Confronting Crisis: Transforming lives through improved resilience

Concern Worldwide’s learning from the Sahel and the Horn of Africa
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Concern Worldwide is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to tackling hunger and transforming lives in the world’s poorest places. We are working for a world where no one dies for want of safe and nutritious food. Malnutrition is one of the gravest threats to child survival and development, with long-lasting consequences. We use our expertise and local knowledge to work with people and communities to develop lasting solutions to hunger so that they can lead happier, healthier lives and lift themselves sustainably out of poverty.

Concern’s focus on tackling hunger, health and extreme poverty is underpinned by an understanding of a lack of assets, risk, vulnerability and power inequality in any given context. The need to protect development gains from being wiped out by disasters, whether natural or human-made, has been the driving force of Concern’s interest in long-term programming, research and advocacy for strengthening community resilience to food and nutrition crises.

**On the front:** Pastoralist Lako Halakhe watering her seedlings. Concern Worldwide and local partner, CIFA, are supporting pastoralists in Madowadi, northern Kenya on a micro-irrigation project, which provides a much needed means of food production. Parcels of land have been given to 30 pastoralist families in the community and they have been taught new farming skills. Despite some initial scepticism within the community as to whether farming was a viable alternative, the project has proven to be a success and is now being embraced.

*Photo: Gideon Mendel/2012/Kenya*
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Gabbra pastoralists Kame Darasso, Halima Mohamed and Doko Isako are waiting to be given food rations at a distribution centre supported by Concern in Maikona, Kenya. Without help, their families would have faced starvation after drought in 2004 and 2005 devastated their livestock herds. When the rains finally arrived, it was too late to help those who had already lost their herds. The challenge for the future is to ensure that pastoralists are not dependent on food aid.

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In this briefing, Concern outlines some practical steps which communities can take to ensure that their food and nutrition security is resilient to drought, so that people can continue progressing out of chronic poverty and malnutrition. This is a 5-Step Process incorporating a 5-Pathways Approach for multi-sector programming that strengthens resilience in food and nutrition crises.

In brief, the 5-Step Process involves:

**Step 1 – Problem identification**

**Step 2 – Systemic contextual analyses**

**Step 3 – Holistic intervention**

**Step 4 – Enabling policy landscape**

**Step 5 – Research, evidence and learning**

Concern posits that a 5-Pathways Approach (as part of Step 3 above) to programming for community resilience to food and nutrition insecurity incorporates:

**Path 1 – Engagement in multi-sector action for improved nutrition**

**Path 2 – Promotion and strengthening of livelihoods options and natural resource management**

**Path 3 – Provision of social protection for the most vulnerable**

**Path 4 – Embedded disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation approaches**

**Path 5 – Improved early response to early warning**

Conflict and instability also greatly undermine people’s resilience, and Concern recognises that peace-building and conflict resolution approaches, which reduce the risks of conflict, are critical in promoting resilience in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region. However, this paper is primarily concerned with drought and how it erodes resilience, thereby locking people into cycles of chronic and acute malnutrition. This paper draws heavily on an extensive literature review of the resilience debate commissioned by Concern Worldwide (UK) and also on Concern’s programming experiences in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, especially in Niger and Kenya. With a focus on the role of NGOs, governments and donors, this paper is not a complete picture of all the factors which contribute to improving community resilience to food and nutrition crises. Our aim is to share Concern’s organisational thinking and practice in order to contribute to the growing discourse and debate on this topic.

**What is meant by resilience?**

Concern defines community resilience to food and nutrition crises as: the ability of a community, household or individual to anticipate, respond to, cope with and recover from the effects of shocks and stresses (Fig 1) that drive or exacerbate malnutrition in a timely and effective manner, without compromising their long-term prospects of moving out of poverty and hunger.

