

Introduction

Concern Worldwide Zambia recently piloted a graduation approach as a component of its Integrated Poverty Reduction and Women's Empowerment Programme (IPRWEPP) which has been implemented in five districtsⁱ of Zambia's Western Province since 2012ⁱⁱ. The Graduation Model pilot project has been implemented directly by Concern Worldwide Zambia in Upper Lealui Ward, in Mongu District, since 2013 targeting 105 households (approximately 494 direct beneficiariesⁱⁱⁱ) across 26 villages.

The project was designed according to Concern Worldwide's Graduation Model^{iv}; an integrated package of support designed to bring about improved **returns on new and existing assets, address inequality and reduce risk and vulnerability** and it has been tailored to the contextual realities and the needs of the population in the Western Province. The project had five essential components:

- **Comprehensive targeting** that makes sure extreme poor households are identified as programme participants;
- **Consumption/income support** provided in the form of a regular cash transfer to support participants to meet their basic needs whilst they engage in expanding and diversifying livelihood strategies;
- **Provision of skills training and regular coaching** focusing on human capital which includes providing access to practical, short, trainings as well as routine coaching and mentoring visits;
- **Facilitating access to savings facilities** (and where feasible credit);
- **An asset/capital transfer** to jump-start economic activity; supporting participants to establish themselves in a small business or to seek more formal employment.

Concern Worldwide works to address extreme poverty and has implemented programmes using this model of graduation in Burundi, Rwanda and Haiti^v. These programmes are not only designed to move an individual or household above a specific threshold (i.e. income or asset ownership) or remove people from other social assistance, but also address the root causes of, and obstacles that prevent people from escaping extreme poverty. For example, in Rwanda the programme works with local partners to engage men and boys on women's empowerment and gender equality; whilst in Burundi it aims to reduce risk and vulnerability through working with communities to develop disaster risk reduction plans.



The verb 'to graduate' is commonly associated with the successful completion of a degree, course or training however, it is also used to describe a move (upwards) or gradual change. It is the latter that we mean when using the term graduation; referring to the gradual move of individuals and households out of extreme poverty and into food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Graduation Model Pilot Project

In Zambia, following targeting and registration, participants received income support of 120 Kwacha (ZMW), approximately US\$13^{vi}, every two months over a 12-month period (six transfers in total). Transfers commenced in December 2013 and ended in November 2014; the value was aligned with the value, at the time, of the national Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme. During this initial 12-month period, participants were advised to invest in small economic activities alongside purchasing food and paying for other basic needs in preparation for receiving capital transfers.

A market assessment was undertaken to support participants in identifying and selecting viable income generating activities (IGAs). The majority of participants continued to engage in the same activities they were involved in prior to the project though the subsequent capital transfer enabled participants to further expand and diversify these activities (whether through expanding the scale and scope of one specific activity or engaging in a number of different activities). The value of the capital transfer provided to participants was ZMW 500 (approximately USD \$48^{vii}) and was conditional on participants having attended business skills training by Mongu Trade Training Institute.



For households engaged in agricultural production, additional training was also provided on Conservation Agriculture, vegetable production, pest control and organic fertilisers. Participants also had the option to use ZMW 100 of their capital transfer towards a hip-pump to improve irrigation and up-take was high. The positive impact that access to a hip-pump had on agricultural households came out strongly in discussions with project participants during the evaluation.

In addition to formal business skills training, participants received regular coaching from Case Managers who visited household regularly and worked with/sensitised household members on a range of things including; spending and saving plans; household decision-making, nutrition, hygiene, HIV & AIDs and how to use the Complaints Response Mechanism (CRM).

What this paper shows

Concern Worldwide is focused on tackling extreme poverty, understood as a **lack of basic assets and/or the low return on these assets** and the key causes, maintainers or obstacles that prevent people escaping extreme poverty including **inequality, risk and vulnerability**. This paper focuses on how the Graduation Model pilot project has supported extreme poor households to increase their asset base and led to improvements in well-being; assets considered are physical, financial, human and social.

This briefing paper summarises the findings from a project evaluation undertaken in November 2015, twelve months since participants last received income support. The project evaluation relied heavily on monitoring data collected pre-capital transfer (April 2014) and post-capital transfer (September 2015)^{viii} which isolates the impact of activities that have taken place since the income support phase^{ix} and whether there have been improvements or deteriorations in indicators of well-being since then. Unfortunately it is not possible to examine trends since the start of the project as a baseline survey was not conducted.

