



Concern Universal Impact Report 2011





Executive Summary

The 2011 impact report tells us what difference Concern Universal is making to people's lives. The evidence in the report demonstrates that we are an effective and efficient organisation and that our model of development works. As well as proving the positive impact much of our work has had, the report also shows where we need to improve and how we can learn from less successful programmes.

We define impact as the long-term changes, positive or negative, intended or unintended that arise as a result of our work. This report goes beyond the achievements outlined in our Trustees Annual Report to focus on the long term sustainable changes that have taken place as a result of our programmes.

Our programmes have benefited 2.3 million people in 2010-11. We increased access to food, improved healthcare, upheld people's rights to basic services, developed skills and increased resilience to natural hazards. Our global advocacy and education programme reached out to 12,000 people across the UK. At the same time, our carbon emissions per £ spent reduced by 17%.

This year's impact report focuses on food security and sustainable livelihoods. A review of our current country programme strategies highlights the importance of this area of work across all our programmes. Through agricultural development, nurturing natural resources and enabling access to microfinance and markets, Concern Universal improved the livelihoods of 150,875 people in 10 countries in 2010-11. Our research shows that our livelihoods projects have improved access to clean water, increased food security for rural smallholder farmers and also increased school enrolment; strengthened organisational capacity to implement livelihoods projects; and increased income. Our impact assessment of a food security programme that finished five years ago in Malawi found that Concern Universal had had a positive impact on agricultural smallholders lives by reducing food deficits; increasing cash income; diversifying crop and livestock production; and increasing the adoption of modern agricultural techniques.

Concern Universal was able to achieve such a significant impact, at a relatively low cost, because of our holistic, partnership based, community led approach to development. Our projects are developed with local communities in response to their needs. Concern Universal is an excellent facilitator and is able to be the catalyst to leverage funds and expertise necessary to implement high quality projects.

We are also aware that we need to improve, and this report highlights that next year we need to focus on strengthening our local partnerships, improving our monitoring and evaluation systems, understanding sustainability and equity better, and doing more market and micro-enterprise analysis. As well as the reviews outlined in Section 2 we are also committed to widening the scope of our impact assessments and as a result of a strategic partnership with The Waterloo Foundation we have committed to completing four country and project level impact assessments in 2011-12.

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This report was compiled by James Treasure-Evans (Advocacy and Learning Manager) with support from Phoebe Myles (volunteer) and Hazel Klenk (volunteer)

Section 1: Our Impact in 2010-11

Why are we assessing our impact?

Concern Universal is committed to assessing impact to improve the effectiveness of our programmes and to learn from our projects that have not achieved the impact that we intended them to have.

How are we assessing our impact?

The impact report is a collation of Concern Universal voices (internal ex-ante and ex-post assessments and country level impact reports); beneficiary voices (community and partner feedback); and independent voices (externally-led evaluations) that give us a clear picture of the impact of our work across our country programmes and in the UK (development education). The report has been compiled through desk based research and key informant interviews with Senior Managers and Directors across the organisation.

The format of our third impact report is based on our learning from our previous impact reports (2009 and 2010) and the draft principles for impact reporting developed by seven key organisations in the UK charity sector, including New Philanthropy Capital and the NCVO¹. These principles include clarity and accessibility of reporting, transparency, accountability to stakeholders, verifiability, and clear proportionality of reporting against the size of the organisation.

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http://www.philanthropycapital.org/downloads/pdf/press_release_impact_reporting.pdf

Our impact assessment process and reporting framework builds on the best practice models in the UK and international charity sectors.

Our understanding of impact has also been shaped by our involvement in the BOND (British Overseas NGOs in Development) Effectiveness Programme, which is currently developing a cross-sectoral impact assessment framework.

Essentially our impact reporting is about trying to know if the work we do is contributing positively to changes in people's lives. Although we are engaged with the academic and theoretical debates around impact assessment and reporting this very practical focus keeps us aware that if our reporting process does not contribute to learning and positive change for the people we work with then it has little value.

What are the development challenges we are trying to address?

Concern Universal is an international development charity working in 10 countries to reduce poverty and improve livelihoods. Our mission is to work in partnership to challenge poverty and inequality. We support practical actions that enable people to improve their lives and shape their own futures. Our country programmes are structured around two overarching strategic objectives. The first organisational objective is to enable community-led development by working together with people living in poverty to enable them to improve the quality of their lives. This is done through practical work with individuals, communities and partners in

10 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Our second strategic objective, developed through strong partnerships with local organisations in our country programmes, amplifies the voices of people living in poverty, enabling them to advocate for a fairer and more environmentally sustainable world. Together, we aim to secure changes to policy and practice to help overcome barriers to development.

What do we do to address these development challenges?

Concern Universal has a holistic appreciation of community development, believing that communities face a number of interconnected issues that may result in high levels of vulnerability and poverty. In order to make sense of the complex issues facing communities and to tackle and reduce poverty in our country programmes we focus on activities within five key thematic programme areas. We aim to work with the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the countries we work in. In 2010-11 Concern Universal worked with over 143 local partners (a full list of partners is available on request) in 10 country programmes.

What are we achieving?

This year's impact report will focus on one specific area of our work, agricultural livelihoods, and the next section is dedicated to this thematic area. However, our achievements and impact over the last year have been wide ranging and diverse and a brief summary of other key achievements is given below.

In 2010-11, **2.3 million** people benefited from programmes supported by Concern Universal. We helped people increase

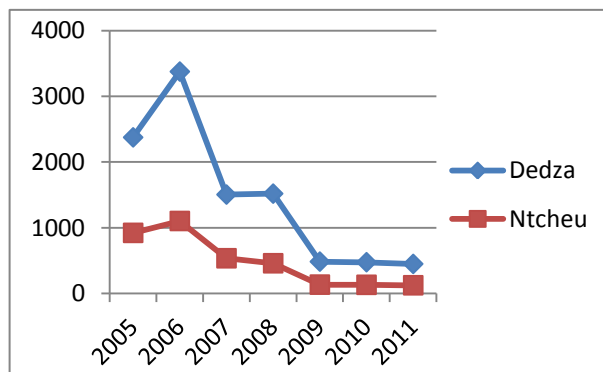
access to food, improve healthcare, exercise their right to access better services, develop their skills and increase their resilience to natural hazards.



