



# KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

**Gender Equality in Concern – Special Issue to coincide with the ‘16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence’**

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

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

## Knowledge Matters basics

Knowledge Matters offers practice-relevant analysis relating to the development and humanitarian work of Concern Worldwide. It provides a forum for staff and partners to exchange ideas and experiences. The publication is committed to encouraging high quality analysis in the understanding of Concern's work. Concern staff and partners document their ideas and experiences through articles. Articles are very short – 500 – 1,500 words. Usually, you only have space to make one or two interesting points. Here are some tips on writing a short feature article:

- Start by imagining your audience – a Concern colleague. Why are they interested – why do they want to read what you have to say? When you identify what your most important point is, say it straight away, in the title or first sentence.
  - What can others learn from your story? Focus on this. Remember to back up your story with evidence. This can be taken from evaluations.
  - It's easier to get people reading if you start with the human perspective – mentioning real people and real-life events. (You don't have to give names).
  - Use short sentences. Use Concern's style guide to help you.
  - Keep paragraphs to a maximum of six lines long.
- Use clear language. Many of the readers of Knowledge Matters are non-native English or French speakers, so think carefully about using phrases or colloquial language that might not be easily understood by others.
  - Always avoid assuming too high a level of knowledge of the topic you are writing about on the part of the reader.
  - Use active sentences ('we held a workshop' not 'a workshop was held by us')
  - Use short and clear expressions.
  - Keep your title short - no more than eight words.
  - Where necessary use photos to accompany the narrative but ensure that you follow the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

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**Cover photo:** A Community Dialogue session is held monthly in Masokoray Community and facilitated by Concern Officer Salamatu Magdalene, 2021. Community Dialogues bring together all members of the community to discuss ways to improve gender equality and tackle issues including gender based violence. As part of the sessions community members are encouraged to roll play actions that promote gender equality. Photo: Michael Duff/Concern Worldwide.

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## From the Issue Editor:

Welcome to the latest issue of Knowledge Matters to coincide with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV). This issue examines Concern's work on gender equality and strategies to reduce GBV. The issue shares lessons and promising practices across various sectors.

Each article presents a unique approach to addressing gender inequality in a specific sector and context. It is interesting to read about the different approaches being implemented in countries as far apart geographically as Liberia, Pakistan and Lebanon, to Bangladesh and others. In keeping with organisational learning, the authors highlight the challenge of the various contexts and the challenges and opportunities that their approaches have brought to the situation of gender equality in their context.

I hope by reading the articles you will get a better insight into the various approaches that we are implementing, whether it is internally with our staff in DRC, engaging with fathers as caregivers in Turkey or with men in Liberia through the 'We are One' approach in order to address gender inequality and influence reductions in GBV.

**Bernadette Crawford – Equality Adviser**

# Reflections from Dominic MacSorley

In the five years since the last issue of Knowledge Matters that focused on the issue of gender equality the global conversation on gender equality, and equality in society more broadly, has caught fire. The #metoo movement served as a critical outlet for expression and solidarity, mobilising action for change in society around the world.

It would be naïve however, to suggest that progress on gender equality has been uniformly positive. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of advancement towards gender equality in the vast majority of countries was painstakingly slow. Last year, 25 years since the landmark Beijing Declaration on Gender Equality, the report '*A New Era for Girls: Taking stock of 25 years of progress*', produced by the United Nations found that "while girls' lives are better today than they were 25 years ago, the gains are uneven across regions and countries. This is particularly true for adolescent girls."

We know that progress can never be taken for granted and the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically upended social and economic progress in almost every society. The last two years has profoundly affected gender inequality, particularly gender-based violence, as life has disappeared beyond closed doors. The COVID-19 pandemic has driven a surge of domestic violence around the world, but the greatest increases have been in contexts which were already impacted by deep poverty, inequality and in many cases, conflict.

The pandemic has also driven widespread economic devastation, and we know that women - who are more likely to be employed in the informal and service sector - have been disproportionately affected. Lockdowns have also had a significant impact on unpaid care and work-life balance. According to the European Commission, women spent, on average, 62 hours per week caring for children (compared to 36 hours for men) and 23 hours per week doing housework (15 hours for men) during lockdown.

In many respects, COVID-19 has had a similar effect on women's lives as many other humanitarian crises in that it has accelerated and intensified existing underlying power imbalances. Time and time again, it is women and girls who face the effects of society being upended, all too often in the form of violence.

It is clear that we are in a time of great flux when it comes to gender equality. But in Concern, we also have an appreciation that gender inequality is deeply rooted in all societies, that it perpetuates and is perpetuated by poverty and structural injustices that go beyond the effects of contemporary events. That's why inequality is central to Concern's understanding of extreme poverty and why our efforts to address poverty maintain a central focus on gender and the empowerment of women.

These efforts are diverse and involve a broad spectrum of approaches, and that's why I am delighted that we have this issue of Knowledge Matters - to showcase some of these programme approaches and also some of the internal efforts that we are making to ensure we are holding ourselves to the highest standard when it comes to gender equality within Concern.

We continue to partner with South African NGO, Sonke Gender Justice, to provide in-depth analysis and training on equitable

gender attitudes and behaviours within our own teams. The partnership also aims to strengthen the impact of our gender work in our programmes, including gender transformative programming and the 'Engaging Men and Women on Gender Equality' methodology.

In 2020, we also strengthened our organisational capacity and commitment to deliver safe programmes by creating a dedicated Protection and Safeguarding Unit to provide strategic leadership for all protection and safeguarding activities at the country programme level across Concern.

This is just part of the approach we are taking to ensure holistic approaches to gender equality, alongside safety and security, within Concern. It's a spectrum of efforts towards progress - and it is a continuous process. But we know that delivering programmes safely and holding ourselves to the highest standard is not enough. We have to also recognise and act on the urgency of gender-based violence, particularly as humanitarian crises have grown considerably in the last decade. Protection programming - the most relevant sector of humanitarian response in this regard - has been consistently amongst the worst funded sectors.

During my time as Chair of the Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence (ICGBV), I gained an ever-deeper appreciation of the importance of translating policy to practice. This means not only ensuring that issues of gender equality and protection are at the centre of planning, implementation and evaluation in any humanitarian response, but also that women and girls are at the centre of implementing that response.

We know that when women are left out of the planning and implementing process for community-based humanitarian response, there is a higher likelihood that the needs of women and girls will not be adequately met



A counselling card showing what to do if a girl or woman discloses to you that they have experienced violence from the 'Social and Emotional Learning' and 'School-Related Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response' training courses delivered to students in schools and adults in communities in Sierra Leone. Photo: Michael Duff/ Concern Worldwide.

in that response. Targeting female-headed households, particularly for cash assistance programming, is a lynchpin of Concern's response in several contexts, and it is based on an in-depth process of community consultation; therefore, having the right demographic make-up within our own staff is crucial.

Looking forward, gender equality will remain central to our work as enshrined in Concern's new Strategic Plan 2021-2025, alongside investment in diversity, inclusion and equality more broadly. We know that progress towards achieving gender equality in society and in the workplace can never be taken for granted and that it is critical for us to remain invested, engaged and active at all levels of the organisation in the years to come.



# The journey so far

Written by Bernadette Crawford

## Addressing Gender Equality: How far have we come?

Gender inequality is one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of inequality in the world. It denies women their voices, devalues their work and make women's position unequal to men's from the household to the national and global levels. Despite some important progress to change this in recent years, in no country have women achieved equality with men, and women are still more likely than men to live in extreme poverty and experience gender-based violence.<sup>1</sup>

During this 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign (November 25 – December 10) we remind ourselves that GBV is rooted in gender inequality at a societal level as well as harmful social norms that discriminate against women and girls. These inequalities are often exacerbated by emergencies, exposing women and girls to risks and vulnerabilities. As a result of these issues, it is crucial for prevention and response interventions to address the gendered dimensions of crises and to promote gender equality and transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> In this issue when we talk about 'gender' we are using it in terms of 'women and men, girls and boys' but we recognise the term 'gender' covers more than just this binary. Transgender, intersex and non-binary people are also some of the most vulnerable people in places where we work, but we are still at this stage focusing on the former due to capacities, strategy and resources.

## How is Concern Doing?

Since 2013, Concern has been implementing gender transformative programmes that work to shift social norms and support men and boys as allies for gender equality so as to advance respect for women and reject violence in families and broader communities. To provide technical support with this work we have engaged in the past with Promundo, an internationally well-known organisation that specialises in approaches to engage men and boys on gender equality. The early days of gender transformative approaches in Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Mozambique provided grounded experience with well evaluated programmes for us to learn from. Similar work followed in Rwanda and Liberia. However, to scale up it was critical that we engaged a longer-term partner to support the Concern teams across the 24 programme countries. In 2017 we engaged with Sonke Gender Justice, a South African Human Rights organisation, who have a dedicated team of trainers who support the Concern teams and partners.

Following the success of the initial two-year partnership with Sonke Gender Justice, a second phase of this partnership was launched in 2020 and scaled up to all Concern countries, with the exception of DPRK. Due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, a number of planned scheduled visits were cancelled, and instead Sonke provided online versions of the planned gender transformative workshops to a number of programmes during 2020/2021.



Nknonzo Khanyile, Trainer Sonke Gender Justice, leads an online session with the Lebanese Concern team, 2021. Photo Bernadette Crawford.

## What do programmes look like?

To date we have been primarily working with couples to strengthen healthy communication, reject violence against women and promote gender equality in households. For example, the ‘We are One’ (WAO) programme in Liberia that was initiated in 2013 has couple dialogues at the centre, an approach that challenges the underlying



Mamawah Kamara, the Program Manager for Concern's ASRH (Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health) project facilitating an 11 week life skills training course with students from Benevolent Primary School in Makali Junction Community. The course provides adolescent students with a range of skills to help them across all aspects of their life including gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health. Photo: Michael Duff/ Concern Worldwide.

gender norms and practices that perpetuate inequality between men and women. At the heart of such an approach is the active questioning of what it means to be a man or woman in society and how expectations can cause harm not only to those around them but also to themselves. Recently evaluated and endorsed by the traditional leaders, read more in Edwin Morlu and Ciara Begley's article on WAO in Liberia. In Sierra Leone, a similar project called ‘Living Peace’ expanded beyond couple's dialogues to engage with the traditional leaders, wider community and adolescent youth. Adolescents are such a critical cohort of the community to engage with on gender equality and GBV issues. You can read more about the work with the adolescents in the article by Rose Ann Kanu and Mamawah Kamara.

