Research, Evidence and Impact: Three Decades of Learning

Worldwide Research Symposium 2026 - Speakers

Opening

Réiseal Ní Chéilleachair, Director of Strategy, Advocacy and Learning (SAL) Directorate, Concern Worldwide

Réiseal Ní Chéilleachair is the Director of Strategy, Advocacy and Learning with Concern Worldwide. She has worked on community development, child protection and programme management for over 25 years in multiple countries with Concern Worldwide, Save the Children, Somalia NGO Consortium, Trócaire, and University College Cork. She returned to Concern in Ireland in 2018 as Head of International Advocacy managing Concern's global advocacy work, and overseeing the Global Citizenship programme in Ireland before being appointed director in March 2025.

Dr. Farah Mihlar, Director, Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP), Oxford Brookes University

Dr Farah Mihlar is Director of the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP) at Oxford Brookes University, where she is also Senior Lecturer in Human Rights and co-coordinates the MA Global Development and Humanitarian Practice. Her research focuses on minority rights and transitional justice, using decolonial approaches to explore how women war survivors understand justice, particularly in Sri Lanka and Lebanon. She holds a British Academy Knowledge Frontiers award. An activist scholar, she works with local communities in conflict-affected countries and spent over 15 years in international NGOs and the UN before joining academia.

Session 1: Tackling Child Malnutrition — Building Evidence for Effective Treatment and Prevention at Scale

Jody Harris, Co-Director Food Equity Centre, Institute of Development Studies

Dr Jody Harris is an applied researcher with a particular interest in the politics and ethics of equitable food and nutrition governance; and in policy, social and human rights interventions for healthy diets and nutrition. She is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies in her native UK, where she is a co-director of the Food Equity Centre; and she is an Adjunct Professor in the Institute of Nutrition at Mahidol University in her adopted home of Thailand. With over 20 years working in international nutrition she has designed and led mixed-methods research in many global contexts, and has published over 60 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and edited volumes for academic audiences, as well as regularly translating her work for policy, technical and lay audiences. Jody holds a PhD in development policy from SOAS and an MSc in international nutrition from LSHTM, both at the University of London.

Kate Golden - Head of Health, Nutrition and WASH Technical Support, Concern Worldwide

Kate Golden is Concern's Global Head of Health, Nutrition & WASH, leading a team of global advisers to support Concern programmes design and implement effective programmes from them. She has worked in international nutrition and public health for over 20 years and holds a master's degree in nutrition science and policy from Tufts University. Kate began her career in Ethiopia in one of the early pilots of the community-based management of acute malnutrition approach (2003) and worked as a nutrition programme lead in South Sudan and Sudan before becoming a global nutrition adviser and supporting Concern nutrition programming across more than 15 countries. She and her global team currently support programmes to deliver primary health care, WASH services; infant and young child feeding promotion and nutrition-sensitive agriculture and cash.

Dr. Anastasia (Ana) Marshak, Assistant Research Professor (Friedman School), Senior Researcher, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University

Dr Anastasia Marshak is an Assistant Research Professor at the Friedman School and a Senior Researcher at the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. Her work strengthens humanitarian nutrition by generating actionable evidence for policy and programmes in complex, crisis-affected settings, focusing on the drivers of malnutrition across the treatment–prevention continuum and its seasonal dynamics. She also researches early marriage, conflict-related livelihood disruption and access to services, and has contributed expertise to an International Criminal Court trial. Dr. Marshak received her BS from Tufts University in Economics and International Relations. She holds an MA from Boston University in Economics and a PhD from the Friedman School of Nutrition Science in Policy with a focus on humanitarian assistance.