Most approaches assert that strengthening resilience requires “systems thinking” to guide a more holistic strategy. This is because the shocks and stresses experienced by vulnerable groups interact with one another and cannot be addressed in isolation. Promoting resilience requires integrated approaches bringing together different issues, sectors and disciplines, and assessing their compatibility. Many approaches place the adaptive capacity of communities themselves at the centre of strengthening resilience.
Context

In 2010 and 2011, the Horn of Africa had two consecutive seasons with below-average rainfall, resulting in one of the worst droughts in 60 years. This put 12 million people in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Warnings were sounded as early as August 2010, but despite this, a slow-motion disaster unfolded in Somalia, northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia during 2011. International donors and governments were initially slow to release funds, which increased the cost of the relief effort and caused further human suffering. A famine was declared in some districts of Somalia, and together with increased media coverage, this finally provoked a funding response by the international community. Whilst lives were saved, over 250,000 people died.

The following year – 2012 – another 18 million people were on the verge of a further food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel region of West Africa. Early warnings issued in September 2011 generated calls for humanitarian funding and action. Following criticism of the slow response in the Horn of Africa, most donors responded more quickly than in 2010 and 2011. However, in June 2012, as the affected population in the Sahel entered the most critical lean season, only 39% of the $1.5 billion humanitarian appeal had been funded.

Throughout the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, droughts and food crises are becoming more frequent and chronic, affecting ever-growing numbers of people. Even in relatively good years without a shock, nutrition crises can persist because of underlying structural causes and population growth. Countries are also experiencing a paradox – some economies are among the fastest growing in the world, yet the frequency of humanitarian crises which they are experiencing is on the increase. In the Sahel, this economic growth, mainly based on natural resources extraction, is neither reducing poverty nor improving child nutrition. Rather, the Sahel remains plagued by persistent levels of malnutrition. In the Horn of Africa, only in Ethiopia have high economic growth rates translated into reductions in poverty, from nearly 50% in 1990 to under 30% in 2011.

In 2011, agricultural production in the Sahel fell as a result of late and irregular rains and prolonged dry spells. However, the startling fact is that the 2011/12 harvest across the Sahel was only 3% lower than the average for the previous five years. Why did a relatively small decrease in food production generate such a massive food and nutrition crisis? The main driver of the 2012 Sahel crisis was not a general shortage of food and fodder, but greatly eroded resilience. Since the Sahel crisis in 2010, most vulnerable households had not been able to restore their livelihoods and productive assets. This undermined people’s ability to produce and/or buy food, and their capacity to cope with the new shock, less than two years later.

Haro Botha, a water pan used by local communities in Marsabit, northern Kenya. The water level in the basin is far lower than usual as a result of recurrent drought in the area.
In recent years, discussion has grown on promoting resilience by humanitarian, disaster risk reduction, climate change and development actors working in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Donors such as USAID, the European Community and DFID have started to adopt a resilience agenda. In DFID’s case, this was catalysed by the independent Humanitarian Emergency Response Review, which described the current global humanitarian system as “not fit for purpose” and called for a shift in the way humanitarian aid is conceived and delivered. But the problem is not just with humanitarian policy - there is a need to ensure that development and nutrition practitioners take up the resilience mantle if chronic malnutrition and extreme poverty are to be tackled. A paradigm shift is needed in how organisations and institutions work internally and with each other to promote resilience – such as local government with central government and financing departments, and NGOs and UN agencies with donors. A literature review conducted for Concern suggests five practical steps to guide approaches to strengthen community resilience to food and nutrition crises.

STEP 1: Problem Identification: articulate a clear overarching purpose for strengthening resilience. Given the countless disciplines and organisations embracing resilience, putting it into practice first requires a decision on “resilience for - or to - what”? For Concern, the priority is strengthening resilience to prevent shocks and stresses from generating food and nutrition crises.

STEP 2: Systemic contextual analysis. In order to understand and address the key challenges and limiting factors to building community resilience, analysis must start at the community level, with community participation. Putting resilience into practice first requires an analysis of local conditions and how communities currently promote their food and nutrition security and protect themselves against risks. Concern incorporates a thorough analysis of individual and community assets and return on assets, risk and vulnerability, and inequalities in power dynamics in all of its programming. Concern then has to assess which national and international policies might affect vulnerable people’s food and nutrition security.