Many of the programmes engage with male and female change makers/agents at the community level to act as peer educators around issues of Gender equality and GBV. You can read more about the Bangladesh approach in Masumi Sharmin's article on their Engaging Men and Boys approach.

In all emergency-affected settings, the majority of cases of GBV are perpetrated by known individuals as opposed to strangers. The risks of experiencing household violence during times of crisis are often exacerbated by factors such as emotional stress, economic strain, and shifting roles and responsibilities among family members. This is no different for Syrian refugees living in Lebanon. The lack of livelihoods and loss of assets are potential contributors to stress and anxiety. The team recognised these factors and engaged with men with the aim to reduce violence against women but also to reduce tension with Lebanese men. Following an evaluation, the programme has been adapted to also engage with women. This is an approach that we recommend regardless of the context, as women are also socialised to internalise social and gender norms and they need to be part of the process. You can read more about

the approach in Monica Rahul's article on *'Engaging Men – how it has evolved and what difference it is making in Lebanon'*.

When we speak of disasters, women experience the impacts differently to men due to their socio-cultural practices/ traditions and economic vulnerability. Nazima Shaheen outlines in her article the *'Gender aspects of the Building Disaster Resilience in Pakistan'* the processes and activities that they built into the programme to address gender inequality in the context.

While all crisis-affected settings are associated with an increased risk of GBV, there are unique factors about COVID-19 that make it particularly alarming. In light of the physical distancing and movement restrictions that have been put in place across the world to curb the pandemic, women and girls face an increased risk of experiencing violence at the hands of family members, intimate partners or others living within their homes. All of these factors are likely to increase within the context of COVID-19, due to widespread job loss, economic strain, disruption of normal routines, and ongoing stress associated with actual or potential illness that have resulted in affected regions across the world. When combined with lockdowns and other movement restrictions, homes within the context of COVID-19 can become potential pressure cookers of GBV, as drivers of violence increase, while survivors and those at risk are more restricted than ever in terms of their ability to seek safety or other necessary forms of support.

This highlights the importance of the response work that country teams are engaged in to ensure support services are available to those in need. In Lebanon, they have adapted their case management to ensure it can be delivered remotely. Positive parenting approaches by the Turkey team which are paramount to the dynamic in the home have been delivered via the internet, which has led to greater engagement by

fathers as the session timings are more accommodating for them. Read more about this in Erin Wall's article on *'Working with men through caregiver engagement'*.

## We are on a journey

Our journey to achieve gender equality and elimination of GBV continues. The articles in this issue give you a glimpse of some approaches, challenges and successes that we are facing in a selection of programmes. The big issue that once again clearly comes through is that gender is not about women, it's about women and men, it's about understanding the prevailing power dynamics, social and inequitable gender norms and finding gender transformative approaches to address these in a way that is bringing about positive changes for women and girls, but also boys and men themselves.

For someone that has been part of the journey since 2012 I want to acknowledge the support from all levels of the organisation to taking the gender transformative approach seriously as I truly believe it is this approach which will move us forward towards achieving gender equality and eradication of gender-based violence. Continued technical support and resources are required for us to fully scale up. The new Irish Aid proposal will provide us with an opportunity to make sure that happens. Even though there is much still to do, we are making strides in the communities that we are working with and amongst our staff. The lives of women, children and men are improving for the better.

Thank you to all the contributors of articles who have made this issue of Knowledge Matters so interesting. The range of articles spanning several sectors is testament that gender equality is an issue across every aspect of life. And a special mention to Dominic MacSorley who has continued to speak out on issues of gender equality and GBV and provide leadership and a strong voice to the issues, inspiring us all.



# Sonke: Beginning with ourselves

Written by Nkonzo Khanyile

## Background

Between 2017 and 2019, Concern engaged in a strategic partnership with Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) to strengthen their approach to Engaging Men and Boys programming (which is now more accurately referred to as engaging men and women for gender transformation). This partnership has been focusing on transforming the gender norms and attitudes of Concern staff; improving their ability to promote gender equality in the workplace and build their capacity to implement gender-transformative programmes. After two years of implementing a capacity-building programme with Concern staff in 12 countries, both organisations became interested in the extent to which the Engaging Men and Boys approach has been effective in bringing about anticipated changes at the individual, programmatic and organisational levels. The two organisations engaged an independent consultant to conduct a mini-evaluation of Concern Worldwide/Sonke Technical Assistance Project on Gender Transformative Norms. Since then, there has been more demand from other countries, and currently, the partnership is covering all of Concern Worldwide country programmes.

*The evaluation revealed that about 61% of respondents found the training to be relevant to their work on eradicating poverty, while 67% felt the programme adequately reflected some of the gender complexities they encounter in their work.*



The 'Breaking the Barriers' manual, developed by Sonke Gender Justice and Concern in 2018.

The primary key objective of the partnership has been about focusing on transforming the gender norms and attitudes of Concern staff, through capacity building process aimed at training staff to develop self-awareness on individual attitudes and perceptions about gender equality and build their capacity to integrate this knowledge into projects/programmes. It was key to have Concern staff invest time and efforts and have staff members dedicated to the process of self-transformation before interacting with the programme participants (beneficiaries). A Breaking the Barriers manual was developed as one of the strategies to achieve this objective. The manual serves as Concern's master version of a gender transformative curriculum, which has been adapted to suit individual country contexts. The manual has been used by master facilitators who have been leading and facilitating workshops with participants from Concern, including staff at all levels, such as in-country programmatic and partner staff, systems staff and senior management and head office-based staff.

## ‘We are what we teach’

Everything should start with us... The first module of the ‘Breaking the Barriers’ (BtB) Manual, focuses on providing an opportunity to enhance gender equality in the Concern organisational culture, this includes personal and organisational transformational processes. That said, countries that have received the capacity building visits from Sonke, have had opportunities to reflect and engage with their gendered assumptions, harmful norms, stereotypes and identities at an individual and organisational levels before they began interacting with the communities, and some countries felt like they needed to pause some of their community interventions to address some of the underlying issues that served as barriers towards achieving gender equality.

From the different country visits, Sonke learned that there were staff members who battled with some beliefs and values associated with gender equality across different organisational levels and especially those colleagues who are in the field. Some senior managers had biased beliefs and attitudes about gender equality. One senior manager from one of the countries said during an orientation workshop, *“I don’t see the point of promoting gender equality when people are desperate for emergency responses and dealing with drought and other humanitarian issues..., people want food, shelter, etc...”*. There were staff members who believed that their ability to sustain change was rooted in their own sense of commitment, with 78% indicating this. 44% believed support from colleagues was important for them to maintain change, a strong rationale for Concern to ensure the internal gender structures are functional.<sup>1</sup> Hence it has been important to encourage Concern Worldwide to continue to have internal

conversations, continue to build its capacity as an organisation through the ‘Breaking the Barriers’ strategies and methodologies including gender integration and budgeting across programmes and systems.

## Capacity building workshops and Training of Trainers

The Training of Trainers (ToT) model has been designed to engage staff members who have been involved in outreach programmes and have been working within the community. The ToT aims to build and strengthen the capacity of existing facilitators to become master trainers and coach new trainers that are less experienced and build a pool of competent master trainers who can then teach the material to other people. With the guidance from the Concern Equality Advisors and Sonke, each country has been able to select what they would like to receive during the visits, from a list of different options: 1) the (traditional) one-week gender transformational workshops for staff of all levels; 2) more detailed Training of Trainers for specific staff who have already been exposed to the approach, incorporating teach-back sessions (each last two weeks); and 3) targeted workshops with specific teams on how to undertake gender transformational programming in specific sectors.

This year (2021) Sonke undertook a visit to South Sudan, Ethiopia, Chad, Niger and Malawi. In Ethiopia, for example, the country requested that Sonke assisted and supported them with their most challenging programme when it comes to gender issues which is with the South Sudanese refugee response programme in Pugnido refugee camp, Gambella region. Sonke’s visit involved travelling to Pugnido to observe the developed action points and see if they were implemented effectively and what major problems were encountered. We reviewed and strengthened the capacity of current Gender Champions and trained new Gender

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<sup>1</sup>. Summative Evaluation of Concern Worldwide/ Sonke Technical Assistance Project on Gender Transformative Norms

Champions in facilitation skills related to the organisational conversations and provided refresher gender transformative training. The support trip also included travelling to Gondar where we conducted a gender transformation workshop and several focus group discussions with regards to the ERNE programme.

During the Ethiopia visit, Sonke learned that religion and tradition remained a structural challenge that required different levels of investment and energy when it came to working with influential groups like men in the community, religious and cultural leaders. Sonke recommended that it will work with the country office to develop strategies and plans aimed at strengthening the existing different partnerships with the different stakeholders, conduct gender-transformative workshops with them, develop and follow up on action plans, which detailed the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the communities and other spaces, and how the religious and traditional leaders will support and influence the change process within the community.

The ToT workshop and the Teach-backs sessions conducted in Gondar focused on strengthening facilitation skills and deepening the knowledge and understanding of the facilitators on how to deliver the materials. Sonke observed that there was an issue of male dominance and it was visible that the male participants were not conscious about their behaviours during the sessions.

For instance, there were situations when both female and male participants would find themselves speaking at the same time during the discussions, the male participants would not stop talking and would raise their voice, and the female participant would apologise, stop talking and allow the male participants to finish their points. Sonke trained the facilitators to understand the need to be aware of some of the negative attributes of facilitation and the need to understand why they had to practice more amongst themselves before they facilitated sessions with the programme participants (beneficiaries). This was especially important when they were expected to co-facilitate some sessions in pairs and they were expected to demonstrate equality and women leadership within the communities.