Professor Sophie Ochola, Associate Professor, Department of Food, Nutrition, and Dietetics, Kenyatta University

Sophie Ochola is an Associate Professor of Public Health Nutrition. Sophie holds a Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences (Stellenbosch University, Cape Town) and MSc in Applied Human Nutrition and BEd Home Economics – First Class Honours, both from Nairobi University, Kenya. Sophie is an experienced researcher and consultant with many years of experience spanning over 20 years. Many of these years have been spent working in Humanitarian context. Sophie's vast experience includes conducting large scale/national surveys; conducting operational research; evaluation of community-based nutrition programmes and development and review of policies and strategic plans. Sophie has undertaken many consultancy assignments and research working with many International NGOs and development partners (UNICEF, USAID, FAO and WFP). Sophie has experience working both locally and internationally; her international experience includes assignments in Ethiopia, Malawi, South Sudan, Somalia and Namibia.

Bishar Osman Hussein, Programme Coordinator, Health and Nutrition, Concern Somalia

Bishar Osman Hussein is Health and Nutrition Programme Coordinator for Concern Worldwide in Somalia, where he has worked since 2019. He has extensive experience in primary health care and emergency programmes, managing complex public health programmes in emergency settings, from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Previously, he was a Senior Health Programme Officer with the International Committee of the Red Cross in south central Somalia (2012–2019). He holds master's degrees in Public Health and in International Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, and a bachelor's degree in Health Science.

Session 2: Pathways out of Extreme Poverty — How Research has Influenced Programme Design, Delivery, and Policy

Alessandro Bini – Deputy Regional Director for the Horn of Africa, Concern Worldwide

Alessandro Bini has worked for over 25 years in the humanitarian and development field working on integrated programs, linking humanitarian and development assistance and increasingly focusing on the use of Cash as tool for delivering quick and efficient humanitarian assistance and long-term cash based social transfers assistance and graduation programs. Working across Central, East and the Horn of Africa, Alessandro has extensive experience in working with communities, civil society,

local and national governments and the private sector. Alessandro is currently Deputy Director for Horn of Africa with Concern Worldwide.

Regine Kopplow, Senior Global Technical Advisor Livelihoods, Technical Assistance, Concern Worldwide

Regine Kopplow is Senior Global Technical Advisor for Livelihoods at Concern Worldwide, where she provides strategic direction and technical leadership for the organisation's livelihoods portfolio across humanitarian and development contexts. With more than 20 years of experience, she combines extensive field-based programme management experience with global advisory and policy roles. Regine has worked across Africa, Asia and the Middle East, leading the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes focused on livelihoods, food security, market systems development and social protection. Her current work focuses on nutrition-sensitive livelihoods, and sustainable pathways out of poverty in fragile and crisis-affected settings.

Keetie Roelen, Professor of Poverty and Social Protection, Deputy Director at the Centre for the Study of Global Development (CSGD), Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS), Open University, UK

Keetie Roelen is Professor in Poverty and Social Protection and Deputy Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Development (CSGD) at the Open University, UK. Her work focuses on experiences of poverty and how to make anti-poverty policies more effective and dignified. Collaborations span organisations across the globe, including research on Concern Worldwide's graduation programme in Burundi. Keetie recently published non-fiction book Why Poverty Persists and How to Fix It, and is founder and host of the podcast Poverty Unpacked.

Tara Bedi, Trinity College Dublin, Assistant Professor in Development Practice, Department of Geography, Trinity College Dublin

Dr Tara Bedi is an Assistant Professor in Development Practice in the Department of Geography at Trinity College Dublin, where she teaches gender and development, theories of development and impact evaluation. A development economist, her research focuses on behaviour change, gender, climate change, social protection and mental well-being, with projects in Ethiopia, India, Malawi, Mauritania, Kenya, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Ireland. She holds a PhD in Development Economics from Trinity College Dublin and a master's in Public Administration in International Development from the Harvard Kennedy School. She previously worked at Trócaire and the World Bank.