As a result of our health programmes in 2010-11, **513,168** people gained access to safe water, and a similar number to improved sanitation. HIV education was carried out for almost **100,000** people and **3,505** HIV-positive people are now receiving care and support. Our work has tackled the causes of disease transmission and the stigma attached to HIV.

In many of our country programmes our extensive water and sanitation work has had a significant impact on health outcomes. In Guinea our focus on clean water and improved environmental sanitation has meant that in the 100 communities in the Forest Region where we have worked there has been no outbreak of cholera since 2007. In Dedza and Ntcheu districts, Malawi there has been a reduction in common diarrhoea with a 83% reduction in cases since 2005 (**See Chart 1 below**). Improved sanitation and access to potable water, coupled with hygiene education have contributed to this positive trend.

Chart 1: Diarrhoea prevalence, Ntcheu and Dedza districts 2005-11



In Southeast Bangladesh our health programme has supported efforts to improve child and maternal health, with noticeable improvements to maternal mortality (11.2 to 8.88 per 1000 live births from 2009 to 2011) and child mortality (65 to 50 per 1000 live births from 2009 to 2011).

In Kenya we have improved the delivery of government health services to marginalised communities through the promotion of mobile medical camps in Machakos, Makueni, Kajaido, and Narok districts. Through our support and continued advocacy there has been a significant change in the last five years with the government now budgeting for medical camps within their outreach activities and being more proactive in identifying and serving marginalized populations.

With support from the Against Malaria Foundation we also pioneered a new model of mosquito net distribution in 2010-11. The new model of distribution, which is on a per sleeping place as opposed to the traditional per head of population basis, has the potential to significantly reduce malaria morbidity in Malawi.



Our rights programmes work with women and children to empower them to understand and claim their rights, and with community groups to give them the skills to demand basic rights from duty bearers. In 2010-11 Concern Universal supported over **500 activities advocating for the rights of poor and vulnerable people**. As a result of these actions essential services, such as water and sanitation, have improved in

the areas where we work, and **38 new service provisions** have been signed ensuring that these gains will be sustainable and for the long term.

In the Northeast of Brazil we have given volunteer community leaders the skills and training necessary to demand better public services for their communities. This has led directly to the improvement of services at three renovated health posts and the regular collection of rubbish in three communities, improving environmental health. Now that community leaders have a better understanding of their rights and local laws they feel empowered to call for further change. Similar rights based work has also taken place in Colombia and improved dialogue between community groups and the government has led to improvements in water, sanitation and health facilities in the Province of Tolima.

The long term strategy to improve gender rights and equality in Ghana has brought significant change to the Upper West Region. In December 2010, 108 women were elected to Unit Committees, the lowest tier of government. A further seven women were elected to District Assemblies. This is almost three times higher than districts where Concern Universal is not working. The long term strategy to first improve women's economic livelihoods, and ensure men understand the benefits of more gender equality, set the foundations for this change. Economic empowerment, through the extra income earned from the micro-enterprises, gave women the confidence to show men that they could develop and manage their own initiatives outside the home.

In Mozambique our programme is making a difference by enabling people to exercise their right of citizenship in Niassa Province. In collaboration and coordination with the local government Concern Universal Mozambique revitalized and trained local councils in three target districts to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities in terms of government decentralisation. Local councils have been an excellent platform to discuss local development issues, district development plans, and resolve local conflicts. As a result of our work communities have been able to understand and influence district development plans and access funds for the improvement of local services, such as a new hospital in Nisssa province. Our support to participatory accountability tools, such as community archives and wall journals, has made a difference to local governance monitoring.



Concern Universal is a people-centred organization and many of our projects focus on giving people the necessary skills needed to

improve their own lives. Developing skills can ensure that people realize their potential and bolster economic development. As a result of our work in 2010-11 **2,679 men and women became literate** (see **Madame Conde's story in Box 1 to see how providing literacy changes lives**). We have also developed the skills and capacity of our local partners. In The Gambia our EXCEL capacity development programme, which focused on giving local organisations the skills necessary to increase the sustainability of their own organisations, has been very successful. As well as writing their

own strategy documents and making improvements to long term planning, local Gambian organisations have been able to do more local fundraising, thereby decreasing their dependence on Concern Universal grants. Also, in the Upper West Region of The Gambia we are working with our local partner, Wajir South Development Association, to transform traditional beliefs that women do not have a right to education. Most men in this region do not want women to be educated, but through support from Concern Universal community groups have managed to get women in to school and they have literally been '*liberated*'.

BOX 1: Madame Conde's story, Guinea

Official statistics show that less than one in five women are able to read and write in Guinea². In one of the villages where Concern Universal works in Eastern Guinea, Mossoko, only two out of 1,000 adults have finished primary school. Less than five percent of the adult population of the village can write their name.

Concern Universal funds agricultural work in Guinea to increase production and incomes of smallholder farmers. However, in Guinea, adult literacy is also a priority and many of our programmes contain a literacy component. Using a West African adult learning technique that was developed in Burkina Faso, and recruiting local literacy teachers, like Mr Oumar Camara, Concern Universal funded a course to help 22 women and three men learn how to read and write. The course fits around the women's busy schedules

² Human Development Report, 2009 data, UNDP: 18% Female literacy rate, 15 and over

and uses local resources, like the 'calabash' (pumpkin), from which they make gourds, and a stick to represent the letters. After two weeks many students can already read and write their own names.

Being able to read and write has made a real difference to the women in the community. Madame Conde, who is taking part in an agricultural programme funded by Concern Universal and spends every morning tending her new kitchen garden and vegetable plots, is now more confident to sell her produce at the local market. With better literacy and numeracy skills she feels happier to buy and sell her produce and feels she now has a better understanding of the marketing process.



Adult literacy lesson in Mossoko, Guinea



Many of the people that Concern Universal works with live in areas that are witnessing the impacts of a changing climate. They live on marginal land that is susceptible to flooding, droughts, and natural disasters. We are working with people to help them adapt to these dramatic changes. In 2010-11 our **risk reduction projects worked with 200,000 people**; improving resilience through better community risk mapping, training,

infrastructure adaptation and preparedness.