STEP 3: Interventions build upon existing community capacities and address the problem holistically. Many inter-related factors lie at the heart of vulnerability, chronic poverty, and recurring food and nutrition crises. Actors have to reach consensus on what a systemic approach to resilience would entail in any given context, and where and how each organisation can add value and harmonise efforts. Drawing on Concern’s programmatic experience, strengthening resilience to food and nutrition crises requires an integrated approach that applies all of the following key 5-Pathways:

1. **Multi-sector action to improve nutrition.** Multi-sector approaches are required to prevent all forms of undernutrition and acute malnutrition, including by promoting nutrition sensitive agriculture and other livelihood options, e.g. women-managed homestead gardens. Barriers to healthy child feeding and caring behaviours also need to be addressed and state health care systems need strengthening or, where necessary, services need to be provided directly. Other critical sectors for the prevention of undernutrition include water, sanitation and hygiene, and in the longer-term, education - especially of women.

2. **Strengthening livelihood options and promoting natural resource management.** The current development paradigm is leaving behind increasing numbers of poorer households, particularly in ecologically fragile and marginalised areas. Yet, there is evidence showing that low cost, agro-ecological farming practices can increase productivity, resilience and adaptation to climate variations, as well as help to restore the natural resource base. In the Sahel and Horn of Africa, there are proven ways to improve the productivity and resilience of pastoral livelihoods - based on mobility. For instance, trans-border herd mobility agreements, demarcation of livestock
drive roads, and support for local inclusively managed pastoral resources, like water and fodder. Such initiatives, especially focused on poorer households, need to be scaled-up in risk prone areas as part of an integrated approach to strengthening resilience.

3. Social protection for the most vulnerable groups. Resilience programming makes social protection/safety nets both a developmental and humanitarian intervention. For instance, Ethiopia has used its high growth rates to make progress in reducing poverty, to which a contributing factor has been its Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). This provides cash or food to people in a way that enables them to improve their livelihood options – and therefore become more resilient to shocks.

4. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. It is imperative that disaster risk reduction and climate change/variation adaptation approaches are fully embedded in development programming. With chronic and acute malnutrition being the greatest risks for children, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation initiatives must include efforts to address nutrition to help reduce the risks of child death or physical and cognitive impairment.

5. Improved early response to early warning. If measures are not taken to ensure that early responses are made to early warning information, gains made in strengthening resilience will be wiped out. Donors such as the EU and DFID are recognising that early action is preferable to late response, not least because of the additional financial burden that studies now identify with combating a full-blown crisis.

STEP 4: Joined-up sectors for a better enabling environment. There is a growing consensus that overcoming repeated food and nutrition crises requires more effective synergies between humanitarian and development thinking, strategies, frameworks, action, policy and funding at national and global levels. This requires a shift towards long-term development programmes that build resilience among vulnerable communities which can be rapidly scaled-up or revised in order to respond early to shocks. Such approaches to building community resilience can only thrive if government policy and donor practice are aligned in support of this new integrated paradigm which combines traditional humanitarian action, i.e. DRR/CCA prevention, and emergency preparedness into development practice.

STEP 5: Research, evidence and learning. With many of the long-term approaches to building resilience currently in the infancy stages of implementation, there is a time lag of rigorous empirical data and evidence as to what constitutes effective community resilience programming. It is important that communities, practitioners, academics, policy makers, and donors collaborate to identify what works well and what doesn’t, so that efforts to tackle food and nutrition insecurity can be effectively and efficiently brought to scale. Furthermore, the potential trade-off or cost of building the resilience of particular groups, as opposed to other groups, needs to be researched further.
2. A focus on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa

A regional approach to promoting resilience to food and nutrition crises can be vital since many countries face similar challenges. Areas of both Niger and Kenya, for example, are prone to slow onset food crises triggered by drought where farming is increasingly precarious because of a reliance on rain that falls erratically. Areas of both countries are also home to large pastoralist communities who have been largely overlooked by government, donor policy and investment. Despite the need to ensure that policies reflect national and local priorities, common challenges can be identified, which the 5-pathways, introduced above, can help address. Although Concern has selected Niger and Kenya to illustrate the problems which can be faced at a national level, other countries in the regions face similar challenges.