The paper then concludes by setting out how graduation (as an approach) and the Graduation Model pilot project could support social protection policy and programming in Zambia and starts to address a number of questions that continue to arise in sectoral discussions. It uses both evidence from Concern's experience of graduation in Zambia's Western Province as well as relevant lessons from Concern Worldwide's other programmes in Burundi, Haiti and Rwanda. These questions are:

- Cash transfer plus what? What is the optimum package of interventions to support graduation of the extreme poor in Zambia from extreme poverty?
- How can the Case Management be made more financially sustainable for replication and scale up?
- What enables households to graduate from extreme poverty?

Findings from Zambia

Physical assets

The evaluation found **improvements in living conditions overall^x**; many participants reported having upgraded shelter walls from elephant grass to reeds and having iron sheet roofing. Where participants may not have improved shelter materials, there were signs of structures being extended using existing materials. Home improvements, either building new or improving existing shelters, was cited as one of the most important benefits of the project for participants. Mid- and end-line surveys do show **significant improvement in household sanitation facilities**, 85% of households now reporting access to a pit latrine without a slab at end-line compared with 57% at mid-line.

There have also been **improvements in the ownership of large domestic assets**, as seen in figure one. Overall, the highest ownership at end-line was of iron sheets (88%), mobile phones (70%), and radios (68%). Though overall, the greatest increase was in ownership of large box batteries, from 2% at mid-line to 31% at end-line followed by bicycles, from 3% at mid-line to 31% at end-line.

There has also been an **increase in the ownership of certain farming (productive) assets**, as seen in figure two. Overall, the highest ownership at end-line was of hoes (100%) and of land, both wetland (86%) and upland (48%).

Financial assets

The evaluation found that participants had experienced **positive wealth trajectories** since the start of the project. There have however, been differences in the experience of participants; some experiencing smooth improvements whilst others have experienced more uneven improvement with trajectories fluctuating over time. These periods of fluctuation are in line with times when the household was impacted by external or internal shocks (i.e. late rains; theft of productive assets; sickness or death of a family member)

Business (trading of goods) was the primary source of income at the time of both surveys (see figure three), though there was a slight decline in the number of participants engaged in this activity at the end-line compared to the mid-line (49% and 59% respectively). This reflects the fact that households are now engaging in different activities at different times of the year. People's ability to switch between IGAs throughout the year, depending on the external environment, came across strongly in the evaluation. For farmers this meant switching between seasonal crops and upland (dry) and lowland (wet) cultivation and for those engaged in trade, between selling fish to selling scones (for example) during the annual fish ban.