Lynn Yoshikawa, Head of Network Development, CaLP Network

Lynn Yoshikawa joined the CALP Network in 2017 as a Regional Representative and became Head of Network Development in 2021, ensuring active collaboration across the Network so that crisis-affected people receive the best possible assistance. Her humanitarian career began before the 2004 tsunami, delivering cash and voucher assistance to urban refugees, and spans research, evaluations, policy and advocacy. She has worked as a consultant and with ACAPS, InterAction, the Jesuit Refugee Service, Oxfam and Refugees International. She graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, holds a master's degree from Uppsala University, and is based in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Hélène Juillard, Co-Founder and Director, Key Aid Consulting

Hélène Juillard is a seasoned researcher with more than 20 years of experience. She specialises in institutional capacity strengthening, emergency preparedness and response, and social protection. She has taken part in more than 70 evaluations and research assignments for inter-agency initiatives, international organisations, United Nations agencies (including UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR), bilateral donors such as FCDO and ECHO, and international NGOs. Hélène is also a PhD researcher in the sociology of humanitarianism at the University of Sussex, where her research focuses on learning, methods and power in evaluation practice. She also teaches at university level, including courses on evaluation, research methods and social protection at Sciences Po Paris and the University of Manchester.

Concluding Plenary: The Future of Operational Research and Evidence Generation

Danny Harvey, Head of Technical Assistance, Strategy, Advocacy and Learning (SAL) Directorate, Concern Worldwide

Danny Harvey is Head of Technical Assistance at Concern Worldwide, leading a global team of technical advisers to strengthen programme quality, learning and innovation in fragile and protracted crises. A humanitarian leader with over 25 years' experience, she has spent more than 10 years as a Country Director, and has also served as Concern's Global Equality Adviser and as Executive Director of Concern UK. She has governance experience on two UK charity boards, including the Disasters Emergency Committee, and is committed to gender equality, national staff leadership and locally led programming.

Lucy Mwangi, Country Director, Concern Worldwide Malawi

Lucy Mwangi is the Country Director for Concern Worldwide in Malawi and has 25 years of experience in the humanitarian and development sector. Her experience spans strategic and organisational leadership, programme management, resilience, emergency response and partnerships. She has a particular interest in how evidence and learning can strengthen programme quality and contribute to policy and practice.

Mark Finegan, Director, Civil Society Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Mark Finegan is Director of the Civil Society Unit in the Development Cooperation and Africa Division of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He previously held senior roles at DAA, Ireland's Dublin Airport operator, including Head of Strategy and Operations in its Infrastructure Division. Earlier in his career, he spent over a decade with the UN World Food Programme, rising to Chief Engineer, and also worked with UNOPS. A civil engineer by training, he holds a BEng from the University of Galway, an MSc in Economics from the University of London and an Executive MBA from UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School.

Nathanael Bevan, Director Research and Evidence, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)

Nathanael Bevan is Director of Research and Evidence at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), overseeing its research investments on economic growth, education, gender, humanitarian, conflict and politics. Previously Development Director at the British Embassy Kathmandu, he led the UK's development priorities in Nepal, including Covid-19 recovery. He has held various roles in the former Department for International Development, including evaluating UK projects in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Deputy Head of the Evidence Department and Head of Profession for Government Social Research. Earlier, he led research and evidence teams across UK government, including on policing effectiveness.

Louino Robillard, Community Development Specialist and Co-founder, Gwoup Konbit

Louino Robillard, known as Robi, is a Haitian community development specialist, peacebuilder, and champion, activist, and practitioner of Konbit, Haiti's tradition of mutual aid and collective action. He co-founded Gwoup Konbit, a national movement that grew out of Konbit Solèy Levé in Cité Soleil in 2011. The movement recently published the Konbit Guide, a community development guide grounded in Konbit values and principles. Louino serves as Program Director at Fondation Rasin Devlopman on La Gonâve and as a consultant and strategic development advisor to Roots of Development. He also contributes to the strategic development of the SoCap research project in Cité Soleil, which examines social capital and community resilience in urban settings affected by conflict. He holds a master's degree in Applied Community Change and Peacebuilding from Future Generations University.