Our work in Bangladesh is reducing flood risk through the use of flood resistant water point platforms and improved sanitation. We have informed 1000 organisations of disaster resilient water and sanitation technology and the NGO Forum, one of the leading network organisations in the water sector in Bangladesh, has distributed information on the technology to its 500 members. Concern Universal is also taking on a leading role in improving co-ordination amongst NGOs working in the disaster risk reduction and humanitarian sectors.

(details of all five of our Strategic Objective 1 achievements are given in Annex 1)

Inspiring and Influencing Others

As well as our operational programmes in our country programmes Concern Universal also has a growing advocacy and development education programme that works with schools, businesses and international development practitioners across the globe.

In 2010-11 we further developed our organisational advocacy strategy on disaster risk reduction. As well as developing internal targets on carbon reduction (see Carbon footprint section below) we published a policy on Disaster Risk Reduction, outlining the seven key priorities of risk reduction programmes, and fed in to a government consultation on sustainable agriculture. We also began to actively participate in disaster risk reduction networks, including BOND (British Overseas NGOs in Development).

In 2010-11 we launched our 'Doing Good Business in Africa' report for the Africa Progress Panel and disseminated it to 20,000 businesses worldwide. The launch received significant media coverage in the print and television press, including in business publications. We presented our 'Good Business' messages to business leaders throughout the year; to over 2,000 executives at eight events, including the World Economic Forum for Africa and the Confederation of British Industry annual dinner.

We developed a new partnership with Wiggly Wiggles and followed up our project to reduce water use at Cargill Meats Europe (Hereford) and facilitated staff volunteers from PriceWaterhouseCoopers to work in Malawi. In 2010-11 seven business leaders began supporting a new rural business project in Ghana. Our Good Business messages are drawn from our experience of private sector partnerships that enable development.

In 2010-11 we developed and strengthened a number of these partnerships establishing a dialogue with PZ Cussons in Nigeria; and in Malawi continued collaboration with the sugar (Illovo Sugar and the Co-Operative Group) and potato (Universal Industries) sectors.

Our global learning activities are improving people's capabilities to build a fairer and more sustainable world together, by linking people around the world to share experiences and ideas. In the past year, three East African speakers visited 73 UK schools, speaking with over 12,000 young people

about global issues ([see Box 2 for one of the student's views of this work](#))

BOX 2: Year 10 student St. John Wall School, Walsall

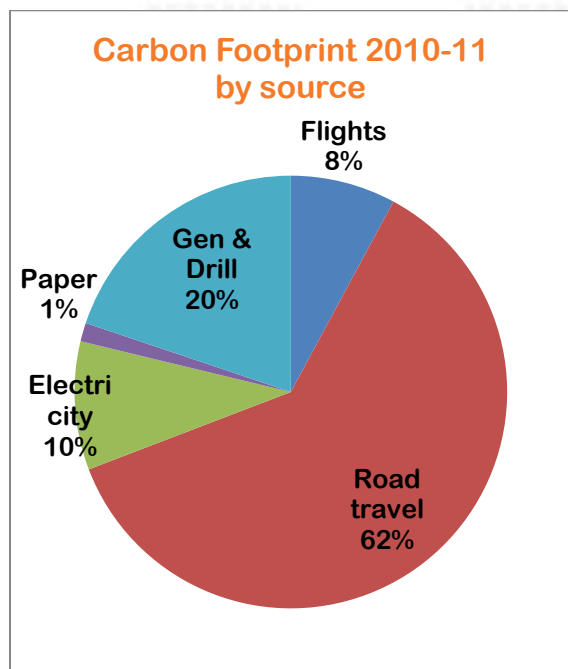
"I've learnt that Concern Universal is a charity that helps people know what to do when there is a flood. They talk about climate change and provide those that are in need with food, clean water and shelter. I have also learnt that there are disastrous floods in Bangladesh and there is a large population. I would like to help by reducing (my) carbon emissions and that would change climate change. I will raise money for them (Concern Universal) and get other people involved"

We also work to change policy and practice through activism with young people; providing opportunities, inspiration and influence to 'act to benefit others' at a local or global level. For example, 12 groups of students involved in our activities have created their own projects to engage others, including producing an animation asking people to take action on climate change and a play promoting responsible tourism and raising awareness of equality issues. Six sixth form students took part in a debate at The Hay Festival in June 2010. Addressing an audience of 150 people, they debated whether the UK should cut its overseas aid budget and continued the discussions with Hereford MP Jesse Norman and people from the regional business community at an evening reception.

Our Carbon Footprint

Concern Universal's overall Carbon Footprint for 2010-11 was 1,432 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, 2% up on the previous year. However when related to

activity levels, emissions per £ spent reduced by 22.4g or 17% on the 2009-10 level. This compares with the improvements over the year before (2008/9) of 2% lower per £ spent and 12% better per employee.



For the first time during 2010/11 the results from this analysis were fed back in detail to the Country Directors and staff in the UK office. Actions resulting included changing to a 'greener' electricity supply and distributing publications such as supporter newsletters more by e-mail than hard copy. Notable Country Programme achievements in this area were the Msamala Sustainable Energy Project (MSEP) project in Malawi moving onto the final stage of Gold Standard accreditation for carbon credits ([see Elida's story in Box 3 for details of how this project has changed lives in Malawi](#)), and the Concern Universal Gambia farm receiving voluntary carbon

offsetting from an international conference held in The Gambia.

BOX 3: Elida Mwale's story, Malawi

Elida Mwale comes from Mbengo village in Balaka District and has 6 children all of them girls. She is a farmer, a Chairlady of Mbengo village forest committee and treasurer of Talandira stove production group.



For Elida, owning a mobile phone or having an iron roofed house was a dream as she could not afford to buy them. Now, thanks to Concern Universal and the

Msamala Sustainable Energy project for introducing Chitetezo Mbaula production groups, Elida produces 40 stoves per month making a total income of MK10,000 which is enough to support her and her family.

'Concern Universal came to our village in January 2008 to tell us about sustainable use of fuel wood saving technologies. As they were introducing this I thought it was not possible but a year later I'm one of those benefiting from this project.'

