwanda are published in Devereux, S. (2016) Sustaining Impacts: Concern Worldwide's Graduation Programme in Rwanda.
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# Evaluation of the International Advocacy Programme



By Kai Matturi

As part of its Irish Aid funded portfolio of programmes, Concern commissioned an external evaluation of its advocacy work in 2015<sup>1</sup>. This article presents the main results that emerged from this exercise.

## Food and nutrition security advocacy

Concern's role within the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) network of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement<sup>2</sup> has been critical in ensuring that the voices of CSOs were reflected within the movement.

To quote a high level official on Concern's role within the SUN CSO network, *"it becomes more coherent when they are active. For a few years the SUN CSO group was more or less dead, and now it is much more active and energetic and I believe this was due to Concern."*

The SUN movement has been influential in keeping nutrition on the international agenda, and in encouraging and reinforcing country-level efforts in advocacy and mobilisation to address undernutrition. This is itself a significant achievement. The movement's influence is reflected, among other things, in the rapid growth in country affiliations to SUN.

The SUN movement has also contributed to international efforts to mobilise funds (notably in supporting the Nutrition for Growth event in 2013), and some SUN countries have achieved moderate increases in nutrition funding.

Another movement that Concern supported was the IF campaign. The campaign brought together over 200 organisations and tens of thousands of campaigners in the UK to call for the end of global hunger. Through a proactive engagement with the various working groups and boards of the IF campaign, Concern was able to influence the IF campaign to choose hunger and nutrition as one of the top two priorities in the run to the G8 meeting in Northern Ireland in 2013. Through this process Concern demonstrated its relevance and effectiveness.

The evaluation team found it difficult to accurately assess how sustainable Concern's work on nutrition and food security will be given the unpredictable policy environments in which advocacy initiatives occur. However, they do note that greater ownership over advocacy issues by Concern country programmes will be crucial to the sustainability of advocacy efforts in the areas of nutrition and food security.



**The evaluation found that Concern's community resilience work was relevant to a number of influential actors, notably Irish Aid, UKAid, and the European Union**

### **Community resilience for food and nutrition security**

Concern's advocacy work in the area of community resilience for food and nutrition security involves influencing the resilience agenda of donors and political targets in the UK, Ireland and key African countries. This ensures that policies to drive resilience building are supported by strategies, implementation plans and investment in resilience programmes such as the BRACED, SHARP and AGIR initiatives.

The evaluation found that Concern's community resilience work was relevant to a number of influential actors, notably Irish Aid, UKAid, and the European Union. For example, Irish Aid identified resilience as a key goal in its 2013 International Development Policy, *One World, One Future*. In 2011 UKAid committed to ensuring that resilience building was a tenet of all its programming by 2015. In 2013 the European Union issued a communiqué on resilience.

In 2013, Concern and its Alliance 2015 partners convened a roundtable discussion in Dublin on 'Scaling up EU Impact on Community Resilience and Nutrition'. The meeting brought together various stakeholders ranging from the European Commission, donors, and academic experts to Concern country teams from Ethiopia, Niger and Chad. All the attendees agreed that a multi sectoral approach is core to addressing vulnerability and building resilience. This was a significant result and was due in part to Concern's ability to influence coalitions such as Alliance 2015. As a key informant noted: "*Concern's style is very consultative and inclusive – in Dublin and other events – it brings out the best out of people in terms of inclusion and contributions.*"

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

With regard to advocacy on humanitarian assistance the evaluation reviewed Concern's work in relation to the World Humanitarian Summit and the Transformative Agenda. The first ever World Humanitarian Summit took place in Turkey in May 2016. Concern was on the Steering Committee of the Irish Humanitarian Summit. This allowed it to influence the national dialogue in Ireland. This then feed into the summit that was held in Turkey. Another area that Concern has had some influence relates to the Transformative Agenda.

The Transformative Agenda seeks to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response through greater predictability, accountability, responsibility and partnership. Concern's support to this process was the development of an online learning resource, Building a Better Response (BBR) as well as a submission to the Committee on World Food Security.

The evaluation found that both of these initiatives were relevant and effective to the global humanitarian community. They note for example that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation is now using the BBR content in its training programmes. This has allowed Concern to reach a much broader range of humanitarian actors.

## **Conclusion**

Concern has had an indelible influence on the policy and practice of food and nutrition. The policy commitment to food and nutrition security and to community resilience was strengthened during the period in question and the evaluation notes that Concern was centrally involved in key advocacy networks and coalitions in making this happen. This clearly indicates that Concern was a critical player with respect to food and nutrition security – no mean feat given its size.

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## **References and Content Notes**

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1. The report can be found on Concern's Knowledge Exchange
2. More on the SUN movement can be found here(<http://scalingupnutrition.org/>)

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## Contributing authors

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- **Asif Imran Khan**  
Equality Adviser  
*Concern Worldwide Ireland*
- **Ciaran O'Reilly**  
Advocacy and Communications Adviser  
*Concern Worldwide Zambia*
- **Claver Kabuhungu**  
Graduation Programme Coordinator  
*Concern Worldwide Burundi*
- **Connell Foley**  
Director of Strategy, Advocacy  
and Learning  
*Concern Worldwide*
- **Kai Matturi**  
Programme Knowledge and  
Learning Adviser  
*Concern Worldwide*
- **Jenny Swatton**  
Social Protection Adviser  
*Concern Worldwide UK*
- **Odette Kampirwa Kweli**  
Country Manager  
*Concern Worldwide Rwanda*
- **Peter Doyle**  
Desk Officer  
*Concern Worldwide Ireland*
- **Roberta Cappieri**  
Desk Officer  
*Concern Worldwide Ireland*
- **Stephen Jones**  
WASH Consortium Director  
*Concern Worldwide DRC*
- **Zenebe Mekonnen**  
Former Programmes Director  
*Concern Worldwide Zambia*
- **Wendy Erasmus**  
Former Country Director  
*Concern Worldwide Kenya*

## For whom is the publication

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

## What this publication includes

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

## What it doesn't include

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

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## Editorial Working Group

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**Kai Matturi:** Editor-in-Chief

**Roberta Cappieri:** Issue Editor

**Connell Foley:** Editorial Adviser

### Key words

Advocacy, Change, Policy, Food and Nutrition Security, Influencing, Education, WASH

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**Design and Print:** Pixelpress

**CONCERN**  
worldwide

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

### Republic of Ireland

52-55 Lower Camden Street  
Dublin 2  
00 353 1 417 77 00  
[info@concern.net](mailto:info@concern.net)

---

### Northern Ireland

47 Frederick Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2LW  
00 44 28 9033 1100  
[belfastinfo@concern.net](mailto:belfastinfo@concern.net)

---

### England and Wales

13/14 Calico House  
Clove Hitch Quay  
London  
SW11 3TN  
00 44 207 801 1850  
[londoninfo@concern.net](mailto:londoninfo@concern.net)

---

### Republic of Korea

Chunji Building, 2F, 374 1  
Seogyo-dong, Mapo-Gu  
Seoul, 121 894  
00 82 324 3900  
[www.concern.kr](http://www.concern.kr)

---

### USA

355 Lexington Avenue  
16th Floor  
New York  
NY 10017  
00 1 212 5578 000  
[info.usa@concern.net](mailto:info.usa@concern.net)

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Concern's Knowledge Quarterly Review Issue 18 | December 2016

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