Figure 1: Ownership of large domestic assets

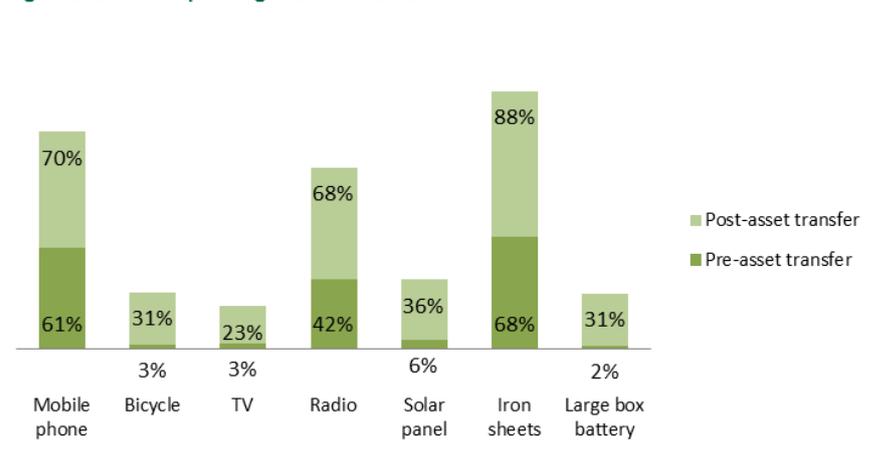


Figure 2: Ownership of farming (productive) assets

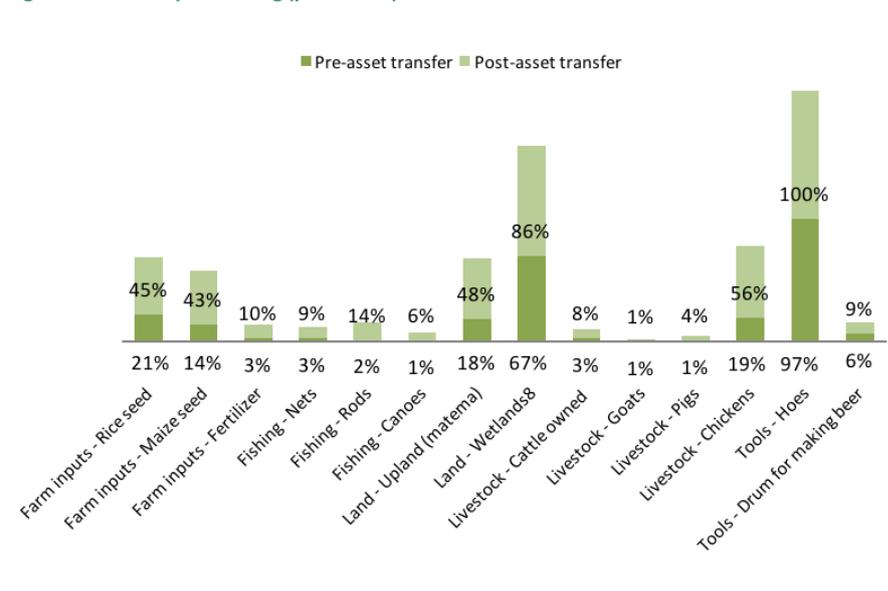
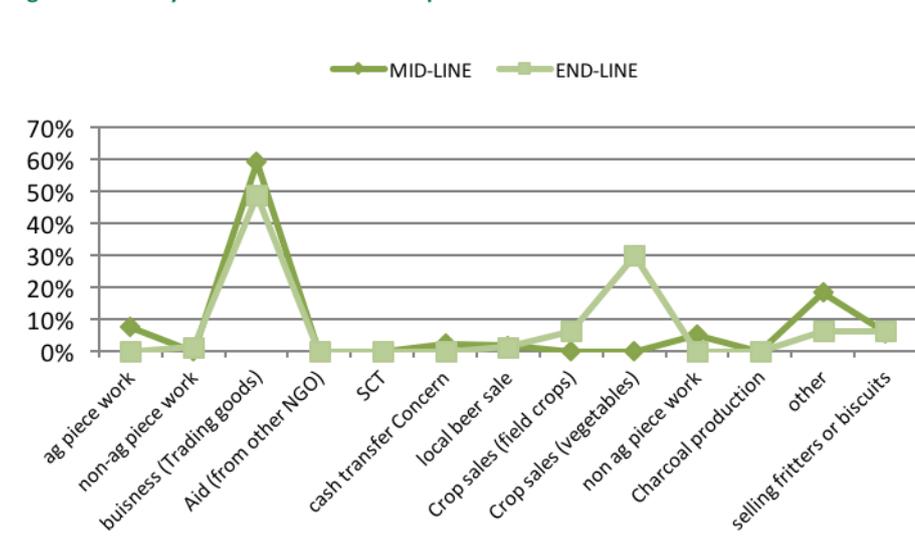


Figure 3: Primary source of income in the previous month



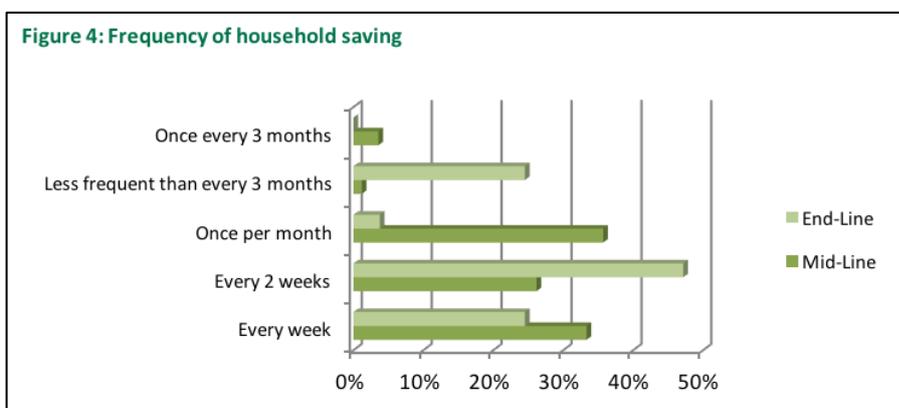
For farmers this meant switching between seasonal crops and upland (dry) and lowland (wet) cultivation and for those engaged in trade, between selling fish to selling scones (for example) during the annual fish ban.