There has been an increase in demand from different Concern country programmes, and demand for continued engagement from countries that have previously received Sonke's visits. For example, the Bangladesh country office has requested Sonke to come for the third time in 2022 and assist them with conducting a mini-evaluation/review of the Engaging Men and Boys and Change Maker approach in the 'Improving the Lives of the Urban Extreme Poor (ILUEP)' programme. It is exciting to see this sustained interest and we look forward to continuing to work with Concern in engaging men and women in gender transformation.



Participants performing a role play during the activity: 'Intimate Violence', 2021. Photo: Nkonzo Kanyile.

# Strategies for gender parity in staff in DRC

Written by Mathilde Bouchacourt

Today, if you are part of the HR team or a member of a recruitment panel with Concern in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), it will not be uncommon to you to hear male applicants complain about the focus on gender in Concern's recruitment process and express their concern about how this could negatively impact their candidature. While this is not true – and many of those male candidates have gone on to be recruited – it is satisfying that the organisation's efforts to achieve gender parity do not go unnoticed.

In early 2019, Concern DRC adopted an internal strategy for Gender Equality, two of the objectives of which directly contribute to improving gender parity: 1. Ensure that the management of the organisation is determined to promote gender equality; 2. Address the difficulties of recruiting and promoting women.

## What are the traditional and contextual barriers?

The first step was to think about the barriers that prevent recruiting more women. As in many developing countries, Concern in DRC finds it difficult to recruit women, particularly in remote areas. Traditional barriers are linked to lower educational attainment among women, lack of work experience, and inequitable attitudes and practices that limit women's exposure to the labour market.



**From left to right:** Jeanette, HR intern in Nyunzu; Huguette, HR Manager Zone Tanganyika and Marceline, Logistic intern in Nyunzu, 2021. Photo: Mara Stadler.

That said, there is another barrier that female recruiters will not fail to point out: the mistrust of female candidates towards NGOs following the numerous scandals of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by some humanitarians external to Concern in the DRC. The recent scandal in Beni and Butembo in May 2021 following the Ebola response is no exception<sup>1</sup>. According to Germaine Masika - National HR Manager - this barrier slows down applications from women for two main reasons: *“For married women, there is a great chance that their husbands will refuse that*

<sup>1</sup> “Nouvelles plaintes d’abus sexuels par des travailleurs humanitaires en RDC », The New Humanitarian, Mai 2021.

*they apply; and single women prefer not to apply in order to avoid rumours surrounding their taking up position, which can damage their reputation.”*

One of Concern DRC’s main strategies to achieve gender parity was the establishment in 2018 of an internship program exclusively for women.

The coordination team envision the strategy as long-term planning in order to stem the main barriers to recruitment and allow women to progress within Concern, thanks to skills enhancement, close supervision of interns and a work environment that promotes confidence and decision-making. According to Germaine and Huguette; former interns who both became HR Manager in their respective

areas, this program is an excellent entry point for women. *Because this is a low-paid internship, there is no reason to believe that women came into the position in exchange for any favours, and it allows interns to familiarize themselves with Concern and its internal procedures relating to Safeguarding, and to see that their fears are unfounded.*

## What are the results of the internship program and the gender equality strategy so far?

The impacts of the internship program, coupled with the development of a gender-friendly recruitment memo, have made it possible to achieve greater gender diversity in the various Concern bases, including remote bases.

**Table 1:** Key requirements of the gender-friendly recruitment memo

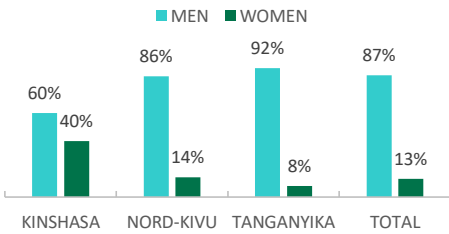
Steps	Requirements
<b>Publication of the offer</b>	Publication of the positions must be in different places frequented by women (eg. at the offices of women’s organisations, universities, churches, markets, hospitals etc.)
<b>Shortlists</b>	Female candidates who meet the minimum requirements are given priority in recruitment in accordance with Concern’s Gender Equality Strategy.
<b>Shortlists</b>	The shortlist must be approved by the HR Manager to ensure that the gender aspect has been taken into account in the preselection
<b>Written test</b>	For Grades 1 and 2, give candidates the opportunity to answer certain questions in a local language during the interview
<b>Interview</b>	The recruitment panel must include at least one woman
<b>Interview</b>	At least one question on gender equality and P4 / Code of Conduct should be asked in all interviews
<b>Recruitment validation</b>	<p>The recruitment process will be considered to have failed in the cases below, and the position(s) relaunched:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>If the number of preselected female candidates (Shortlist) to take the tests / interviews does not reach at least 33%;</i></li> <li>* <i>For recruitment to several positions (2 and more), the process will have failed if the number of successful candidates for the positions does not reach at least 40%.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Exceptions are allowed only by authorisation of the Country Director and only if all other steps to encourage the maximum number of applications from women were correctly done.</i></p>



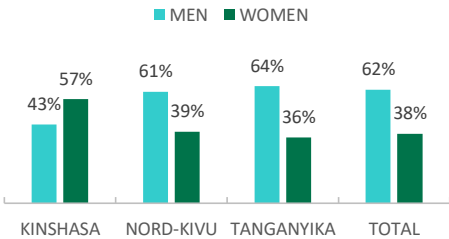
In addition, we implemented measures to encourage the retention of women in their posts, such as the organisation of working hours and location of employment for pregnant and breastfeeding women<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, Concern DRC adopts a policy of systematic renewal of pregnant staff whose contract will end, subject only to having a satisfactory Performance Development Review (PDR).

For example, in Tanganyika, women represented only 8% of the staff in December 2017, compared to 36% in July 2021. In Tanganyika alone, 7 interns have been hired as a result of their internships since 2018.

**BREAKDOWN OF CONCERN DRC STAFF BY GENDER IN DECEMBER 2017**



**BREAKDOWN OF CONCERN DRC STAFF BY GENDER IN JULY 2021**



<sup>2</sup>. Breastfeeding women can arrive at work one hour after or leave one hour earlier, and they have one hour per day to breastfeed. On return from maternity leaves agreements can be made with HR not to return in remote base locations immediately

Despite this progress, efforts must continue to develop female interns within the organisation, as some of them are not recruited for lack of vacancies - or lack of capacity. This is why in September 2021, Concern DRC will validate new guidelines for its internship program, which incorporate lessons learned from the previous three years. Several key measures are included:

- On their arrival, interns receive from their supervisor at least three SMART learning objectives, which will be assessed throughout and at the end of the internship.
- Interns receive at least 1.5 days of training per internship period, in connection with the field of the internship and / or the identified capacity building needs.
- The internship supervisor has an objective relating to the coaching of the interns who are under their responsibility in their PDR.

In addition, other measures are planned to promote employment after an internship:

- While Grades 1 to 3 positions should only be opened locally where the project is implemented in order to maintain good relations with the population and local authorities, exceptions can be made to recruit former interns who are meeting the requirements for the new positions but are not from the local area.
- Give priority to former successful interns in the event of a new vacancy related to their skills.

## What are some of the impacts of a more mixed team?

For Concern managers who joined the organization before 2018, the emergence of more mixed teams has had positive impacts. They notice more competitiveness at work, which translates into improved performance for both men and women. According to the Irish Aid-funded Graduation Project Manager, the arrival of women has also helped to undermine some negative prejudices stemming from harmful gender values amongst staff. For example, the idea that women are inherently not intelligent, or that they are unable to do certain types of work.

The positive impacts are also felt at the community level, where again the project managers see a real change as a result of having more females on the team.

*Synat (USAID Project Manager in Tanganyika) explains that the trainings and sensitizations on gender make more sense for the communities since they are facilitated by mixed teams. When a Concern team first arrives in an intervention area, they can proudly see the wide-eyed women who see other women being recruited to implement the project. This helps build community confidence in Concern, and encourages parents to send their daughters to school.*

# Engaging Men and Boys approach to achieving gender equality in Bangladesh

Written by Mausumi Sharmin

Concern Worldwide increasingly uses the Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) approach with the inclusion of women and girls to promote gender equality. This gender transformative approach creates spaces to discuss and explore the effects that patriarchy has on men and women's own lives and the underlying gender norms and practices that perpetrate inequality between men and women. This approach has led to transformative changes in attitude and behaviour to gender relations. It also addresses strategic needs to improving status, power, decision-making capacity, self-esteem, self-confidence and voice of women, men, girls and boys and engaging men. The approach also has effectively been used to address issues of GBV.

Through EMB training for project participants, partner organisations and local leadership, we enable a more conducive environment that fosters positive attitudes toward the representation and participation of women and girls. The activities of EMB contribute to combating the marginalisation of women and girls and fostering respect for their rights and dignity; combating stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices in all areas of life. Moreover, they promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of women and girls.

## EMB Activities:

EMB utilises a number of participatory methodologies. A three day long training is used to identify and train community



Change Maker session run with Sajida Foundation in Maniknagar, Dhaka, 2020. Photo: Md. Assim.

'Change Makers', both male and female from programme participants to act as gender champions and advocates for gender equality within their communities. Facilitation skills as well as refresher trainings ensure the Change Makers are supported in being able to implement the necessary actions to achieve gender equality at the community level. The approach uses a series of self-reflective and experiential exercises to allow participants to really think about what it means to be a man or a woman, and allows them to understand their own perspectives on gender roles and norms in the context. This includes discussions on sex, gender, gender equity and equality, what men and women typically do for the 24 hours in a day, forms of power, how we learn violence, types of violence, violence against women in daily life, the cycle of violence, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, 'act like a man', 'act like a woman', positive parenting and group work with men and women groups separately and jointly to help to internalize the effects and root causes of gender inequality including GBV. Pictorial IEC materials ensure a better understanding on the above issues.

