

Call for expression of interest

Concern Worldwide Multi-Country Research Programme:

The role of Social Capital in urban fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCACs)

Concern Worldwide is an Irish International Non-Governmental Organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries.

With funding from Irish Aid, Concern is embarking on a multi-annual research project examining social capital in urban settings within two fragile / conflict-affected contexts: Haiti (Port-au-Prince,) and Somalia (Banadir (Mogadishu) and Gabiley (Somaliland)).

Concern invites international research partners to submit an expression of interest in leading this research programme over a period of three years.

Research Programme Overview

Objective	This research aims to generate learning and evidence on the role of social capital in urban settings and FCACs. The purpose is to inform Concern's approach to strengthening individual and community resilience, including to conflict-related shocks; enhance social cohesion and positive peace outcomes; inform programme adaptation and development; influence national government and donor policy and contribute to scientific knowledge.
Timeline	Expressions of Interest must be received by Monday, 6th November 2023 at 12.00 Noon Irish Standard Time / GMT + 1 The expected project timeline is from December 2023 – November 2026 (36 months)
Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port-au-Prince, Haiti • Banadir (Mogadishu), Somalia • Gabiley, Somaliland
Budget	Applicants should submit a proposed budget not exceeding €750,000, and should note that this will be a competitive process.
Additional Information	This research call is open only to research teams from institutions that already partner with, or are willing to develop partnerships with, local research/policy-focused institutions in the listed regions. This should be in the form of sub-contracting arrangements where the research body awarded funding will on-grant to the regional partners identified.
EOI Queries	Interested applicants can submit any EOI-related queries to michelle.kearns@concern.net

Research Background

Concern defines a livelihood as ‘the means by which a person or a household makes a living over time’. Livelihood security is the adequate and sustainable access to and control over both material and social resources, to enable households to make a living without undermining the natural resource base and is something that Concern strives to deliver for programme participants. Building on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, Concern identifies six categories of assets or capitals upon which individuals draw, or rely on, to pursue their livelihoods – Natural, Physical, Financial, Human, Social and Political. Although there are differing definitions of Social Capital (the focus of this research programme) there is consensus that the term refers to social relations that have productive benefits. Some examples are: ‘the networks of relationships amongst people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively’, or, ‘the social resources (networks, memberships of groups, relationships of trust, access to wide institutions of society) upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods’. Concern does not currently have a working definition of Social Capital that encapsulates the different ways we view this in terms of livelihoods, resilience, and maintaining a peaceful environment in the contexts where we work. Informing organisational understanding in this regard will therefore be central to this research programme.

Over the past 10-15 years, Concern has undertaken several in-depth pieces of research,¹ and much of this points to a relationship between social capital, internal self-efficacy and resilience building - but also the detrimental effect that, in particular, social exclusion (a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life) plays. The relationship between social capital and internal self-efficacy and resilience building is also evident from Concern’s work on Community Engagement.²

In Concern’s understanding of extreme poverty, strengthening social capital and self-efficacy - ‘the belief that one can perform basic or difficult tasks, or cope with adversity’ - is essential to somebody being able to exit conditions of extreme poverty, achieve livelihood security, and foster resilience. The breakdown in social relations is seen as contributing to people losing their subjective sense of their own capabilities, vision, and sense of self-determination. This is particularly problematic in contexts of conflict that affects trust and attitudes.

Research areas to explore

- a) What are the sources of social capital in different urban FCACs where Concern works, particularly for marginalised groups including women, youth, and displaced persons?
- b) The impact of social capital on resilience of specific groups.
- c) The interaction between social capital, structural inequalities, and peace, conflict and violence.
- d) How can social capital be utilised more effectively in programming to a) improve outcomes for those we work with and b) reinforce social cohesion and a more peaceful environment?

This research will be positioned within Concern’s Irish-Aid funded Irish Civil Society Partnership (ICSP) Programme situated across 21 countries for a period of five years (2023-2027). The research will run in parallel to programme

¹ We have also worked with students from the University of Galway on a desk-based systemic review on the role of social capital in building individual and community resilience to shocks.

² <https://admin.concern.net/sites/default/files/documents/2021-01/Knowledge%20Matters%20Issue%2029%20-%20Community%20Engagement.pdf>

activities in Haiti and Somalia which aim to, amongst other objectives, enhance social capital, increase resilience, and contribute to social cohesion.

The following ICSP policy priorities should be considered as part of the research agenda: climate action, conflict sensitivity (nexus), localisation, gender equality, and community resilience to hunger.

Purpose of the Research Partnership

There are three dimensions to the research:

- Programme learning, adaptation and development
- Policy analysis and advocacy
- Identification and analysis of common themes across contexts and contribution to scientific knowledge

The research team, in collaboration with sub-contracted regional partners and Concern, will be tasked with identifying and examining **specific research questions and themes in each individual country** with the view to **informing Concern's learning, programme adaptation and future programming**.

The second priority will be **generating evidence to inform advocacy and awareness raising** amongst the wider community, public servants, policy makers and other power bearers. The research will include a policy and stakeholder analysis in each context and identify the issues that may be addressed through focused advocacy and policy influencing at relevant levels, nationally and internationally, as appropriate.