There has been a **significant increase in the proportion of households keeping a record of income and expenditure** – from 49% at mid-line to 70% at end-line – and a **significant increase in the average income for their**

primary income activity. The average daily rate earned (last time) at mid-line was ZMW 121 compared to ZMW 426 per day at end-line which could be used as a proxy^{xi} for total income.

Overall, **the majority of participants are saving money regularly** though there is little difference between the mid-line and end-line surveys (94% and 95% respectively). The findings from the mid-line are unsurprising as this was during the period when participants were receiving regular income support and were encouraged to save a portion of their monthly stipend however, the finding that a similar proportion are **still saving 12-months following the end of the income phase** is an indication of how positive outcomes have been sustained.

In addition, the **average amount saved by households has increased significantly** from ZMW 99 at mid-line to ZMW 224 at end-line (based on the amount saved by households the 'last time' they saved). There are however, considerable differences in the amount being saved by different households. During the end-line survey, the minimum monthly amount being saved by participants was ZMW 6 whilst the maximum was ZMW 2000. The



frequency of household saving is more varied, with an increase in the proportion of households reporting that they save every two weeks - 47% at end-line compared to 26% at mid-line - but also an increase in the proportion of households saving less frequently than every three months, from 1% at mid-line to 25% at end-line. Please see figure 4. Once again this is unsurprising given that participants are no longer receiving regular and predictable income support – which can support financial planning – and income from seasonal business activities is less predictable.

Human assets

There has been a **slight increase in participants attending formal health care services** – 83% at mid-line to 93% at end-line. For those not attending formal health care services, there was a significant reduction in those citing the reason for not attending formal health services as being because they use local remedies (88% at mid-line to 0% at end-line). In terms of barriers to access there has been a slight reduction in those reporting that they could not afford formal health care services (4% at mid-line to 0% at end-line).

There has also been **significant improvement in household hygiene practices**. As well as an increase in the proportion of households owning soap for washing hands, from 51% at mid-line to 74% at end-line. There has also been an increase in the use of soap and water for hand-washing both after toileting (74% at mid-line to 91% at end-line) and before feeding children (33% at mid-line to 79%).

Social assets



The project also led to participants feeling **increasingly empowered** and, as a result of having increased livelihood options, having the ability to plan for the future. A number of participants also reported feeling that they had **more respect within the community** and that specifically, the project had improved the role of women within the household. The evaluation found examples of where participants had been able to take on positions of responsibility within the community, such as becoming Community Development Representatives.

Impacts beyond the project

Finally, there have also been significant changes taking place beyond the original scope of the project; most notably at household/community level due in part to the extended family system in Zambia. These include increased labour opportunities; supporting extended family; community participation in Savings Investment and Loan Committees (SILCs) and an increased supply (both type and number) of goods available in the market. That said it is not possible to validate various spill over effects or quantify any multiplier effects. There have also been reports of negative impacts at micro level including

over-supply of certain goods in the market place and jealousy.

Changes beyond the project, at a meso and macro level, have been more limited so far although there is huge potential to increase this. At meso level this could be aligned with the roll out of the national Social Cash Transfer programme (SCT) in Mongu District and at macro level through supporting the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP).