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***A very clear message was that men should respect women, and husbands should treat their wives well. ("We have also been taught how to respect women, and not abuse or neglect them" - Programme participant.) This extends to men empowering women by consulting in household matters, and respecting their wives' right to work. ("I also learned that I should discuss with my wife before taking any family decision. My wife should have the right to work. During the meetings, we learned that male and female have equal rights" - Programme participant.)***

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Sessions at the community level engage different group members; Self Help Group, Mothers Support Groups, Adolescent groups whether this be weekly, monthly and fortnightly include women, men, girls, boys and people with disabilities. Some sessions are mixed with men, women, boys and girls together, and some are with separate groups, depending on the topic. Consciousness raising of local level community leaders, Ward health Committees, Ward development committees, religious leaders, teachers, government institutions (following stakeholders mapping) on EMB issues creates linkages with micro and meso level stakeholders. Stakeholders play a significant role to build a coordinated response against GBV and include programme participants in social service provision.

Adolescent boys and girls are also engaged in the EMB approach to analyse their views of girls and women comparing rights and gender roles and practices of gender equality. The youth play an important role to prevent sexual harassment and early marriage and to ensure positive role on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in this process. Finally, we utilise existing networks in our project implementation areas, to act as central delivery mechanisms to implement the EMB activities. Although these actors differ from an urban to rural context, through the use of Change Makers the action ensures participatory, gender transformative programming, at all levels from household to national level.

Further to the approach additional points of intervention are:

- Regular community based session with Adolescents, Parents and Mother Support Groups, Self-help Groups on rights and Gender Based Violence issues
- Regular house to house visits by Change Makers

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*Often couples went to these trainings together, which led to improved outcomes. “Two of these training sessions I joined with my wife. So that we can both learn how to make a happy family and how husband and wife should respect each other. As a result of this training we are now living very well” - Programme participant.*

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- Our implementing partners are well trained on gender transformation, and their frequent interaction with women and adolescents gives them the opportunity to engage programme participants on planning and progress of our programme actions to prevent unintended negative consequences
- Day observations such as International Women’s Day, International Girl Child Day and 16 Days of Activism against GBV are used to promote equitable messages, sharing good practises using drama, songs, dance, discussions and role play for community level awareness with participation of Change Makers and local leaders;
- Responses to mitigate domestic violence, sexual harassment, early marriage and other forms of violence by Change Makers with engagement of local stakeholders;
- Sharing information on referral services to ensure accessibility to health, counselling, legal services relevant to GBV;
- Increase awareness of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and complaints response mechanism (CRM) reporting pathways in all activity organized for the community;
- Change Makers are not trained counsellors, but as a first point of contact with survivors are trained to listen without blaming survivors. In our ILUEP programme, partners have trained ‘para counsellors’ to provide individual and family counselling. We also provide information on referral services and counselling to ensure community level services are available;
- Discussion sessions with different age groups.



Change Maker training session with Sajida Foundation in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka, 2019. Photo: Ayesha Ahammed.



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***One male respondent gave an example of the advice they were given about how to handle conflicts between husband and wife. “If the wife says something angrily, I should leave the house without replying and walk around outside for some time to calm down and return home. This will cause anger on both sides to dissolve and we can discuss things calmly. After learning from the training, we are using these in our real life. By doing this, the family problems has decreased a lot.” - Programme participant.***

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## **EMB impact:**

In particular, the EMB approach has already been very well received by our partners which include SEEP, Sajida Foundation, Nari Maitree, and beneficiaries in the Irish Aid funded ILUEP programme (2017-2021). With technical support from Sonke Gender Justice, the Programme team systematically applied the EMB approach and worked with the Change Makers to make ILUEP a gender transformative programme. Both the partners’ staff and the Change Makers were trained on Gender transformation in practical ways to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) and bring about changes in gender norms. Change Makers

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***“I learned about children’s rights. I learned how to take care of children. It’s the duty of the parents to ensure their wellbeing. During the meeting they told us to ensure hygiene of the children, send them to the school and think about their future.” – Programme participant.***

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now have the capacity and are showing the confidence to handle violence and family conflicts linking Ward Councillors, law enforcing agencies and community leaders. They are also actively advocating for a more gender friendly environment to prevent sexual harassment, necessary health care, WASH services, livelihoods in their communities and, have reported several positive results in the past year.

Some of the impacts of EMB approach are:

- There has been enhanced shared decision making at household level which has increased women’s control in resource use, and financial decision making with men. When asked if women should not be involved in making decisions with men in the family at the baseline, 35% of people disagreed with this statement. However, in 2020 Annual Outcome Monitoring, 82% of people disagreed with this statement.
- There has been a shift and increased awareness of men’s role in childcare, increased engagement of men in household chores and some acceptance of changing men’s role from community. For example, during the baseline data collection people were asked if they agreed with the statement ‘childcare is a women’s responsibility, not a man’s’ to which 24% of people disagreed. In the 2020 Annual Outcome Monitoring 60% of people disagreed with this statement.
- Through male Change Makers demonstrating a respectful and non-violent attitude towards women and girls they have become role models of positive masculinity; moreover the Change Makers have represented and conveyed that domestic violence is not a personal matter it’s a violation of rights established at community level.

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***“How to raise children as good people. Children are equal, men and women are equal, everyone is given equal importance, and respect is shown to each other.” – Programme participant***

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- The awareness around the negative impact of early marriage as a harmful practise has minimized the number of early marriages and promoted girls’ education. Community members and the Change Makers now stand up and intervene when they hear of a marriage taking place of an adolescent. Through the ILUEP programme, Change Makers and community members have prevented 84 cases of early marriages through engaging formal/informal leaders from 2017 to June 2021.
- Engaging local stakeholders to respond to GBV has helped to reduce unintended negative consequences and acceptance of the EMB activity at the community level. This has been achieved through engaging community leaders and government representatives through 53 Ward Committees and sensitizing them on gender and equality and introducing them to the programme activities.
- The EMB approach has built support for gender equality and supports social behavioural change that supports women’s empowerment and reduce incidences and the threat of GBV.
- The community Change Makers (both men and women) have grown into leaders, with increased capacity, who are able to engage with local stakeholders and programme participants. The Change Makers have recognition within their communities and are key to the success of the changes at the community level.

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***Awareness-raising sessions on gender issues were not limited to husbands and wives, they also extended to relations between parents and children, and good parenting skills. Specifically, participants were advised to treat all children equally, and not to give preferential treatment to sons. “They told us to give equal importance to both sons and daughters. They told us to not feed our daughter less food just because she’s a girl. An educated girl can do much more than a boy to help her parents. If I educate my daughter well, she will support me one day.” – Programme participant.***

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# Engaging Men Approach in Lebanon: how is has evolved and the difference it is making

Written by Monica Rahal

## Introduction

Having been operational in Lebanon since 2013, Concern has extensive experience in livelihoods, shelter, WASH and Protection. The Concern Lebanon Protection programme aims to promote the rights, safety and dignity of the most at-risk and marginalised people from the Syrian and Lebanese communities. While Concern works directly with men, women and children, preventing and responding to Protection risks through Psychosocial Support and Case Management, every programme that Concern implements is ‘gender sensitive’ – meaning it identifies and takes into account the different needs, abilities, and opportunities of girls, boys,

*“We felt comfortable engaging with Concern staff. The team followed the humanitarian principles, were respectful, understanding and professional”*

*Kherbet Daoud - Women’s Focus Group Discussion (Balamand University Evaluation)*

women and men. Our ultimate aim is to move from ‘gender-sensitive’ to ‘gender-transformative’ programming. Gender transformative programming seeks to challenge and transform rigid gender norms and relations that can be harmful within communities.



Men’s session, North Lebanon (names of participants and photographer redacted to protect identities).

## What are key Protection issues in North Lebanon?

The Syrian refugee population in Lebanon remains one of the largest concentration of refugees per capita in the world, estimated at 1.5 million Syrians with 91% of the entire refugee population living below the Minimum Expenditure Basket<sup>1</sup>. According to reports by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in March 2021, 78 percent of the Lebanese population (3 million people) was estimated to be in poverty. Extreme poverty has reached an estimated 36 percent of the Lebanese population (1.38 million)<sup>2</sup>. Pre-existing issues, exacerbated by the financial and economic crisis, have caused negative coping strategies to increase, a reduction in legal residency for Syrians, limited self-support opportunities and impeded access to basic services, and an overall depletion of resources including savings and assets.

Policies issued by the Lebanese government since 2015 have tightened regulations over Syrian refugees, significantly restricting their mobility and their access to work opportunities. Daily life stressors have become magnified for many Syrian refugees in recent years. Stress related to fears of deportation, having no means to earn a living, and the impact of roadblocks on their mobility, labour participation and community life; their sense of claustrophobia and of living their life in an open prison have impacted their ability to contribute to the needs of their family such as to pay rent and provide food so their first priority need was related to daily survival. The impact on their families includes begging, engagement of children in the worst forms of child labour, foregoing educational opportunities, and increased instances of early marriage. Further analysis



Men's session, North Lebanon (names of participants and photographer redacted to protect identities).

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***“Change in perspective is a need. Violence against children and early marriage are not acceptable.”***

*Kherbet Daoud - Men's Focus Group Discussion (Balmand University Evaluation)*

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and assessment suggest an increased risk of exploitation for women, girls, boys, and men including risk of trafficking and survival sex<sup>3</sup>.

There are heightened responsibilities for women and children to secure income and basic needs, as they are less likely to be stopped at checkpoints, further exposing them to exploitation, abuse and harassment, including from employers and landlords. Adolescents, particularly young boys, are forced into the worst forms of child labour such as street work (including begging, petty trading, drug dealing and prostitution), and exploitative conditions in agriculture and physical labour. Child mothers, early married girls, unaccompanied and separated boys and girls, women and girls with disabilities, older women, and female heads of households are most at risk of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Youth are at a higher risk of exposure to extreme forms of violence resulting in physical, psychological and emotional harm.