Elida was struggling to pay her children's school fees or feed her family and her husband was far away in Dedza struggling to get work. 'Through stove production now I can manage to pay school fees for my kids, including one who is at boarding school in Salima. I also bought a cell phone. I bought 24 iron sheets and dining set. As a result of

the achievement made, people from my village have started to recognise me to the extent of selecting me in various local committee positions. To me this is a very significant change because I feel I have been empowered socially and economically by acquiring leadership positions, the assets which I did not have previously and having reasonable income. I want to continue producing more Chitetezo stoves in order to assist my family, relatives and diversify into other micro- businesses.

In-country Partnerships

As part of assessing our impact we have asked our local implementing 'southern' partners to give us feedback on how they would rate their partnership with Concern Universal. We did not do an online partner survey this year, instead we received feedback from our 10 Country Directors, who in turn had gathered feedback from their programmes' partners throughout the year. We are also able to include for the first time this year feedback from our Mozambique partner survey and Malawi stakeholder consultation.

This section does not try to assess all our partnerships. Strategic partnerships with organisations like The Waterloo Foundation, The William Cadbury Trust, Hestian International and key institutional donors such as Irish Aid and the European Commission were not assessed as the focus of this report has been programmes work implemented in our 10 country programmes.

Concern Universal defines partnership as working with (rather than through) local organisations with common mission, goals and values in order to jointly enhance the dignity and improve

the lives of people living in poverty. We regard partnership as a long-term relationship, where the focus is not on a specific project but rather on maximising mutual learning and effect.

The feedback we received from our partners this year was largely positive with most respondents feeling that Concern Universal has contributed to the institutional growth and programme capabilities of their organisation.

A '*spirit of sharing*' was identified as a key positive of working with Concern Universal Nigeria and Concern Universal Brazil was identified as helping its partners '*establish a more holistic vision of development*'. Many partners now feel better equipped and more able to engage in wider dialogue with both government officials and other NGOs. In Ghana one partner organisation stated that the '*high reputation of Concern Universal translates to enormous goodwill*' for them as a local partner. Both Concern Universal Brazil and Gambia were identified as helping their partners establish a strategic vision and improving their ability to submit proposals. In Kenya one partner organisation stated that they appreciated the opportunity to actively participate in and negotiate project design and implementation.

Concern Universal Mozambique assesses the effectiveness of its partnerships by engaging in open dialogue and holding a regular partnership workshop. Partners have identified the opportunity for training, institutional development and internal democratic changes as key benefits of a partnership with Concern Universal.

In 2011 Concern Universal Malawi commissioned a 'Strategic Planning Consultation Report' through which stakeholders reflected on their relationship with Concern Universal. Both Dedza and Ntcheu district councils stated that Concern Universal was their most visible and strongest partner. Concern Universal Malawi was identified as successfully building the capacities of community based organisations and their committees.

Overall Concern Universal was identified as an approachable and accessible partner, often because we were seen as being 'on the ground' in all our country programmes.

The feedback from local partners has also given us clear ideas of how we can improve our partnerships in the future:

Equality: Some of our local partners have expressed a desire for a more 'equitable relationship'. Specifically they would like clearer reporting and feedback mechanisms and more transparency regarding the allocation of funds and how funds are divided.

Regular support and visits to partner offices: Within the Mozambique assessment partners said that regular weekly visits to partners offices (instead of travelling to Concern Universal's offices) would be a huge benefit.

Concern Universal 'a catalyst for change': A number of partners stated that Concern Universal should focus on its role as a facilitator, not an implementer.

Training and fundraising: A number of partners expressed a desire for staff training to improve the capacity and capabilities of local partners, and they requested more support with fundraising.

Prompt allocation of resources: Some partners raised concerns about the delayed allocation of funding and materials required for specific programmes. Unfortunately our UK Operations are also constrained by the release of funds from our donors but we are committed to putting in place systems that will speed up the delivery of essential project resources.

In 2011-12 we are committed to addressing the challenges above through regular in-country partner reviews. This will deepen our dialogue and understanding with Southern organisations and strengthen the implementation of our projects.

Focus on Livelihoods and Community Strengthening

Livelihoods Achievements



For many agricultural smallholders in developing countries producing enough food to feed their families is a constant struggle. In the

countries where we work as many as a third of children are malnourished. The World Food Programme estimates that the cost of malnutrition is on average 6-11% of GDP³. This is why Concern Universal focuses on improving crop and livestock yields and making sure people are more 'food secure' in all of our country programmes.

Concern Universal's work to improve agricultural livelihoods focuses on training, fair access to land, financing, infrastructure and ensuring there is a regulatory/legislative environment that stresses the right to food. In 2010-11 we have supported projects that relate to all stages of the agricultural value chain, from production through to storage, trading, processing and retailing.

Food Security and sustainable livelihoods is the area of work on which Concern Universal spends most funds (53.6% of programme expenditure in 2010-11). A review of our current country programme strategies highlights the importance of this area of work across all our programmes. Improvement in agricultural livelihoods is one of the main objectives or a key

success indicator in all 10 of our country programmes.

Through agricultural **development, nurturing natural resources and enabling access to microfinance and markets**, Concern Universal improved the livelihoods of **150,875 people in 10 countries** in 2010-11.

Bangladesh: our large scale food security project ensured that 41,395 people are no longer experiencing 'hungry months'. Findings from the baseline and end line surveys show that many of the 10,000 families that we worked with in Jamalpur have been able to increase their monthly income by 240%. Although the farmers expenditure has increased profitable incomes have gone up by over 500 Taka (£4) per household per month. This is pulling families out of debt, as many struggled to even cover basic expenses before the project started.

Malawi: our livelihoods programmes benefitted 83,000 people, with an average cost per beneficiary of £26 in 2010/11. As a result of seed distribution through the Local Development Support Project there has been a significant reduction in malnutrition in the target villages.

Mozambique: Our programme led to improvements in crop and livestock yields for 900 individuals. Because of on-going conflicts between communities and large investors in Niassa Province (largely reforestation and hunting companies) we also supported five communities to obtain land titles from the government that puts them in a better position for negotiations with external stakeholders.

³ WFP 2008 (http://doConcernUniversalments.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/doConcernUniversalments/liaison_offices/wfp175334.pdf)

Nigeria: we improved food security for 3,158 people. Support to Forest Management Committees in Akpabuyo Local Government Area ensured that local people were able to reduce levels of illegal logging.