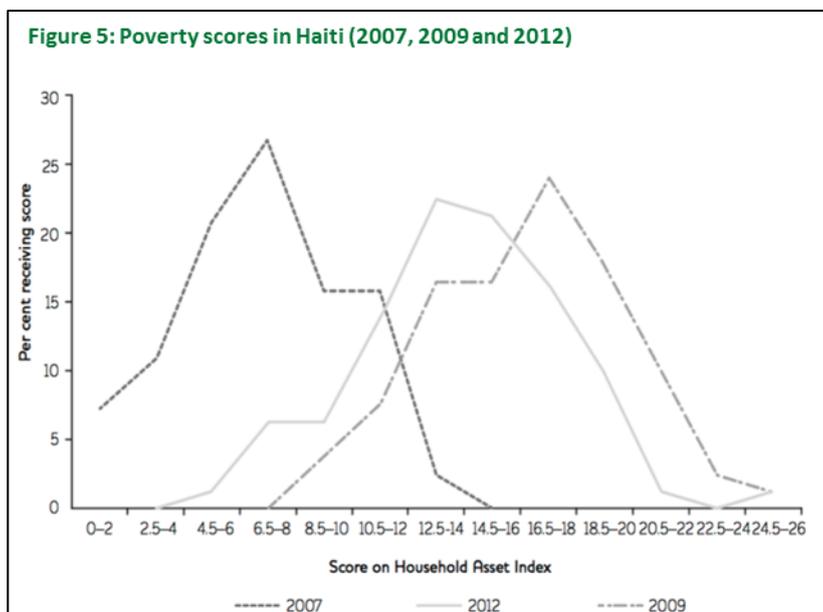


Conclusion

Overall, the project has been effective in supporting participants to increase their asset base. Particular improvements were seen in physical and financial assets – participants reported positive wealth/wellbeing trajectories and an increased average daily rate – and although income accruing from economic activities was not captured, wealth trajectories and improved daily rates can be considered proxies for improvements in total annual income. This is also likely to have influenced the improvements seen in human and social impacts. Progress has also been seen in addressing a number of casual factors of poverty in Zambia's Western Province including: increased ownership of productive assets; improved land fertility and reduced reliance on low paid, ad-hoc daily labour.

Any increase in asset ownership, or return on assets, also reduces household vulnerability and this was confirmed by participants during the evaluation who reported that they felt better able to support themselves and their families cope with the impact of internal and external events^{xii} following their participation in the project.

Participants have had different experiences, evident from the variations of response given to certain questions posed during mid- and end-line surveys (i.e. the number of months that households experienced hunger during the previous year; the amount saved last time) and during the evaluation. There is a need to look more closely at these to better understand the factors that increase (enable) or decrease (constrain) the likelihood of households graduating from extreme poverty, or meeting graduation thresholds more quickly, in Zambia's Western Province.



As previously mentioned, the graduation approach is not only designed to move an individual or household above a specific threshold but bring about sustainable changes to well-being. The project in Zambia is considered to have partially achieved this given that many improvements in well-being have been sustained or further improved since participants stopped receiving income support. However, it is important to follow-up as experience from Concern's programme in Haiti shows. Despite 96% of programme participants being better off at the end of the programme (2009) than at baseline (2007) a downward trend was observed 4 years later (2012) which raised concern about households who slip back below thresholds after graduation. Overall 31.2% of participants in Haiti had continued on an upward trajectory after graduation; 39% has maintained the same score on the poverty scorecard or registered a small decline and 29.90% registered a sizeable decline (see figure five^{xiii}).

Further lessons from the Zambia project are set out in the full evaluation document alongside practical recommendations for Concern Worldwide Zambia to guide future replication or scale up of the approach in the short, medium- and long-term.

Discussion points

Influencing policy in Zambia

The evaluation identified four ways in which graduation as an approach and learning from the Graduation Model pilot project does, or could further, inform social protection policy and programming in Zambia:

1. Providing evidence of how programmes, if designed and implemented well, can offer viable pathways out of extreme poverty for households with some access to labour capacity. This includes the potential to inform and influence the design of national programmes that are adopting, or plan to adopt a graduation approach. For example, The World Bank-funded Girls Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood (GEWEL) programme.
2. Supporting extremely poor households to access existing livelihood development programmes which, although intended to target the extreme poor, often remain out of reach (e.g. Farmer Input Support Programme). This still requires further analysis to look at what programme participants have been able to 'graduate onto'/into and what barriers they still face.
3. Strengthening institutional structures and building capacity to ensure that national programmes not only target but also address the specific needs of the extreme poor. Including recognising that the extreme poor are not a homogenous group.
4. Developing a better understanding of what is required by way of an enabling environment to support sustainable graduation as opposed to threshold graduation^{xiv}.