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees

<sup>2</sup> Emergency Response Plan Lebanon 2021 – 2022 Issued August 2021, pg 5

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<sup>3</sup> IOM (2021) Counter trafficking in Emergencies

## What is Concern's response to Protection issues in North Lebanon?

In 2014, Concern Lebanon began its 'Engaging Men' programme in Akkar and Northern Lebanon. The 'Engaging Men' approach has a specific focus on preventing and alleviating exploitation and violence against women and children. This concerns domestic violence, sexual harassment and exploitation, as well as early marriage and child labour, by engaging Syrian refugee and host communities, men to promote safety in their communities, through increasing their capacity to use prosocial coping and mitigate and resolve conflicts peacefully. This is done through group dialogues on concepts of and practices of masculinity, the positive and negative use of male power and how gender norms can affect men. Engaging men groups integrated discussion of gender within their talk about their loss of income generating capacity, loss of social identity and status, and loss of community networks of relatives, neighbours and friends that support community respect and uphold the wellbeing of their wives and children. Changed economic circumstances had led to significantly changed gender roles within families. One of the major problems they identified regarding Protection was fear of what might happen to their wives and children publicly and the fact that they have little redress for this. In particular, the approach targets the positive impact men can have in communities and their families, as champions of non-violent communication and conflict mitigation. Psychosocial support (PSS) with men addresses the main Protection risks facing Syrian refugees in Lebanon, including domestic and gender-based violence, sexual harassment and exploitation, child labour and early marriage.

In order to ensure social cohesion among refugees and host communities, to strengthen their relationships and reduce tension, Lebanese and refugees participate in the

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*"I attended the sessions at the same time as my husband. It was good for us because we were learning the same things and applied the lessons to our interactions at home with each other and had a united approach to dealing with our six children. I feel so much more happy and hopeful for the future and I believe things will get better soon."*

*Women participant of PSS sessions*

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Engaging Men sessions, while PSS sessions with women and children are delivered by qualified trained teams using a manual designed specifically for the context for Lebanon Syria/Iraq and Turkey. The programme continues its approach with more focus on targeting the communities from the same area/village in order to have better impact on the behavioural change for the whole community and to prevent any duplication with other partners implementing PSS sessions.

The Protection programme utilises a 12 session course structure guided by a manual developed specifically for the Syrian response. The programme is implemented in three month cycles. Participants are recruited in groups of men, women and children, outreached through focal points, stakeholders and local NGOs who we are also building their capacity on delivering Engaging Men programme. Each group has approximately 20-25 participants; sessions are sex disaggregated but utilise the same manual. The time and date of each session is agreed during the Focus Group Discussion at the beginning, are set based on the availability of the majority of the participants, especially for men's sessions which are delivered in the evening since they are working during the day. Sessions with children are based on a different manual but covering similar topics but adapted to be child friendly.



## Case story

Ali is a 42 year old man with six children. He participated in Concern's Engaging Men sessions: *"The sessions were very interesting and we learned a lot. For me, I realised that stress was the root cause of all my problems. I was seeing everything black; I thought the only way to be a good father was outside the home, to work, earn money and feed my family."* Ali says that the sessions showed him that he had a very rigid idea of what it meant to be a father and husband. He has since learned the importance of his role in the home, of helping his wife and being present to guide his children. *"We lost our country and our homes, but this is not an excuse to lose our children."* During a question about gender roles and early marriage, Ali stated *"my daughters have a life to live. They are not property to be given away or sold. They have a right to continue their education and choose their path in life. None of them are married and I don't want them to get married."* Ali says he always held this view but that the sessions confirmed to him the physical and emotional impact early marriage has on young men and women.

## What has Concern's experience been in adapting our approach to Engaging Men in North Lebanon?

The continued increase in the rates of child marriage and child labour, as negative coping mechanism are exacerbated by the lack of a national policy and laws on child marriage which puts more responsibility on the humanitarian sector to work with the communities and caregivers in shifting attitudes and behaviours of child labour and early marriage. Concern has been targeting men, women and children, in both Akkar and T5 governorates of North Lebanon.

In 2014 when Concern established the Engaging Men programme, we were the only partner targeting men from the Syrian community in Lebanon. We targeted men involved in the Camp Management Committees in the collective shelters and informal tented settlements (ITS) using a curriculum developed internally reflecting the context and situation. In 2015, women and children Syrian refugees were targeted for the PSS aspects of the programme to raise awareness on GBV and empower women to be effective members of their communities.

In order to ensure social cohesion among refugees and host communities, to strengthen relationships and reduce tension, in 2016 the approach was adapted to include host Lebanese and Palestinian refugees in Engaging Men and PSS sessions for women and children. In 2018, the programme focused on targeting communities from the same area/village in order to have better impact on behaviour change for all community members and prevent duplication with other partners implementing PSS. An external consultant developed a manual for this work which was designed specifically for the context for Lebanon, Syria/ Iraq and Turkey.

In 2020, as a pilot project, the programme was adapted again, this time to focus more on the family rather than the earlier community based approach which only targeted men. Men, women and children from the same family are targeted so that at the end of the sessions the teachings would be mutually reinforced. Women and children are empowered on their rights and have more access on awareness raising on GBV and child Protection risks, men are provided with a safe space to discuss challenges, and how they cope with their stress, and mitigate the risk of violent communication in the home setting, and all parents are participants in additional positive parenting sessions. Complementarity to reduce

violence against children, raise awareness on fatherhood and positive parenting sessions were delivered for the graduates of the engaging men using Concern's manual. Children continue to have access to focussed PSS sessions for those at risk of child labour and child marriage. To have more efficiency in the project, cases identified throughout the sessions are referred to case management services when needed for survivors of GBV and for children at risk or exposed to Protection risks, referrals are conducted internally as well as externally to ensure a better implementation of the action plan.

Due to COVID-19 mitigation measures and to ensure the safety and security of all beneficiaries and staff, PSS sessions were initially provided remotely via Zoom, WhatsApp and a number of other social platforms with adapted content. As governmental restrictions were reduced, Concern adopted a blended approach with some sessions being provided online and others provided in-person. A key advantage of delivering sessions remotely was that Concern could accommodate beneficiary schedules and in particular promote the inclusion of people with specific needs who were unable to reach the designated meeting place. In-person sessions were and are still extremely important to gaining beneficiary trust and active participation.

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### ***“Fathers started to treat their children in a better manner”***

*Kherbet Daoud - Children's Focus Group Discussion (Balamand University Evaluation)*

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Nonetheless, Concern staff now have the skills and materials to provide such service online/remotely if required in the future.

Concern Lebanon's psychosocial support programming and, in particular, its Engaging Men approach were evaluated in 2016 by University College Cork (UCC) and the American University in Beirut (AUB), and in 2020 by the Balamand University. The UCC evaluation found that within their families, results indicated many men expressed greater empathy towards their wives and their needs, and increased dialogue and positive time spent with children. The Balamand University evaluation reported that the intervention was effective amongst men, women and children given the reported changes in behaviour and attitude following the sessions.



Men's session, North Lebanon (names of participants and photographer redacted to protect identities).

# Working with men through Caregiver Engagement in the Turkey Education Programme

Written by Erin Wall

## Background

Since 2014, Turkey has hosted the largest number of refugees in the world – currently, 3.9 million registered refugees and asylum seekers live in Turkey. Per the Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and UNHCR, around 3.6 million are Syrians, while the remaining 368,230 refugees are Afghan (48%), Iraqi (39%) and other nationalities (15%). According to DGMM, more than a third (38%) of all Syrians under Temporary Protection (UTP) in Turkey live in the four provinces of the Southeast where Concern is working: Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis and Sanliurfa. Sanliurfa Province, home to Concern Turkey’s country office, also hosts 425,174 Syrians, or around 20.2% of the total population.

In 2019, pre-pandemic, formal education enrolment among refugee children in Sanliurfa was quite low, around 43%, with more than 80,000 school-aged refugee children remaining out of school. Refugee children face significant barriers to a quality, equitable education in Sanliurfa. Each year, the Southeast Turkey Education Working Group conducts a parent survey as part of the Back to School (BTS) campaign at the beginning of each academic year. In the province, the most commonly reported reasons children were out of school were child labour (29%), financial barriers (17%), disability of child (10%), overage child (10%), peer bullying (7%), family has no interest in education (6%), lack of Turkish proficiency

(4%) and distance to school/transportation (4%). An additional 2.9% of respondents reported difficulties during the registration process.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, Concern’s psychosocial support programme is designed primarily for children who are out of school. As part of the registration process, families are asked why their children are not enrolled. Families reported that children were afraid of school or had to work, that they tried to register and were refused, did not know how to register at all or did not know how to obtain the necessary equivalency documentation. Other reasons included problems with Temporary Protection Identification Document (TPID) or address registration, bullying, financial barriers (stationery, uniform, etc.) and transportation to school/distance from school to home, among others.<sup>2</sup>

## What is Caregiver Engagement?

The home environment can have a huge impact on a child’s wellbeing and ability to access and benefit from a quality education. Research has shown that learning and development activities conducted with families in the home have a positive effect on children’s wellbeing, school readiness, learning outcomes and overall creativity and independence.

<sup>1</sup> Education Working Group (Dec 2020). Back to School Parent Survey Findings: 2020-2021 Academic Year.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Caregiver engagement session in Ceylanpinar, 2021. Photo: Yasin Almaz.

Based on Concern’s global Caregiver Engagement & Family Literacy curriculum, the Turkey Caregiver Engagement programme was initially conceived as an extension of Concern’s existing Education programming and a recognition that the home, school and community affect children’s learning and development. In 2018, the Concern Turkey team adapted the global curriculum to fit the Turkey context and piloted the programme in early in 2019. Since then, the curriculum has been updated several times to include sessions on adolescent brain development and learning needs, screen time and its effect on child development and education opportunities for children with disabilities.

Caregiver Engagement provides a platform for caregivers to discuss the challenges and achievements of raising their children and a safe space to ask questions and apply learnings and strategies together. Facilitators initially offered sessions in person in Concern’s community centres, and modules were designed to be discussion-based and interactive. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden urgency of home-based learning and wellbeing support, the Concern team adapted the sessions to be offered online, through WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, or via phone. This created an opportunity to encourage more men to engage in the sessions, as they could be offered outside of community centre hours, from the comfort of participants’ homes as they attended the sessions through online calls.