Promoting community resilience in Niger

Agriculture and livestock production play a vital role in the economy of Niger where the majority of producers are small-scale farmers and pastoralists. The common view is that improvements in agricultural productivity hold great potential for poverty alleviation and food security, yet there has been only limited progress in the ecologically fragile and drought prone zones. In many parts of Niger, even in good years, many poorer farming families do not produce enough food to meet their nutritional needs for more than 3-6 months.13 The average yields of Niger’s two principal grain crops, millet and sorghum, are much lower than in neighbouring countries.14

In some areas of Niger, up to 50% of the landmass is unproductive because land degradation and erosion has resulted in hardpan formation.15 When it rains, water cannot infiltrate the hardened ground. Extensive water run-off and flooding occur, destroying crops and increasing erosion. With limited tree cover, young sorghum and millet plants, particularly in sandy areas, are often blasted and buried by strong winds that cause extreme evaporation and loss of ground moisture. Few farming families have sufficient organic matter to maintain soil fertility and fewer still can afford artificial fertilisers. Promoting resilience and food security through agriculture is not feasible unless the productive resource base – the land and soil fertility - can be restored.

Pastoral areas were severely affected by the droughts in 2009 and 2011 that weakened livestock and reduced milk availability - a major contributor to the diet of pastoralist households. The increase in distress sales drove down the price of livestock as cereal prices rose sharply. This drastic depletion in purchasing power increased food insecurity and malnutrition and led pastoralists to adopt severe coping strategies. The result has been a further undermining of the pastoralist way of life in Niger. Recurrent drought, widespread animal mortality and underinvestment in the pastoral economy have driven many poorer pastoralist families to give up livestock breeding, or to rely largely on farming, in order to compensate for a lack of income from herding. Farming in Niger, however, is even more vulnerable to dry spells than pastoralism, since there are few options to access areas with more favourable rainfall.16

The 2012 Sahel crisis exposed, once again, the most glaring indicator of declining resilience: the persistent levels of malnutrition in Niger, which remain at near emergency levels in good years and bad. During the 2010 humanitarian crisis, 320,000 children suffered from severe acute malnutrition. A year later, Niger experienced exceptional rains and a record agricultural harvest, yet the number of children affected fell to only 307,000.17 Since 1990, the rate of stunting has actually increased by 1%, and stood at 51% in 2010.18 Chronic child malnutrition is not only a consequence but also a cause of the resilience deficit; resilience requires strengthening human capacity to adapt livelihood strategies to shocks and stresses. Reducing chronic child malnutrition and achieving nutrition security must be central in assessing the extent to which resilience has been strengthened.
A focus on the Sahel and Horn of Africa

The 5-Pathways

Delivering the 5-Pathways for community resilience to food and nutrition insecurity in Niger is discussed below.

1. Multi-sector action to improve nutrition. Tackling undernutrition to promote a resilience agenda in Niger must combine efforts to prevent all forms of undernutrition, with supporting universal access to treatment services for acute malnutrition, particularly severe acute malnutrition. Although acute malnutrition can be reversed with timely treatment, prevention is clearly preferable. Activities to prevent chronic and acute malnutrition are largely the same, but the delivery mechanisms, duration of the interventions, and measurement differ. For example, it may be possible to reduce the prevalence of acute malnutrition (wasting) via a short-term emergency intervention, but any gains made will be quickly reversed if the intervention is stopped, rather than adapted and then transferred into a longer-term programme of prevention of chronic malnutrition (and by default, future cases of acute malnutrition).

Any intervention intending to reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition (stunting) in Niger, must be sustained for the full 1000-day ‘window of opportunity’ - close to three years and preferably longer. As building resilience to food and nutrition crises is a long-term approach, it should ultimately aim to address both chronic and acute malnutrition, as well as maternal undernutrition, which would mean addressing micronutrient deficiencies, as well as breastfeeding behaviours.

Tackling undernutrition requires action from across multiple sectors. These include the promotion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and the provision of fortified food supplements, particularly during hunger periods. Programmes must analyse and address specific barriers to optimising child feeding and caring behaviours, which often include issues linked to mothers’ time and workload, as well as the control a woman has over household resources. It is also critical to strengthen the health care system and provide child and maternal health services (particularly vaccinations, treatment of malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and, where necessary, medications to prevent the transmission and onset of, or to treat, AIDS, as well as antenatal services). Similarly, improved access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene are proving to be more critical to preventing undernutrition than many had previously thought. Education of women has proven to be an important determinant of undernutrition, albeit over a longer timescale.