The research lead will also identify **key themes or lessons across contexts**, and document these in **thematic reports for targeted audiences** that can contribute to wider institutional learning, and sectoral and academic debate on the issue of social capital. Contribution to scientific knowledge should be achieved via written outputs and conference presentations.

Country-specific Research Themes³

Haiti: Concern Haiti would ideally see this research carried out in a **Community Based Participatory** approach. Specific research questions and or hypothesis should be developed through the research process which should be outlined in the expression of interest. Broadly, the research should explore social capital, in consideration of the following:

- Working with Youth and community groups in the urban environment of Port-au-Prince – specifically Cité Soleil.

³ In addition to these specific research studies, Concern will collect data on several indicators included in results frameworks for multiple countries under the ICSP programme, which may enable wider comparisons to be drawn across countries and contexts. These indicators include Community and Social Belonging, and Self-, Household- or Community-efficacy (depending on the design of the programme).

- The research should be grounded in the contextual reality of Port-au-Prince, with a clear analysis and understanding of the wider country context, and the complex political dynamics which exist.

Somalia: While this will be determined, it is expected that the approach preferred will be in-depth qualitative research. Concern seeks to better understand how social capital amongst different groups is linked to, and can be leveraged for, resilience, empowerment and social cohesion. The research should:

- Focus on the urban environments of Banadir (Mogadishu) and peri-urban areas in Gabiley (Somaliland)
- Explore social capital amongst internally displaced persons, women, youth and community groups.

Specific Tasks to be Undertaken by the Research Partner

The below is an indicative list of potential tasks to be undertaken by the research partner:

- Develop a brief inception report that outlines the research background, focus, methodology, communication and research uptake plan.
- Co-design the research protocol with Concern, local partners, and key stakeholders (e.g. community representatives, policy makers, donors).
- Design and facilitate any trainings needed to deliver on chosen methods.
- In-person country visits for the purpose of training, data collection, and dissemination of learning.
- Communication, coordination and relationship building with Concern HQ and country offices, and regional sub-contracted research teams.
- Sub-contract regional partners (which may include local researchers/research institutions and/or partners that work within the policy and governance space), and work with them to review and deliver on the research protocol, project management, stakeholder and policy mapping, validation of findings, and the development and communication of results and recommendations.
- Hosting of periodic reflection sessions that bring together the research and programme team to discuss progress, programme adaptations, policy implications, and advocacy priorities.
- Delivery of high-quality research reports at relevant points through the study cycle for the purpose of documenting the research process, sharing findings and how these can/should be used to inform programming recommendations, identifying policy implications, and using for advocacy purposes.
- Communication of results in a manner that is relevant for a variety of target audiences (e.g. CSOs and CBOs, policy makers, sub-national public servants, donors). This could include design and/or delivery of presentations to diverse audiences, collaboration with Concern's technical advisors on learning briefs, policy briefs which have targeted recommendations relevant to Humanitarian, Development, Conflict Sensitive and Peace initiatives, national and sub-national policy development, implementation and governance processes.
- Sharing findings including practical evidence-based recommendations on policy weaknesses in academic and global policy arenas.

Required Experience/Qualifications of the Research Team

- Demonstrated expertise in the area of social capital and its relevance to poverty reduction, resilience, social inclusion, social cohesion, and conflict and peace
- Prior record of seeing research projects through to completion as Principal Investigator
- Experience of undertaking work in similar contexts (i.e. Urban, LDC/LMC and FCACs)
- Experience using in-depth qualitative methodology and participatory approaches, particularly in complex contexts
- Experience of identifying policy challenges and exploring alternatives
- Experience of disseminating research to different audiences and influencing policy and practice

- Experience of managing teams and research partnerships in complex contexts
- Affiliation with recognised academic/research institute
- Ability within the research team to work through French

Submission of expressions of Interest

Expressions of Interest must be submitted by **Monday, 6th November 2023 at 12.00 Noon Irish Standard Time / GMT + 1**. Applications should be sent via email to michelle.kearns@concern.net and be **no more than 2,500 words** covering the following points:

- Research design and justification
 - What research relating to policy and practice has already been done on the suggested topic and how this study would contribute to the future discourse
 - Potential research approaches specific to the contexts identified and noting the countries where Concern works and where this research learning will be used in the future
- How communities and key stakeholders would be engaged throughout the process to ensure research uptake
- Capacity to conduct the study
 - Relevant experience of applicant(s) and structure of team
 - Describe potential in-country partners for Somalia and Haiti
 - Proposed principal investigator (ideally include CV as an annexe)
- High level budget envelope and timeline for the work, including breakdown of costs of research and overheads (exempt from word count).

Please feel free to submit any clarifying questions you may have about this opportunity and process to michelle.kearns@concern.net by Wednesday 25th October at 5 PM Irish Standard Time / GMT + 1. Any questions submitted by COB Wednesday, 25th October will have responses no later than Tuesday, 31st October. Questions submitted earlier will be responded to on a rolling basis. Questions submitted after Wednesday 18th may or may not be responded to in time to inform an EOI submission. At Concern's discretion, answers to submitted questions may be shared publicly in a document hyperlinked [here](#). Submitted applications will be reviewed by a panel committee. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a follow-up interview.

Concern would like initial contracts to be signed by the year end, with the research programme commencing in early 2024.