Session	Topic
1	Introduction to psychosocial support
2	Importance of education
3	Child protection and child labour
4	Age-appropriate play
5	Positive parenting
6	Supporting children’s language and literacy skills at home
7	Developing children’s cognitive skills
8	Adolescent brain development
9	Building positive relationships and respecting your teen’s opinions, thoughts and feelings
10	Supporting children through art and music

## Working with Men and Women

Since 2018, more than 3,000 caregivers have completed the Caregiver Engagement programme, which Concern Turkey offers across donors as a core component of its Education portfolio. Around one-third of those caregivers are men. Concern strongly encourages men to participate in the programme, in recognition of the impact men can have on the home environment and in an effort to challenge the prevailing belief that women are naturally better caregivers and that raising children is solely the responsibility of mothers.

In order to measure the impact of the sessions, Concern uses a short pre-/ post-test at the beginning and end of the ten-session programme. Overall, around 91% of participants have improved their knowledge and skills related to providing a positive home learning environment for their children between the pre- and post-test (92% women, 90% men). While the average scores of men and women on the pre-test are comparable (around 11.4), men have a slightly higher average score than women on the post-test (18 compared to 17.8).

There are significant barriers to men's participation in Caregiver Engagement, beyond the usual logistical challenges such as men's inability to attend sessions during the workday and the distance to the community centre. There is also a strong cultural belief that caregiving is primarily the mother's responsibility ("women's work"), while the father should work outside of the home generating income. However, caregivers generally acknowledge that both the mother and father have a role to play in raising children and that fathers' authentic engagement with and support of their children can be particularly impactful because of the respect afforded to fathers culturally.

When asked about the impact of the Caregiver Engagement sessions, fathers are more likely to mention their children's academic success, while mothers emphasize positive changes in their children's demeanour, behaviour and way of speaking. In terms of the most surprising or most useful thing they took away from the programme, mothers highlighted the effective strategies for communication and building trust in the curriculum, while fathers mentioned that they were now spending more quality



Ozge Celebi and Ayoub Alslash facilitate a session with caregivers in Ceylanpinar, 2021. Photo: Yasin Almaz.



time with their children and had learned the importance of play and responding to their children's needs in this regard. Caregivers of both sexes appreciated the positive parenting session and reported that they had stopped using physical punishment when their children misbehaved or acted out. One father mentioned that, as a result of positive changes in his own behaviour based on what he learned, his children were no longer afraid of him and raced to be near him and tell him about what had happened during the day when he came home from work.

Both male and female caregivers report increased confidence after the sessions. One father noted, "I learned what I can do to support my child with disabilities. I can rely on myself, I don't always have to look to others." Another mother said that she was less isolated after attending the sessions and had a better idea of her own self-worth: "I can say my own ideas with confidence." There is some anecdotal evidence of positive social norm change happening, as some participants have requested additional sessions or even a separate programme that focuses on the relationship between husbands and wives and relationships within families.

## Recommendations to improve men's participation in Caregiver Engagement

1. Offer flexible scheduling and delivery modalities (online, in-person) to maximize men's engagement at times when they are available. This is already happening in Turkey, and in some centres, facilitators are offering sessions in person at the centre during the day for women and in the evening through WhatsApp or Facebook for men.
2. Arrange groups depending on the needs of participants. Some participants engage more actively in gender-segregated groups, while others prefer attending mixed-gender sessions.
3. Leverage the trust and existing relationships that communities have in Concern and Concern's other activities to support children. In Turkey, the school enrolment support, cash for education programme, Education Access Fund and psychosocial support activities were key to starting conversations with male caregivers about their interest and participation in Caregiver Engagement.
4. Recruit male and female facilitators who are members of the communities they are trying to reach. The sessions have a greater impact when facilitators understand the community and when participants trust the facilitator and feel comfortable engaging in discussion with her/him.
5. Ensure facilitators have proper training before they begin delivering Caregiver Engagement sessions and that there is ongoing follow-up support as they make their way through the cycle. Facilitators are responsible for creating a safe and welcoming environment for participants, as well as delivering relevant information and facilitating discussions between participants.
6. Encourage facilitators to share their own experiences and challenges with regards to the topics addressed in the Caregiver Engagement curriculum, demonstrating the universality of many caregivers' experiences raising their children and emphasizing the support caregivers can provide each other.
7. Emphasize the small positive changes caregivers, particularly men, can make in their lives and routines and the significant impact those small positive changes can have on their children, socially, emotionally and academically.

# Gender aspects of the Building Disaster Resilience in Pakistan programme

Written by Nazima Shaheen

## Introduction

Women's vulnerability to disasters is different compared to men due to their socio cultural practices/ traditions, economic vulnerability as well as institutional vulnerability. In Pakistan, women are less often consulted while preparing the Disaster Risk Management policies and plans and have less access to educational and capacity building opportunities. These considerations were taken into account while designing the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded programme on Building Disaster Resilience in Pakistan (BDRP). BDRP has the goal to build the resilience of disaster affected vulnerable communities including women, older age and people with disabilities through better planning, preparedness, response and resource allocation at the governmental and community level. Concern Pakistan led the Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) component of BDRP with other consortium partners IRC, Acted and WHH along with local NGO partners, and assisted in building resilience of poor men and women to natural disasters. This flagship programme was implemented in 3 phases; 1) inception, 2) implementation phase I and 3) implementation phase II from 2016 to 2020. In order to ensure that gender equality was integrated into programme interventions, an adaptive learning approach was applied for each phase based on learnings from the previous phase.

As a first step during implementation phase-I, a comprehensive Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan was developed with the vision, *'Community where men and women are equally resilient to disasters.'* The strategy was formulated based on findings from a robust and an independent gender analysis conducted for selected project locations by capturing the community needs and opportunities regarding gender equality for the programme. It also included clear recommendations to improve the potential areas of intervention in the programme and key opportunities and barriers to engage men on gender. The gender analysis also provided an opportunity to understand how gender relations and equality were linked to building resilience to disasters in the programme targeted districts and how such robust gender analysis can be further used to inform the programme and any adaptations needed to bring the positive change in women's lives. Afterwards, nominations for gender focal persons were sought from the consortium and the gender equality strategy was rolled out through various BDRP platforms. Strategies included having a dedicated agenda at quarterly review meetings of BDRP consortium, gender mainstreaming trainings for field staff and meetings of sectoral technical working groups to share gender mainstreaming recommendations for each sector; community based disaster risk management, WASH and infrastructure and livelihoods.

## Engaging Men on Gender Equality

The design of implementation phase-II regarding gendered aspects, was revised based on learnings from implementation phase I especially in relation to the shifting focus of trainings to an 'Engaging Men on gender equality' approach instead of general gender mainstreaming training that had been used in phase I. Learning from phase I showed that the barriers to gender equality in the resilience building programme related to patriarchy, socio cultural and gender norms and required a transformative approach that really questioned these norms and ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman in the context. For example since decision makers are usually men, and given a key impediment to achieving gender equality is women's lack of participation at decision-making level, the recommendation from phase I was to train disaster management committees on the Engaging Men approach as well as training women in leadership and negotiation skills.

The findings were also confirmed by a detailed gender analysis conducted for implementation phase-II that established that men need to be engaged and sensitized for meaningful inclusion of women in both development and humanitarian projects. Subsequently, this approach was applied to facilitate meaningful participation of women in development planning within Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) by encouraging support of women by male Change Agents (male DMC leadership/ community gate keepers). At the end of the training, the participants made a plan of action with highlights of how to ensure maximum support to women counterparts both in committees and at household level. This approach was quite successful in terms of ensuring meaningful participation of women in programme activities especially at decision-making level of disaster management committees.



Women Leadership and Negotiation Skills training for women UCDMC members in Tharparker, Sindh, Pakistan, Photo: Devtrio, 2020.

## Building the skills of women

In parallel, if we want to progress on gender equality, then it is also vital to build the leadership capacity of women especially their negotiation skills and how to claim their spaces. Hence, there is need to address the challenges of gender inequality with regards to linking women's or men's experiences to the wider context of gender inequality which can lead to gender-just practices, contributing to enhanced women's inclusion in humanitarian response and development projects. Such an approach was successfully applied in the BDRP programme. The detailed gender analysis identified the training needs required and it was also a key to designing a gender sensitive and transformational intervention for implementation phase II.

Women Leadership and Negotiation Skills were covered in a dedicated 5 days training. The leadership module covered topics such as self-awareness and empowerment, leadership, real life leadership situations, gender and leadership while the Negotiation Skills module captured communication skills, assertiveness, understanding negotiation and conflict. Overall, in both the Engaging Men trainings and Women Leadership and Negotiation Skills trainings, 253 men and 266 women were trained.

Throughout the programme, women were also actively engaged in identification of the infrastructure schemes in their location through representation in disaster risk management committees (DRMCs). Trainings were also provided to women on livestock management. Celebration of International Rural Women Day was also initiated to acknowledge the contribution of women to the rural economy. The programme also coordinated with relevant government disaster management authorities regarding provision of accessible and clean water for women in camps, separate toilets, access to food, safe places and security.

During phase II relevant sectoral focal persons were involved in gender mainstreaming trainings rather than just focus on gender focal persons. This approach promoted building capacity of sectoral specialists instilling motivation and skills, so that these specialists who were overseeing the interventions in the

field brought a gender perspective to their work. Another approach was having a dedicated agenda on gender during the Quarterly Progress and Planning meetings which not only kept gender as a priority but also helped in timely and efficient implementation of gender mainstreaming activities. The approach is especially successful for payment by result (PBR) projects where activities are locked with certain time bound deliverables.