Colombia: we worked with 1,569 people to improve food security and supported 88 people to establish new businesses. We distributed over 1,500 food packages every six weeks in 2010-11 for the most vulnerable people of Ibagué. We also carried out an awareness programme on the benefits of organic produce, and caring for natural resources, details of which can be found on you tube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKJWyoFftC0>

The Gambia: over 4,000 people were trained in new agricultural techniques and 600 people started a successful new business, a major increase from last year. The URRLIFE project led to a significant increase in agricultural production and access to loans. (see [the impact this has made on Fatoumata D’rammeh’s life in Box 4 below](#))

Ghana: food security projects benefited a total of 2,943 people, and the number of microfinance clients increased by 689 from last year. (More details on this programme can be found in the next section)

Guinea: 5% of the 52,601 beneficiaries of Concern Universal projects benefited from sustainable livelihoods and food security projects. Improvements in crop diversification and kitchen gardens had a real impact on diets.

Kenya: our programmes led to a reduction in dependency on relief food in Garissa.

BOX 4: Fatoumata D’rammeh’s story, The Gambia

The URRLIFE project in The Gambia aims to address a lack of employment opportunities and agricultural skills in rural areas. The project has increased crop yields and productivity in a number of communities.

Fatoumata Drammeh, from the village of Misirah attended the agricultural training programme where she obtained a certificate in agricultural production specialising in horticulture. Based on her performance on the course and satisfying all the course requirements, Fatoumata developed a business plan and requested a total loan amount of GMD 23,000 (about £500).

After signing the loan agreement, Fatoumata opened a savings account with the WASDA Cooperative Credit Union and registered as a member. Her husband provided fence poles, joined the well diggers and fenced the half hectare vegetable garden before loans were given. Fatoumata began using her newly learned skills in her garden and the first demonstration of her new skills was in the layout of her garden beds which many of her fellow women farmers admired and started to replicate.

Fatoumata has started the production of vegetables and, thanks to the knowledge and skills gained through the training, has been able to stagger the growing of her crops to be able to make marketing of her produce easier

throughout the year. She now has savings to re-invest in the garden. One major benefit the training has had on her life has been the improvement of her health, and the income generating capacity of her household which has increased as a result of her involvement in the project.

“Thanks to the LEND/URRLIFE project, the extension workers and the entire leaders for reshaping and restoring my confidence in life”



Fatoumata Drammeh speaking publically about the project

Review of external evaluations and end of project reports

Concern Universal has over 100 ‘live’ projects covering work in each of our five Strategic Objective 1 areas. In 2010-11, 12 external evaluations were carried out and 17 end of project reports completed that were related to sustainable livelihoods and community strengthening. A desk based review of these evaluations and reports has been completed to give us a better understanding of the main impacts and challenges of our livelihoods work (full details in Annex 1). The reports were

completed using qualitative and quantitative surveys, project staff monitoring, Participatory Rural Appraisals, organisational self-assessments, and random sampling. All of the external evaluations were completed by independent consultants.

Main impacts

The main impacts of our livelihoods projects have been improving access to clean water (5 projects) and increasing food security for rural smallholder farmers (10 projects). Other impacts that were mentioned in a smaller number of reports include increases in school enrolment (1); strengthened organisational capacity to implement livelihoods projects (2); increases in income (2); and increase in the profitability of micro-enterprises (2).

The improvements in food security across our programmes have been impressive. Within a number of projects there have been tangible increases in food reserves from three to nine months, resulting in a significant decrease in ‘hunger months’. For example, in a project in The Gambia 75% of beneficiaries increased food reserves from 6 to 9 months after the first year of the project. Livelihoods work has also led to sustainable behaviour change related to agriculture, principally the diversification in crop production, which in many cases has led to an improvement in diet. Our livelihoods projects are also leading to increased incomes, by as much as 30% in some cases. In Dedza District, Malawi a livelihoods initiative led to a reduction in 30% of people living under the poverty income line.

Other livelihoods projects in Kenya and Ghana have also led to greater food security through seed multiplication, pest management, compost education and improved irrigation infrastructure.

Key learning and challenges

Although many of the challenges we face within our agricultural livelihoods work are project specific, there are also a number of key learning points that are similar across many of our projects. The main challenges from the review of 29 evaluations and end of project reports are outlined below:

Collaboration and networking: Three external evaluations, and a number of end of project reports, highlighted the importance of working with a wide range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of agricultural livelihoods projects. Projects that sought to involve a range of stakeholders, government and non-government, were likely to be more sustainable. In Kenya, the involvement of clan and sub-clan elders in the planning and implementation of projects has enhanced implementation and meant that work has focused on the most poor and vulnerable. The collaboration with elders has also deepened the relationship with government offices. A number of reports also mentioned the benefit of cross-organisational sharing, informing other Concern Universal teams and partners of our work. Although this is done across the organisation on an ad hoc basis, we are missing out on easy opportunities for organisational learning by not doing this systematically across all our projects.

Flexibility: Three project reviews and evaluations stated that flexibility, both internally and contractually, ensured that

the project was able to adapt to local realities and address development needs. Conversely, when a project was constricted by a high level of conditionality project staff struggled to deliver on the key objectives. Managers need to not only ensure that all project staff have an awareness of financial conditionality, budgets and targets but also there should be a clear process for negotiating budgets and targets with the donor when the contract is set up.

Monitoring and evaluation: A number of reports noted that an insufficiently clear monitoring and evaluation framework was set up at the beginning of the project and baselines were not always used for monitoring of project progress. Project staff also noted that partners do not always fully understand the value of regular monitoring. It is essential that work is done at the beginning of a project to set up a simple and practical monitoring system that can be used by project and partner staff. If possible, this monitoring system should be similar across all projects and feed in to a country wide monitoring system and be linked to the organisational Country Programme Monitoring sheet.

Market analysis: Some agricultural livelihoods projects have been developed without a sufficiently comprehensive market analysis and have focused more resources on supply-side development (training, capital expenses). In one project completed in 2010-11, micro-enterprise activities around honey and mushrooms were started before a thorough market analysis was completed. Once the activities were carried out it became clear that a local market for these products did not exist. The poor road

network compounded the problems as it was not financially viable to sell the products further afield. A simple investigation into the market demand and infrastructure would have highlighted these issues. The market analysis should also outline the timeframe for the returns of project investment as these may be quite long term.