2. Promotion and strengthening of livelihoods options and natural resource management. The influence of dominant ‘Green Revolution’ thinking about agriculture has resulted in investments in expensive seeds, inputs and large-scale irrigation, to the detriment of agro-ecological techniques that can, over the longer-term, increase production and foster livelihoods that are resilient to drought. Smallholder farmers in remote, ecologically fragile zones of Niger, who often live on less than $1 per day, cannot afford inputs like hybrid or genetically engineered seeds, fertiliser or pesticides. However, there are well-documented successes of diversified and productive agro-ecological farming systems, which integrate food production, trees and livestock. Examples include the use of zaï planting pits, which are holes dug to collect water run-off and improve crop yield, and farmer-managed natural regeneration of trees (agro-forestry), which has helped to build community resilience to food crises by restoring degraded lands, re-igniting production, increasing crop yields, raising water levels and boosting farmer incomes. Communities that adopted the latter practice and complementary soil and water conservation techniques have boosted their livelihoods, with gross household income increasing by 18-24%. This also contributed to enhancing community capacity to absorb shocks. When drought and accompanying food shortages hit the regions of Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri and Zinder in 2004–05, villages with high levels of adoption of natural tree regeneration fared much better than those devoid of trees.

Villagers from the rural settlement of Koukatala on the border between Niger and Mali, who are being funded in a cash-for-work programme by Concern to build rain harvesting systems.
Farmers using these agro-ecological techniques were able to stockpile grains during good years, harvest trees for food and income in bad years, and sustain productivity by improving the fertility and water holding capacity of soils, reducing erosion, and preventing the ill effects of sun and wind on young crops.22

Agriculture has the potential to tackle poverty and malnutrition by increasing food production for home consumption, increasing household income and lowering food prices. Yet, neither agriculture nor increased incomes are sufficient to reduce malnutrition.23 Agricultural interventions are often not designed with complementary actions to address other root causes of malnutrition, like chronic poverty, maternal health and poor nutrition practices.24 Community interventions that combine agriculture, social protection, nutrition, education and health are needed, along with complementary government policies that create an enabling environment for food and nutrition security.

3. Provision of social protection for the most vulnerable.

The poor are more likely to be malnourished and the malnourished to be poor. Therefore, pathways to resilience in the Sahel require appropriate forms of social protection.25 Although social transfers are not the whole solution to building resilience, by protecting people from the worst effects of a chronic hunger crisis they can provide a solid platform upon which longer-term, transformative livelihoods, and improved child nutrition, can be built. Although Niger is achieving strong economic growth, current development policies are leaving poorer households and malnourished children behind. The lack of a comprehensive, targeted social protection programme, addressing chronic hunger and malnutrition and adapted to specific geographic and livelihood contexts within Niger, is a major factor in the growing resilience deficit.

There is clear evidence that child nutrition can be enhanced by using social transfers that both promote improved nutrition behaviour and provide the poorest families with the resources needed to practice them. Niger was one of the first Sahelian countries to pilot a social transfer project in the wake of the 2005 food crisis, when the limits and costs of a succession of humanitarian crisis responses became clear. In partnership with the World Bank and UNICEF, this work was expanded, subject to conditions such as exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months, hand-washing, addressing diarrhoea and dehydration, sleeping under mosquito nets, using preventative health services, and increased spacing between births. In 2011, the National Institute of Statistics of Niger conducted a survey of the programmes and found that 72% of households used the cash transfers to build their savings, for productive investments required for increasing domestic production and promoting their food and nutrition security.26

4. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation approaches.

Evidence from Niger suggests that disaster risk reduction initiatives at the local level can enable vulnerable households to become more resilient, diversify and protect their assets, strengthen their support networks, reinforce local coping mechanisms and avoid the need to resort to negative coping strategies such as borrowing money or selling grain for cash. Yet, existing initiatives did not help vulnerable families reach a point of resilience to face the 2010 crisis without external support, as there had not been sufficient time between crises to build up physical assets, knowledge, skills and networks to be better placed to cope. Many of the same families were hit again by the drought-induced crisis of 2012.