## Learning from the process

In order to achieve the aim of gender equality, the activities should be agile and adaptable to changes in context so that there is no discontinuity in the process. For instance, a webinar series on 'Equity-based approaches to an effective and accountable COVID-19 response' was organized to highlight the differential impacts of COVID-19 on men and women. The first webinar in the series was broadly focused



Participatory group works, Women Leadership and Negotiation Skills training for women Union Council level Disaster Management Committees members in Kashmore, Sindh, Pakistan. Photo: Devtrio, 2020

on gender and COVID-19 while the following three webinars were sector specific (CBDRM, WASH and livelihoods). 144 (89 male, 55 female) individuals got exposure through the 4 webinars. Additionally, due to COVID, the mode of planned capacity building activities for senior project staff was quickly changed and a detailed online course on 'The transformation of patriarchal attitudes, values and behaviour in men and women and in gender relations and consortium' was conducted for senior level BDRP staff, led by Sonke through support from the HQ Equality Adviser. Twenty-three (7 females, 16 males) senior programme staff from Concern and local NGO partner organisations were trained during August 2020 through four online sessions.

Organisational priority and commitment is critical for the successful roll out of the interventions aiming to achieve gender equality. For example, Concern Pakistan management's support in mainstreaming gender in programmes, was the key to success. At the organizational level, another example of how to walk the talk on the gender equality front was the hiring of female staff for the specialists roles, resulting in women making up half of the Programme Implementation Unit of BDRP. This presented a strong message within the organisation and consortium as well as at community level where such real-life examples of women being represented at higher cadres, is much more impactful than just the formation of policies.

## Findings from the evaluation

Because of all of these integrated efforts at every level, an independent final programme evaluation showed that male- and female-headed households almost equally improved their resilience (52% males-headed and 48% female-headed) which endorses the effectiveness of the programme interventions and gender equality strategy and action plan. Kabeer Khan, President Union Council level Disaster Management Committee, District Jhang and participant of Engaging Men training shared, "In our disaster management committees, women members face difficulty in getting permission for going out for committee work, therefore, in order to ensure meaningful participation of women in committees, we as men need to realise that it is our obligation to convince such women's family and leverage support to their work". Najma Shaheen, member Village Disaster Management Committee and participant of training on Women Leadership and Negotiation Skills said, "I have gained substantial knowledge through this training and now I can communicate confidently to other women that they should speak up without hesitation; if they don't, how people will know their problems and how solutions would be sought?".

# “Because we are adolescents’: an inclusive approach to reproductive health and menstrual hygiene in Sierra Leone”

Written by Rose Ann Kanu and Mamawah Kamara

## Introduction

*“Before the Concern intervention we were denied to access school. Some of our friends were forcefully driven out into marriage just after going through FGM. My brothers were forced into mining to raise money to support the family. It was sad! Today, this has changed due to the intervention of Concern and through the ASRH project. Most of us are now going to school. I am currently in class six. I hope I will pass the NPSE exam and be promoted to Secondary School. My wish is to become a nurse.”*

Munta Jalloh, 15 year Kemedugu, Sambaia Chiefdom, Tonkolili

Around the world, adolescence represents a critical window of opportunity when young people learn to make independent decisions and form their own attitudes and beliefs. However, in Sierra Leone, we see the daily grind of poverty forcing girls to sacrifice their sexual rights and hope for a better life.

Despite great progress made over the last few years, thousands of young girls continue to be denied their right to sexual reproductive health education. Yet it is one of the unquestionable ways of transmitting poverty from generation to generation.

Deep rooted in our Sierra Leonean culture and tradition is the belief that the girl child is meant to be prepared for marriage. Sadly, in many families, parents favour the boy

child and girls will inevitably be ‘married off’ whilst their son will continue to carry the family name and take care financially. Added to the favouritism at home, it has become the norm for the girl child to be absent from school for several days during the month, too embarrassed to participate in class, due to their menstruation. They do not have appropriate menstrual hygiene education and toilet facilities at their school to manage their period in privacy and with dignity. This often eventually leads to school-dropout and teenage pregnancy. In fact, Sierra Leone has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world. According to the 2019 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 12.5% of women were first married by the age of 15 in Sierra Leone. 28% of girls and young women aged 15-19 have their first child or are pregnant and 22% have had sex with men at least ten years older than them.

Moreover, due to a lack of access to family planning services sexual education, many of these girls are exposed to higher risks of many complications related to unsafe abortions, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and domestic abuse, which in some cases lead to death. The outbreak of COVID-19 has left community structures and GBV referral pathways dysfunctional and has even made the situation worse.





Kadiatu Bangura is the programme manager of Concern's Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive health project in Sierra Leone. Seen here facilitating sessions with students from Benevolent Primary School in Makali Junction community, 2021. Photo: Michael Duff.

## The importance of integration

Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health (ASRH) is a component under our Irish Aid funded Safe Learning Model, a 5-year integrated project aiming to improve the health, education, protection and wellbeing of vulnerable communities in Sierra Leone's Northern District of Tonkolili.

The ASRH element aims to reduce teenage pregnancy amongst adolescents aged 9 to 19 years through increased awareness of and access to, better sexual and reproductive health information and services in order to exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights. To achieve this, the project adopts a behaviour change approach amongst boys and girls to address the underlying attitudes that drive teenage pregnancy. It further utilises a socio-ecological model to engage parents, teachers and the wider community to create an enabling environment, including

healthcare workers who have a vital role to play in the provision of services.

*“When I was in school, I got involved in a sexual relationship with my teacher. I became pregnant but lost the child. I did not want to continue the relationship with my teacher any more especially when I had started participating in life skills sessions. My mother was pressuring me to maintain the relationship thinking that was the way I could access food in the home. One day I decided to confide in one of Concern’s field youth trainer, sharing my situation with her. The field youth trainer encouraged my mother to participate in the parents sessions following the Listen! Learn! Act! Approach. My mother became inspired by what was taught and advised me to quit the relationship and encouraged me to focus on my education.”*

Anonymous 17 year old ASRH beneficiary, Tonkolili District

## Are we really making an impact?

The paramount need to engage with men and boys alongside women and girls has been highlighted through our expertise in designing behaviour change approaches. ASRH provides 'Life Skills' and 'Living Peace' sessions for husbands and wives, girls and boys, driven by the very core values of what Concern Worldwide stands for: equality; listening; commitment; innovation; accountability.



Kadiatu Bangura, Class 1 teacher facilitates an after school Social, Emotional Learning (SEL) session, at Patiful Mayeppuh Primary School, 2021. Photo: Michael Duff

By improving the communication between adolescents and parents on 'day to day' topics such as sex, marriage and relationships, communities themselves have been able to identify the key drivers of teenage pregnancy through a participatory approach in order to find appropriate solutions.

Stakeholder knowledge has also improved about Concern's intervention as a whole and has ultimately enhanced community ownership of the project and its commitments to women and girls alike. For example, today we see women playing a leading role in the VSLA groups as well as the Farmer Field Schools. As evidenced in our IAPF indicators, women have the power to make decisions on matters affecting their own lives. We are seeing a steady and significant improvement in couple's

decision making, progressively shifting from decision-making about the households by men to joint decision-making.

Our approach is focused on changing the context around the adolescent and then giving them the skills to think critically and to understand their rights simultaneously; increasing the opportunity to claim these rights and exercise decision-making.



ASRH SRGBV Session with teachers and parents, Yele, Tonkolili District, August 2021. Photo: Charlotte Woellwarth

Breaking the silence about menstruation by publicly distributing safe sanitary pads and providing menstruation hygiene education has minimized the shock experienced by girls during their first months; boosting confidence and reducing absenteeism of girls from school. Furthermore, the engagement of boys during the ASRH sessions has empowered them to feel they can support their peers; not forgetting that half of the population is female!

***"We have never spoken about sex and menstruation to our children; we thought it was a taboo to talk about this to them and especially when we thought they were yet children and have to reach the stage to have sex. Today, Concern, through the ASRH project has helped us to talk about this to our children. At last, the silence has been broken!"***

Mariatu Kargbo, Parent of ASRH beneficiary, Matotoka, Tonkolili District

Training provided to health workers on the delivery of ASRH has also been found to be a driving force in sustained action to protect girls from teenage pregnancy and promote adolescent sexual and reproductive rights. Additional incentives include mentoring sessions, advocacy for other partners such as Marie Stopes and mystery client visit feedback with the DHMT and the Ministry of Social Welfare. These health workers will continue to deliver adolescent friendly reproductive services even after the lifespan of the project. They will in turn train and cascade knowledge to other health workers who will be transferred to the health facility.

Four mystery client visits have been conducted since 2018 in all 35 targeted Peripheral Health Units across the IAPF operational areas, as one innovative way to follow up on health workers in relation to delivery of quality adolescent friendly reproductive services. From the visits, it was revealed that Health Care Workers are

improving their attitudes and behaviour in providing SRH services, in turn encouraging adolescents to access the health centres for modern family planning.

Implementing project activities in close collaboration with partners and community stakeholders have also contributed to the successful implementation of our project activities. This enhanced full participation and increased knowledge partners about Concern activities as a whole.

## Creating an environment which prioritises girls

Our ultimate dream is a Sierra Leone that strives to protect the rights of every adolescent girl, creating the space to voice their opinion with confidence, to share their views without fear and intimidation, and identify their needs and access resources equitably regardless of their gender.



In-School Adolescents at their ASRH graduation, Warrima Tonkolili District, June 2021, photo by Bilkisu Jah

Many people have the idea that equality issues are borrowed culture and are too difficult to be adopted by the context in which we live. Yes, gender transformation in Sierra Leone can be slow especially when our focus is on specific group of people.

Nevertheless, we are seeing attitudes towards gender roles and the notion of equality improve through our variety of approaches and audiences. We will continue to do so no matter how long it takes.

## COVID-19 and adolescent girls

One of the groups most affected by COVID-19 in Sierra Leone has been adolescent girls, combined with two rainy seasons, many of our sessions were cancelled or adapted in terms of attendee numbers. Aware of the rise in teenage pregnancies and incidences of SGBV during the Ebola epidemic, we conducted a refresher training on SRGBV, where we invited key players including the Family Support Unit, School Management Committees, Lifeskills and Community Conversation co-facilitators to participate. We were able to confront discrimination and human rights violations based on gender in our targeted communities before they happened. By talking openly about what happens ‘behind closed doors’ and using knowledge gained from these trainings we also challenged stereotyping and unequal power relations at both gender and generational levels.