Review of Concern Universal research

Our research in 2010-11 influenced government policy and NGO practice. In Kenya, the government has committed to using our Clan Study as an induction document for staff going to work in North Eastern Kenya. In Malawi, our report on decentralisation has informed the government debate on decentralization in Malawi. Our food security project in Jamalpur District, Bangladesh also produced one learning document on cash and assets transfer in March 2011 which outlined the benefits of our smallholder lean season cash transfer programme for 10,000 farmers. Key learning from the research includes using the local government administration to ease disbursement, promoting direct cash disbursement to encourage income generating activities, and ensuring use of ID cards to record proper disbursement.

In 2010-11 we published two reports on community based volunteers and their importance for local development (Community Based Voluntary Service Providers, Malawi, September 2010 and Village Extension Multiplier Model Study, Masasa, Malawi, May 2010). Our research has shown that voluntary service is a successful source for positive change in communities, and

Voluntary Service Providers can sustain livelihood interventions after project funding is withdrawn, if given the right skills and training. This approach promotes our view of seeing beneficiaries not as recipients of services but as partners in development programmes that benefit their own community. In order for this model to work it is crucial that the elected Voluntary Service Providers are acknowledged and accepted by their communities. Open dialogue amongst stakeholders and partners, and the standardising and formalising of policies and procedures will lead to more effective, efficient, and dynamic volunteers and development intervention programmes. Working with rural smallholders in Ntcheu District the Village Extension Multiplier model was used to increase agricultural extension outreach to farmers. With the Village Extension Multipliers help communities were provided with a link to otherwise unattainable district level services. Our research has shown that the motivation in these training programmes is the desire to learn and not to earn allowances, and Concern Universal's no allowance policy has promoted sustainability.

Focus on Ghana – livelihoods impact summary

The Ghana Livelihoods and Food Security Programme focuses on strengthening the capacity of smallholder, resource-poor farmers to access market opportunities and engages with women and men farmers with the aim of creating an entrepreneurial culture in rural communities, where smallholder producers produce what they can

market rather than trying to market what they produce.

Our work in Ghana has reduced postharvest losses for maize farmers in the Wa East District of the Upper West Regions. In 2010-11 farmers in five communities were supported with two maize shellers to hasten harvesting processes. In addition, the farmers were introduced to hermetic storage technology using triple layer bags with bio-gradable liners. The technology offers an effective, sustainable and environmentally friendly storage for smallholder farmers. 2,000 hermetic triple layer biodegradable bags were distributed to the farmers.

Vegetable farmers in the BrongAhafo Region have remained in poverty because of the low prices they receive for their produce. Almost all farmers produce the same type of vegetables (mostly tomatoes and to a smaller extent okra) and at the same time (the rainy season). This leads to supply outstripping demand and pushing the prices down. In an effort to increase household income and reduce poverty, Concern Universal in partnership with local NGO the Abrono Organic Farming Project (ABOFAB) worked with 100 farmers (42 women and 58 men) in Tanoso, Forikrom, Fiaso and Boankron communities in the BrongAhafo Region for year-round vegetable production using drip irrigation technology. **(for the impact of this project on the life of Naomi Abudea see Box 5 below)**

BOX 5: Naomi Abudea's story, Ghana

"I am Naomi Adubea a member of Odankunim farmers group at Fiaso. I participated fully during our dry season vegetable farming sponsored by Concern Universal and ABOFAP. I am a vegetable farmer and was previously only producing vegetables during the rainy season. I became happy when I had the training to produce vegetables all year round using the drip irrigation system. The income we had after harvesting our okra was GH¢1,500.00 (£600). The money has been shared among the group members, I was happy to have GH¢70.00 (£28) out of which I used GH¢20.00 (£8) to pay for my health insurance premium and GH¢23.00 (£9) to buy my child school uniform and fees. I used the remaining amount to support my pepper farming which is at the fruiting stage".



Naomi Abudea using drip irrigation technology

Review of ex-post impact assessment

Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods, T.A. Kachere, Dedza District, Malawi⁴

In September 2010, Concern Universal conducted an assessment of the long term impact of its food security programmes in TA Kachere, Dedza District, Malawi. A team of 5 researchers conducted 203 household surveys, 53 group discussions, 39 case studies, and village walks in 19 villages over 12 days. The primary focus was on the Dedza Food Security Improvement Project (DFSIP), an EC-funded initiative that ran from 2002-2007. The study also covered villages that had participated in the Dedza Sustainable Livelihoods Project (DSLIP, 1998-2003), and, for comparison, villages that had only participated in a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH, 2006-11) project, and had not received food security support from Concern Universal.

The study found that Concern Universal had had a positive impact on agricultural smallholders lives in the target areas (**for a personal account of this impact see Lezita's story in Box 6 below**). The main sustainable benefits of the projects were found to be:

Reduction in food deficits: Households in DFSIP villages were more food secure in terms of maize stocks than

those in DSLIP or WASH villages. Households in DFSIP villages were more likely than other households to have stocks of other foods (cassava, Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes).

Increase in cash income: Cash-income levels were three times higher in DFSIP villages than in WASH villages.

Crop and livestock diversification: Crop diversification was significantly higher in DFSIP villages compared with DSLIP and WASH villages. Households in DFSIP villages were significantly more likely to own at least 2 species of livestock, compared to those in non-DFSIP villages.

Adoption of modern agricultural techniques: More than twice as many people used six or more modern agricultural techniques in DFSIP villages, compared to DSLIP villages. A much larger percentage of households in DFSIP villages practised winter cropping compared to other villages.

Overall, Concern Universal's food security work in Malawi – represented by the DFSIP project – has made an important contribution to improving long-term food security in the DFSIP impact area. DFSIP has also been effective in sustainably increasing access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure.

The study also identified the challenges that Concern Universal encounters when implementing livelihoods projects in rural areas:

Being realistic about which activities can be sustainable. Clear guidelines on how to make seed banks, livestock pass-on

⁴ The full report can be found on the Concern Universal website:
http://www.concernuniversal.org/index.php?/article/_news/long_term_impact_assessment_report_malawi/95.htm

schemes, volunteer multipliers and access to credit more sustainable are necessary. Projects need to identify the factors that make such activities sustainable, such as government support, or local champions and put in place exit strategies.