Chronic and acute malnutrition are the greatest risks for children in Niger, yet disaster risk reduction/climate change adaption initiatives in Niger generally do not integrate nutrition activities to help reduce the risks of child death and physical and cognitive impairment. There are many reasons for this failure. The disaster risk reduction response to drought in the Sahel, while considering nutrition, is still largely driven by the need to reduce food deficits. But
achieving food security is a necessary – but not sufficient – condition to improve nutrition. Drought presents multiple threats to lives and livelihoods – it does not exclusively affect food security, but also nutrition security. In Niger, food and nutrition sectors are also heavily dependent on donor funding and, as such, are subject to the ‘stop-start’ nature of 3-4 year donor funding cycles, thereby hindering the delivery of long term, sustainable, national food and nutrition programmes.

Disaster risk reduction and climate variation adaptation thinking in Niger has not yet adapted to chronic, complex emergencies and is not yet part of a more systematic approach to resilience. Stronger policy frameworks and greater inter-ministry coordination need to be supported. Many actors in Niger, including the FAO, have started to develop specific disaster risk reduction strategies, but these have not been fully integrated or funded within development work. Current approaches to drought by many actors, as reflected in conventional disaster risk reduction and climate change/variation adaptation initiatives (such as dry season gardening, cereal banks and small scale irrigation), often fail to target the distinct livelihood needs of the most vulnerable households, or tailor activities to address equity through “multi-track” interventions where:

- One track directly strengthens the productive capacity and livelihoods of households chronically trapped in the hunger cycle.
- A second track develops capacity for contingency planning and effective action, particularly at community and district government levels.
- The third track adequately addresses the structural causes of vulnerability including degraded agro-ecosystems, soil and water erosion, and high population growth rates.

5. Improved early response to early warning. In both 2005 and 2010, slow responses resulted in unnecessary suffering, a loss of assets by poor households in agricultural and pastoral areas, a huge increase in the level of need and a significant rise in costs. In 2012, the response in the Sahel was faster and better than in 2010 as UN agencies OCHA and UNDP collaborated with national early warning system providers to develop regional and national level contingency plans and simulation exercises. In September 2011, in light of early signs of a poor harvest, the Prime Minister of Niger convened a meeting of donors, Ambassadors and UN Missions to call for preparedness actions. Later that month, he requested international assistance in a speech to the United Nations in New York.
Benefits of cash transfers in Niger: Concern’s experience

In 2011, Concern Niger implemented a multi-pronged programme with the dual goal of reducing acute malnutrition, morbidity and mortality among children under five and contributing to the adoption of positive coping mechanisms within targeted communities in the Tahoua Region of Central Niger. To achieve this goal, Concern Niger promoted: an unconditional cash transfer programme in 36 villages; community-based therapeutic care or community management of acute malnutrition – where children were admitted to their local health facility on an outpatient basis (as opposed to previously being admitted on an in-patient basis, often far from home, affecting sibling child care, livelihoods and promoting cross infection); and, a cash-for-work programme.

Researchers from Tufts University were commissioned to study the impact of the unconditional cash transfer programme in terms of household well-being – measured by child nutritional status, food security, coping strategies and asset ownership.

The study found that households used the cash transfer to buy more types of food and non-food items in 2011 (5.75 different categories) than in 2010 (4.04 different categories). In particular, households also used the cash to purchase diverse food items such as cowpeas, oil, meat and condiments. Perhaps more importantly, households were much more likely to pay for health services and school fees, reimburse debts, purchase clothing and buy livestock in 2011, compared to 2010. Not all of these purchases were directly associated with, or captured by, changes in nutritional status in the short-term, but they point to households making investments into future food and livelihood security.

Child nutritional status in the villages under study improved substantially between May and December 2011, with a 9% reduction in the prevalence of wasting (low weight for height) during this period. This improvement can primarily be attributed to the seasonal nature of malnutrition in Niger, particularly between the hungry and harvest periods. However, the cash transfer programme, when combined with the nutrition programme, led to a decrease in the rate of malnutrition by a further 3%, as compared with villages without such a combined programme.

Beyond improving nutritional status, the cash transfer programme reduced the likelihood that a household suffered from food insecurity since the previous harvest. In addition, households in the cash transfer villages were less likely to reduce the number of meals per day as a coping strategy and were even able to acquire more livestock, primarily poultry and goats. They were also able to save a small sum of money on their mobile phones. In addition, women in cash transfer villages were more likely to be involved in household decision-making on agricultural and education-related issues.