Our activities during the COVID-19 pandemic fostered a culture that embraces and exemplifies our commitment to gender equality, girls’ rights and inclusion, while supporting staff to adopt good practice, positive attitudes and principles of gender equality and inclusion. Instead of the normal Life Skills sessions, a one day hygiene training and menstrual education session (following COVID-19 protocols) was held followed by a mass-distribution of hygiene kits, which included reusable sanitary pads, toiletries and used clothing reaching 1,500 beneficiaries, including 500 sisters who share the same households with the adolescent girls. This ultimately contributed to the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents in our communities during this difficult time.



# We Are One Gender Equality Promotion in Liberia

Written by Edwin S. Morlu and Ciara Begley

## Big Picture

According to UNDP's Gender Development Index which disaggregates the differences in human development between men and women, Liberia has among the world's lowest equality between women and men<sup>1</sup>. Human development, life expectancy and expected mean years of schooling are all markedly worse for women in Liberia as compared to men. Liberia is also 156 out of 162 countries when measured on reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity<sup>2</sup>. Maternal mortality is shockingly high in Liberia at 661 deaths per 100,000 live births<sup>3</sup>. Only 8 countries have higher rates and almost all of those are situations of conflict. However perhaps the most aggressive indicator of the challenges faced by women in Liberia is that 38.5% have experienced physical and or sexual violence from an intimate partner. Liberia is in the worst 25 countries in the world for this type of violence (again most of the others are in situations of conflict)<sup>4</sup>.

## Concern in Liberia and the impact of gender inequality on nutrition

All Concern programmes in Liberia are focused on tackling malnutrition in children under five years of age, particularly chronic malnutrition, a condition that develops when children do not eat the correct balance of nutrients in the first 1,000 days of life (from conception to the age of two), resulting in the stunting of their mental and physical development<sup>5</sup>. Gender inequalities perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition in Liberia and sustain poverty at unacceptably high levels, currently 62.9%<sup>6</sup>. Gender inequality not only limits women's access to and utilization of safe and nutritious food, but also undermines their productive, educational entrepreneurial capacities and social development, which have severe implications on the health and agriculture sector.

Women are systematically discriminated against in Liberia. Land ownership, access to credit and agricultural inputs are all restricted and this limits their participation and ability to benefit from food value chains.<sup>7</sup> Gender inequality is also a contributing factor to food insecurity in Liberia, where an estimated sixty percent of the population is food insecure. 66%

1. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/LBR.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/LBR.pdf) page 5

2. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/LBR.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/LBR.pdf) page 6

3. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/89006>

4. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/167406>

5. Liberia Child Stunting Research | Concern Worldwide

6. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/38606>

7. Liberia National Gender Policy, Ministry of Gender and Development

of rural women work in the agriculture sector<sup>8</sup>, yet cannot access the inputs and resources needed to maximize the returns to their labour. They own less land and mostly rely on their male relatives to access land for farming; as a result, they have trouble accessing credit and financing, especially bank loans for agriculture. Literacy rates for rural women are low, at 33.5% compared to 63.2% for urban women<sup>9</sup>, making it difficult for them to effectively use extension services and inputs. Women also face limited access to agricultural markets, particularly for cash crops, and limited post-harvest and value addition opportunities. Even when women produce food, the household allocation of food amongst family members disfavours them due to beliefs about the value of females as compared to males<sup>10</sup>. As such Concern Liberia believes that all programmes must integrate improving the power imbalances experienced by women to make a lasting contribution to ending the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.

## Where does the We Are One programme come in and how does it work?

To respond to this tough context Concern Worldwide (Concern) is using a participatory methodology called ‘We Are One’ – a gender transformative approach that engages men and women on gender equality. The process aims to tackle injustices experienced by women, and power imbalances that harm entire communities, especially women and girls.

Concern programme staff enter communities with an integrated multisector package of activities and interventions. Community Savings and Loans Associations (CSLA) are established, Mother Groups are set up



Augustus and Rebecca Barcee, We Are One participants. Photo: Edwin S Morlu.

for those with young children, water and sanitation management committees are established as water points are built and a huge package of trainings tackling livelihoods, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation are initiated. The process of entering the community is managed with close and careful collaboration with local government and traditional leaders. As such before any gender equality programming takes place the community, including leadership, are already aware of Concern and our approach and trust is strong. To explain the establishment of We Are One, discuss and agree why people should be selected, the team enter into dialogues with the community leadership, including traditional leaders who are often male but also traditional midwives and healers who are often female and command great respect in the community. With the support of local and traditional leaders, and the mother groups, the CSLA groups, the programme team establish We Are One groups based on the needs of the community. Often it is the community members themselves that will select the strongest candidates to champion We Are One or who in the community urgently needs to be coached and mentored to change. The existing Concern programme structures support this community entry and We Are One programme set up process.

<sup>8</sup> Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20 [FR362] (dhsprogram.com) page 42

<sup>9</sup> Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20 [FR362] (dhsprogram.com) page 48

<sup>10</sup> Liberia Child Stunting Research | Concern Worldwide



The team work to identify natural change makers in each group (one female and one male) to serve as role models and positive agents of change in family across the communities. The role of these change makers is to support the process of gender transformation which is led and facilitated by the Concern team to promote an effective rollout of the We Are One approach including increasing awareness and visibility. The implementation of the programme is visual, active, participatory and experiential. It is sensitive to the fact that there is widespread illiteracy in rural Liberia. As such a set of pictorial materials had been developed and distributed to change makers in communities in Grand Bassa & Rivercess counties to guide and provoke the programme participants to remember and sustain the changes considered while active participants of the programme after it concludes.

## Learning By Doing – Reviewing the Approach and Where to go Next

In July 2021, a consultant was hired by Concern Liberia to conduct a review of the overall gender sensitivity of our integrated multi-sector programmes and the gender specific (We Are One) programmes. Her review included looking at the quantitative results of the annual surveys undertaken as part of our multi-annual Irish Aid and EU funded programmes and direct qualitative data collection. She found that the multi-sector integrated programmes are gender sensitive, and successfully improving the lives of women and girls, her quantitative data review focused on women’s participation in household financial decision-making. She also found that the gender specific We Are One programme is making an even greater positive impact on women’s participation in household financial decision-making. Her qualitative data collection found that the We Are One programme is well received, encouraging communities to address gender inequality, encouraging men to be more involved in

unpaid domestic care work and anecdotally is greatly reducing violence against women in the community.

Her recommendations for where to take the programme next included scaling up to reach a larger number of communities, and refocusing on advocating for the programme approach to be adopted by more organisations and even government. She strongly recommended building on the work done this year to engage local NGOs and local government with the training needed to support implementation of the programme.

The positive findings of the review and the suggestion to work further on implementation and advocacy encouraged Concern Liberia to make a significant additional investment in three new staff to scale up the programme.

## Amazing Achievement

The National Chairman of Chiefs and Elders council of Liberia, Chief Zanzan Karwor gave traditional leaders in Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties an endorsement of the We Are One programme and the Concern approach. He requested that anytime a traditional leader is unclear or has a doubt that they seek clarity from Concern directly. He noted that the We Are One programme supports the best of traditional practices of the country by helping engage men and boys with understanding, respecting and appreciating women and girls in Liberia.



Augustus and Rebecca Barcee, We Are One participants doing housework together. Photo: Edwin S Morlu.

During a conversation with Isaac Jeybor and Sam Toby, the traditional leaders of Sahyah Town in Rivercess County, they explained that the traditional community has accepted the We Are One programme. The support of their Chief traditional leader Zanzan Karwor has also helped reassure them when confronting the discomforts of change. They are proud to be change makers in their communities.

## Concern Response – Partnership

Concern worked in close partnership with Sonke Gender Justice to design the We Are One approach and ensure that the transformational aspects were integrated with our integrated multi-sector programmes and the key messages were internalised by staff. As many staff as possible, particularly all staff that work on the We Are One programme participated in a six-day core gender transformational workshop. Community based staff working on the We Are One programme participated in a further six-day training of trainer’s workshop. It is essential that the We Are One team internalise the issues and believe in the transformative possibility of the programme before engaging with implementation

of We Are One in communities. In 2021 Concern Liberia collaborated with three other INGOs to conduct a comprehensive six-day introduction to the We Are One methodology with Sonke Gender Justice supporting the team to reach ten local implementing partners, national NGOs in Liberia. INGOs expressing an interest in the model include the largest INGO in Liberia and Concern Alliance 2015 partner Welthungerhilfe (WHH). Local NGOs partners working closely with Concern Liberia include Sister Aid Liberia and Community Empowerment for Change. These, our partner NGOs, were persuaded by the methodology and intend to adopt the model as organisations and for programme implementation.

## Concern Response – Staff

The process of gender transformation extends to Concern Liberia itself as an organisation. The currently draft form Country Strategy Plan for 2022-2026 includes specific gender equality targets for the team to strive to achieve in its own staffing. Huge positive progress has been made with recruiting, mentoring and promoting women from entry level to mid-management level. However, from mid-management to senior management there is a serious gap and this is the priority the new country strategy targets.

### WAO – Community Change Maker case study/success story impact of change 2021

Rebecca Barcee is 40 years old and her husband Augustus Barcee is 42, they have 4 children and have lived together for 8 years in Toby Town, Rivercess. The couple were identified and trained as change makers after attending four WAO sessions in their community. The couple are also members of the CSLA group in Rivercess. According to Rebecca, she and her husband used to have confusion but are now happily living together. “WAO training sessions really help us to transform our life”. According to Augustus “WAO sessions motivated me to stop making palava [conflict] in our relationship, now a days, I help my woman do our domestic house work such as washing dishes, sweeping the yard and fetching water.”

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## 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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# KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

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EXTREME POVERTY  
WHATEVER  
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