Adding to the evidence

Evidence from Zambia, as well as experience from other Concern Worldwide programmes, help to start to answer some of the questions circulating in the national and global discourse around graduation programmes:

- **Cash transfer plus what? What is the optimum package of interventions to support graduation of the extreme poor in Zambia from extreme poverty?** Although it has not been possible to isolate the impact of individual activities in Zambia, monitoring and evaluation has allowed us to isolate the impact of interventions taken place since the end of the income support including training and coaching. Participants spoke highly of the business skills training received; with lessons on being able to identify and research your market in order to ensure products are suitable, and on financial management and how to recognise profit and loss, frequently cited as being the most important. Training was also seen as having helped participants to adapt to the challenges that the devaluation of the Zambian Kwacha brought with it. Training on conservation agriculture was also well received by participants engaged in on-farm IGAs; with participants being able to apply learning such as innovative ways to keep the ground wet in the face of low or late rainfall. Similarly, improvements in the hygiene and sanitation practices of households and in households keeping a record of income/expenditure suggests the messages through coaching have been highly effective.
- **How can Case Management be made more financially sustainable for replication and scale up?** The graduation approach is intensive and therefore the cost of staffing and case management tends to make up a large proportion of programme budgets; in the case of the pilot project in Zambia 22% of the budget was apportioned to the cost of three full-time Case Managers who were employed directly by Concern. Costs could potentially be reduced by scaling down the level of support across the project lifespan with higher treatment in year one which is then tapered in year two and then again in year three (depending on the length of the project). Households who are progressing more slowly through the project may require additional support, in which case treatment could also be further tailored to households identified as being faster or slower movers^{xv}. Finally, it is feasible that a project could utilise existing community structures to provide a coaching role, such as community development volunteers, although it is important to consider the capacity and capability of these structures^{xvi}.
- **What enables households to graduate from extreme poverty?** Research from Concern Worldwide's graduation programme in Rwanda identified a number of factors which enable graduation from extreme poverty categorised as **household characteristics, household behaviours** (IGA selection; savings and investments) and **external influences**.

Household characteristics Households were likely to meet graduation thresholds more quickly if they had two or more adults living in the household^{xvii}; they owned their own land rather than renting and they had fewer dependents. Participants also mentioned the

importance of having good spousal relationships within the household which created opportunities to plan together and agree household goals.

Household behaviours

Households that prioritised the purchase of land for construction and cultivation, cultivated a diverse range of crops and belonged to more than one savings group, were seen to meet graduation thresholds more quickly. In terms of IGAs, participants also mentioned the importance of creating household plans (and following them), liking what you do and working hard as factors affecting the success of activities.

External influences

Households who received outside support, whether additional financial or in-kind support (labour, advice, help with land preparation, etc.) from family or neighbours, were seen to meet graduation thresholds more quickly. In terms of IGAs, participants also mentioned the importance of having access to financial services, having access to other programmes (e.g. government subsidies for fertiliser), having health insurance and having good relationships with local authorities as factors affecting the success of activities.

An enabling environment

Research in Rwanda^{xviii} identified internal and external factors which challenged the success of IGAs including household health; family disputes; theft of assets; crop and livestock disease; lack of capital and high interest rates of financial service providers. External factors; and the importance of the external environment in facilitating and sustaining graduation from extreme poverty, also came out strongly in the evaluation of the pilot project in Zambia. Although the project in Zambia addresses demand-side constraints as to why households are unable to access basic services (i.e. lack of income; lack of awareness) and aims to link households up with service providers, in particular financial services, it does not currently address supply-side constraints such as the availability and quality of service provision. Whilst it is important to not over-burden project objectives there is potential for the graduation approach to increasingly support system strengthening and increase social accountability in the future.

Further considerations

It is also agreed that there is a need to look more closely at psychological factors which may enable or constrain graduation and to consider the social impacts of the project. Although social impacts are less tangible, they cannot be underestimated and are likely to have huge implications on project outcomes in the short- and medium- term (and the sustainability of outcomes in the longer term). During the evaluation powerful accounts were heard on just how positively influential the project had been on people's lives^{xix} however, there were also reports of jealousy at the beginning of the project and theft of productive assets which are concerning and the risk of negative social consequences needs to be considered and managed in the design of any future programmes.



Finally, although applying a graduation approach may support a household to reach a broad threshold of graduation it does not mean that they will never slip back and therefore there is a need for consistent and universal social protection in place to provide safety nets when required^{xx} but also to support households without labour capacity.