Understanding how to achieve equity, if this is a core objective: it is important to establish at the beginning of each project how the poorest (landless) can benefit from agricultural projects, if this doesn't happen the project could widen the gap between rich and poor.

Understand the limitations of small business development: not everyone wants to be an entrepreneur and this may not be a particularly pro-poor approach.

As well as being able to inform and improve our future livelihoods programming the research has allowed us to improve our impact assessment methodology across the organisation.

BOX 6: Lezita Wamsinje, Malawi

Lezita Wamsinje smiles as she emerges from her small plot of land on a hillside in Kanyanga village in central Malawi, "It feels like we have opened a gold mine" she exclaims. "I have already harvested my second crop of maize this year."

Lezita is reaping the benefits of a recently installed irrigation channel which provides her and her fellow villagers with year round irrigation for their crops, enabling them to harvest up to three times a year.

The gravity fed channel, built using local labour and fed by a local river, has

enabled farmers to irrigate their crops year round. As a result farmers like Lezita have more food on the table and more money to provide for their families. The channel irrigates around 250 acres of arable land and over 270 households are benefiting as a result.

Lezita, who has eight children, has been allocated a quarter of an acre of the irrigated land which she farms along with her own two acre plot, "We are now able to grow enough food to last throughout the year. I can also afford to sell some food to buy basic items and send my three youngest children to school."

Over 80% of Malawians are subsistence farmers, most of whom are dependent on one harvest a year. Traditionally, farmers plant around November in time for the start of the rainy season and yield in March or April after the rains have finished. The land lies fallow throughout the long dry season.

The lean pre-harvest period from January to March is typically known as "Njala" or the hunger season. This is when many people live on one meal per day and malnutrition rises. "This is the first year that my family didn't experience a hunger season" says Lezita.



The irrigation channel in Kanyanga Village

Section 2: Improving our Impact

Conclusion

Concern Universal programmes and partners have had a significant impact on the lives of poor and vulnerable people in all of our 10 country programmes. Our impact has been achieved, at a relatively low cost, because of our holistic, partnership based, community led approach to development. Our projects are developed with local communities in response to their needs, and we are able to work with government, non-government and community based organisations depending on what will be most effective. Our high impact comes about because Concern Universal is both an implementer and facilitator and is able to be the catalyst to leverage funds and expertise necessary to implement high quality community development projects.

This is our third organisational impact report. Over the last three years our financial resources have grown from under £10m to over £12m. This has allowed us to develop more programmes and for the first time in 2011 we worked with over two million people.

Our increase in size and scope has meant that we are able to have an impact on more people's lives this year than in previous years. However, because we have only recently started to look at our impact in any depth, and because of the very wide diversity of our community development programmes we still have a lot of work to do to

definitively say that our impact, across all our programmes, is not only getting bigger but also getting better.

Improving our Impact

We are also aware that we need to improve, and this report highlights the work that we need to do in four key areas. Firstly, we need to strengthen our local partnerships. The feedback that we have received shows us that we can do more to improve our partnerships and develop the capacity of our partners.

Secondly, we need to improve our monitoring and evaluation systems. From the review of end of project reports and final evaluations there is evidence that we could do better when it comes to developing good baselines and practical monitoring systems that are used throughout the life of our projects by project staff and partners.

Thirdly, we need to do more research to understand issues like project sustainability and equity better. Some of our project activities have not been sustainable and we need to find out why. Likewise some projects that focus on enterprise development may not be benefiting the poorest and we need to do more to ensure that we are supporting the poorest and most vulnerable.

And lastly, our programmes would benefit from more market and micro-enterprise analysis.

The publication of our annual impact report is the most visible output of our ongoing commitment to reflect on the changes that are taking place in the communities where we work and the contributions we are making to these

changes (see our definition of impact in Section 1). However, it is only one milestone in an ongoing process of review and reflection that is taking place everyday in each of our country programmes.

As well as disseminating the lessons learnt from our project reviews and evaluations, ensuring that these are fed back in to programmes reviews and planning in 2011-12, we are also committed to the following key tasks to improve our impact:

Country Programme Monitoring Review

Concern Universal has been using the Country Programme Monitoring (CPM) tool since 2006. The data from the CPM provides an overview of the inputs, outputs and outcomes of Concern Universal's work across all our country programmes. A recent review of the CPM showed strong support for the organisational monitoring system itself. However, there is still a disconnect in some countries between in-country level monitoring and the CPM data. The review, which will take place at the end of 2011, will create a more robust CPM that we can use both internally and externally to monitor our organisational achievements.

Theory of Change

To help us understand how change happens we have developed an organisational theory of change (see [Annex 4](#)) and are encouraging country programmes to consider change processes in their strategic planning. Our organisational theory of change sets out how we understand the causes of poverty and how we believe we can most effectively bring about positive

changes to people's lives. Our definition of the 'drivers of change' informs our organisational theory of change and will feed in to our country and organisational level strategies. The theory of change outlines our key dimensions of change and gives us focus for our impact assessments and organisational Impact Report from 2012 onwards.

Concern Universal monitoring and evaluation reviews

A number of countries have expressed a wish to improve the way they assess the impact of their country programmes but struggle to see how this is possible when all of their funding is project based and can not be used outside of the project timeframe. Some of our programmes are not collecting data from the field regularly or comprehensively enough to be able to do this yet. In some countries we are not maintaining good databases of clear monitoring and impact information. We need systems that are practical and both used and understood by project staff and partners. We are also struggling to develop clear indicators that can be aggregated up to give us a clear picture of our overall impact.

Working within project parameters we will introduce more on-going impact monitoring in 2011-12 as part of country level monitoring and evaluation frameworks. A number of monitoring and evaluation reviews are already underway, namely in Malawi and The Gambia, and we will continue to support this process to ensure that our monitoring systems begin to give us a better picture of impact.

Impact Assessments

Assessing impact means understanding changes in people's lives, not solely assessing what we have achieved through our project activities. Impact data gives us an understanding of the wider positive/ negative, intended/ unintended changes that have taken place in the communities we work in. In the past much of Concern Universal's impact assessment work focused on measuring outcomes and the results of specific projects. This is very important, and whilst we will continue to do this, we will complement this work with assessments that focuses on the wider changes that have taken place in the communities where we work. In 2010-11 we completed one ex-post impact assessment in Malawi. Thanks to our strategic collaboration with The Waterloo Foundation we are increasing

our commitment to impact and will complete four impact assessments in 2011-12 in The Gambia, Ghana, Colombia and Kenya.

Partner survey

Partner surveys are an important tool in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our partnerships with local NGOs and in 2012 we will carry out another partner survey. We hope to improve on the response rate of the 2010 survey and to build on the responses we gathered in 2010. It is important that Concern Universal continues to build a picture of our partnerships to ensure our work is effective and sustainable. We are currently designing the 2012 partnership survey and discussing the options for its facilitation.

Annex 1: Impact summary for Enabling Community Led Development (SO1)

Total number of people enabled by Concern Universal to improve their lives and shape their own futures: **2,235,473 people**

Impact	Improved food security and sustainable livelihoods	Improved health	Improved respect for rights	Improved skills	Reduced vulnerability
	150,875 people	1,224,208 people	222,489 people	429,506 people	309,561 people
<i>Through...</i>	<i>Agricultural development, nurturing natural resources, and enabling access to microfinance and markets.</i>	<i>Access to safe water & sanitation, preventive healthcare, improved nutrition, & action on HIV and AIDS.</i>	<i>Empowerment of women, children and other vulnerable groups.</i>	<i>Literacy circles, capacity building, and other training.</i>	<i>Disaster risk reduction, integrating emergency preparedness and response work with long-term development.</i>
Outcomes	40,722 people with improved crop and livestock yields	513,168 people with access to safe water	64,402 women whose rights are more respected	2,679 people now literate	195,159 people enabled to reduce their vulnerability to disaster risks
	57,353 people no longer experiencing 'hungry months'	524,976 people with improved sanitation and hygiene	147,670 children whose rights are more respected	25,603 people with other new skills	63,613 people enabled to rebuild their lives post-disaster
	4,643 people that have established successful businesses	3,505 HIV-positive people living positively	27,820 members of community groups able to demand their basic rights from duty bearers	310,019 members of community groups with stronger capacity	
Outputs	34,228 people trained in new agritural techniques	664 water points provided or rehabilitated	24,770 participants in training	2,958 members of literacy circles	8105 participants in DRR training
	£3,107,540 of horticultural produce sold	119,250 people trained on sanitation and hygiene	606 advocacy events	173 facilitators of literacy circles trained	5,450 recipients of emergency relief
	580 hectares irrigated	241,502 people reached with HIV awareness work	38 service provision agreements signed with duty bearers	51,309 participants in other training	42,708 recipients of reconstruction/ rehabilitation support
	382,756 trees planted	100,447 people enabled to access healthcare		6905 children participating in educational & arts activities	
	62,759 microfinance clients	3,035 HIV-positive people receiving care and support			
Inputs	£5,529,444	£2,424,877	£985,309	£386,986	£1,620,202
	£10,917,092 total project expenditure in FY 2010/11 Carbon footprint: 1432 tonnes (Concern Universal direct only)				

Annex 2: End of project reports reviewed (projects ended in 2010-11)

Project ID	Project Name	Donor name	Country	Finish Date
462	Dedza and Ntheu Safe Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion and capacity Building Project	DfiD (& EC)	Malawi	30-Jun-10
388 (369)	Masasa Sustainable Livelihoods Project	AFAP / AusAID	Malawi & Kenya (Mozambique, Zambia & Zimbabwe)	30-Nov-10
428	Mkhumba Boundary Communities' Livelihoods Improvement Project	EC	Malawi	31-Dec-10
433	Msamala Environmental Rehabilitation and Livelihoods Improvement Project	EC	Malawi	31-Dec-10
564	Livelihood Enhancement Alternatives Project	EC	Nigeria	30-Jun-10
905	Bakassi Returnees Socio-Economic Reinsertion in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria	French Embassy	Nigeria	30-Jun-10
847	Disaster Risk Reduction Package for Refugee Hosting Communities in the Foni Districts of Western Region	Oxfam America	The Gambia	30-Apr-10
861	HPP - EPR 6	Irish Aid	The Gambia	31-May-10
436	Empowering Civil Society Organisations through Capacity Building and Network Linkages (EXCEL)	DfiD	The Gambia	01-Mar-11
866	Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Project	Cordaid	Bangladesh	14.09.10
866	Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Project	ECHO	Bangladesh	15.11.10
903	HPP - Building Community Resilience to Hazards in West Africa	Irish Aid	Ghana	31-Jan-00
853	Upper West Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project	MTN	Ghana	07-Feb-11
893	Cholera preparedness in the prefectures of Kissidougou and Guéckédou	USAID	Guinea	30-Nov-10
843	Salubrité et Assainissement dans deux Localités Urbaines et Rurales de la Guinée forestière	EC	Guinea	04-Dec-10
859	HPP - Social and Livelihoods Emergency Preparedness	Irish Aid	Kenya	14-Jul-10
552	Girl Rights and Opportunities for Women - Innovation, Networking and Growth	Comic Relief	Nigeria	31-Dec-10

Annex 3: Project evaluations reviewed (completed in 2010-11)

Project ID	Evaluation	Country	Date published
901	Reduction of food insecurity for poor and extreme poor Households – EC mid-term monitoring report	Bangladesh	08/07/2010
	CBDRR DipECHO V, ETE	Bangladesh	Oct-10
562	FAMILIES - EC mid-term monitoring report	The Gambia	16/04/2010
675	URRLIFE - EC mid-term monitoring report	The Gambia	16/04/2010
676	SMILE B - EC mid-term monitoring report	The Gambia	16/04/2010
575	PROTECT, IA ETE	The Gambia	Mar-10
558	Kasumbu FSIP - Big Lottery Fund – external mid term evaluation	Malawi	Jul-10
	Phalombe – Malaria project, MTE	Malawi	Oct-10
569	WUW – EPUR for BLF, mid-term evaluation	Ghana	Jul-10
575	PROTECT, IA funded	Ghana (West Africa)	Mar-10
575	PROTECT, IA funded	Nigeria	Mar-10
552	GROW-ING, CR funded	Nigeria	Apr-11

ANNEX 4: CONCERN UNIVERSAL THEORY OF CHANGE