ⁱ Mongu, Limulunga, Senanga, Koama and Luampa

ⁱⁱ IPRWEP is due to run to the end of 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Based on an average household size of 4.7 persons

^{iv} The Graduation Approach was first developed by BRAC in Bangladesh and subsequently adapted and piloted by CGAP (the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor) and Ford Foundation in an effort to understand how safety nets, livelihoods and access to finance can be sequenced to create sustainable pathways out of extreme and chronic poverty.

^v Existing programmes reach approximately 30,000 direct beneficiaries

^{vi} Please note. There has been a significant devaluation of the Kwacha. As of the 1st December 2015, ZMW 120 was equivalent to USD \$11.50 however two years previously (at the time of the first transfer) it was equivalent to USD \$21.50 (oanda.com)

^{vii} As of the 1st Dec 2015, ZMW 500 was equivalent to USD \$48 however based on the exchange rate on the 1st May 2014 (the month in which the transfer was given) it was equivalent to USD \$78 (oanda.com)

^{viii} Unfortunately, a baseline survey was not conducted therefore it is not possible to examine trends from the start of the project.

^{ix} The report does not manage to disaggregate the impact of other activities.

^x This is despite little improvement being seen between the mid- and end- line surveys. It is suggested that the reason for quantitative data showing little improvement in the condition of shelter is down to how questions posed during mid- and end-line were designed. Specific recommendations on survey questions are included in the conclusion and recommendation section.

^{xi} A proxy refers to a variable, in this case average amount earned last time, which can serve in place of an immeasurable variable, in this case total income.

^{xii} The internal and external events found to most likely to affect households were sickness (internal) and climatic changes such as late and low rainfall (external).

^{xiii} 'Poverty scores in Haiti (2007, 2009 and 2012)' Pain, C., Vautravers, E. and Descieux, A. in Devereux, S. and Sabates-Wheeler, R (2015) Graduating from Social Protection, Vol. 46, No. 2. March 2015

^{xiv} Sustainable graduation implies that a beneficiary or participant remains self-reliant after exiting the programme because s/he has built up some resilience against shocks and stresses whilst threshold graduation implies that a beneficiary or participant exceeds the programme's eligibility criteria (e.g. income level or asset ownership) and is no longer eligible for support. (See Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2011)

^{xv} Concern Worldwide's graduation programme in Rwanda undertook qualitative research, studying households that had been identified as progressing faster or slower through the programme in an effort to better understand enabling and constraining factors. The resultant report, entitled 'Adding to the evidence: A summary of qualitative research', is available on request.

^{xvi} More information on the advantages and disadvantages of using existing volunteer structures to provide Case Management can be found in Martin, R. and Swatton, J. (2015) Final Evaluation of the Unleashing the Productive Capacity of the Extreme Poor Graduation Programme, Rwanda 2012-2015. Concern Worldwide: Dublin

^{xvii} Please note, only one adult per household is registered as a participant of the programme though some households may have more than one adult with labour capacity.

^{xviii} More information on findings from Concern Worldwide's graduation programmes in Rwanda (Burundi and Haiti) can be found online at: <https://www.concern.net/en/where-we-work>

^{xix} A series of case studies is available in the full evaluation report.

^{xx} See Pain, C., Vautravers, E. and Descieux, A. (2015) Sustaining Graduation: A review of the CLM programme in Haiti. In IDS Bulletin: Graduating From Social Protection. Vol. 46, No. 2. March 2015

This paper was written by Jenny Swatton in collaboration with Concern Worldwide Zambia, drawing on the 'Internal evaluation of the Graduation Model pilot project 2013-2015.' This report is available from Concern Worldwide Zambia on request. For more information please contact: Danny Harvey – Country Director, Concern Worldwide Zambia (danny.harvey@concern.net) or Jenny Swatton – Social Protection and Safety Nets Adviser, Concern Worldwide (jenny.swatton@concern.net)

Photographs:

- 1) Mulela Mukini showing the evaluation team her farm land, Lipumelo – Upper Lealui
- 2) Kasabi Kasabi outside his family home, Kambina – Upper Lealui
- 3) Katanekwa Etambuyu serving customers at her village shop, Naenda – Upper Lealui
- 4) David Ndonga Kazhila outside the brick house he has built since participating in the programme, Nalunembwe – Upper Lealui

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