In 2012, this programme included research assessing the nutritional status and dietary practices of young children resulting from the programme. Evaluations found that cash transfers played a significant role in promoting child anthropometric outcomes and may have influenced household dietary patterns. For instance, children in families receiving cash transfers consumed legumes twice as often as those in the non-cash group, and, on average, consumed one additional meal per day.

Concern’s learning from programming in Niger includes the importance of combining cash transfers and malnutrition interventions with interventions from other sectors that address the underlying causes of malnutrition and food insecurity. For instance, combining it with complementary health programmes or food aid/vouchers. To account for the diverse uses of the cash transfer, it is also important to develop and monitor nutrition and food security indicators as a measure of the success of the programme.

“The situation here is very bad. We are relying on Concern for support. The price of food has tripled in the last year alone. If Concern had not helped us with cash transfers then we would have had to abandon the village like so many of our neighbours”.

Adiya Hatou, a participant in Concern’s cash transfer programme in Mogheur Village, Tahoua, Niger
Promoting community resilience in Kenya

Pastoralism is the dominant production system in the arid areas and some parts of the semi-arid areas (ASALs) in the Horn of Africa, including Kenya. The challenges are numerous including: population growth, insecure access to land and water, restricted mobility (including across international borders), inadequate economic and social services, scarce appropriate research and extension services for pastoralists, and gender inequality.

Expenditure on humanitarian aid in the region is rising and hunger has become chronic in some areas. There is widespread agreement that the root causes of crises must be addressed, moving beyond humanitarian aid to supporting long-term development that promotes resilience. But there is still controversy over how to invest in resilience in order to generate benefits at scale in the ASAL regions, where the costs of doing so can be high.

The recent drought in the Horn of Africa has intensified the debate as to whether traditional pastoralism is still viable or whether a different livelihood system is needed. One side of the debate cites declining herd sizes, shrinking grazing land and reduced water access as too difficult to overcome. The other side asserts that pastoralism is a sector of comparative advantage in the semi-arid lowland regions of the Horn of Africa and that mobile livestock herds make efficient and risk-minimizing use of an environment with relative land abundance and variable rainfall patterns. The argument is also made that pastoralism has proved to be more dynamic than most policymakers had expected, and that pastoralists yield higher incomes than most non-pastoralist livelihoods in the dry lands. Those arguing in favour of investment in family size based mobile pastoralism point out that alternative investment strategies in drylands such as resettlement, irrigation, dryland agriculture and privatisation of land have largely failed, and even worse, have caused damage to the existing pastoral systems.

The 5-Pathways

Delivering the 5-Pathways for community resilience to food and nutrition insecurity in Kenya is discussed below.

1. Multi-sector action to improve nutrition. Over the last ten years, northern Kenya has suffered recurrent drought and extreme climatic conditions that have put livelihoods at risk. The frequency of drought, coupled with the increased incidence of livestock diseases, has limited pastoralists’ ability to rebuild their herds, leading to a drop in herd sizes. For poor pastoralists, this has had a tremendous impact, shrinking the incomes and food security they derive from their herds, and reducing their asset base and returns. This has forced pastoralists to shift away from their traditional milk, meat and blood diet, towards a cereal based diet. This has meant that more pastoralists have been trying out new ways of producing food, such as micro-irrigation.

The effects of drought related food insecurity include high maternal and child malnutrition. Besides limited access to critical services, other major factors contribute to high malnutrition in northern Kenya. These include pre-existing chronic and acute food insecurity, poor dietary diversity, limited access to fortified foods, poor child care and feeding practices, poor practices related to hygiene and sanitation, low access to essential nutrition services, limited capacity by the healthcare system to deliver nutrition services, poor market integration and conflict.

In this drought context, tackling high maternal and child malnutrition must combine early humanitarian intervention with longer-term livelihoods strategies that improve nutrition-sensitive agriculture and livestock production, child and maternal nutrition behaviours and access to health services, as well as building community resilience to promote livelihoods, assets and food security before, during and following droughts (prevention, protection and recovery).
2. Promotion and strengthening of livelihoods options and natural resource management. Secure mobility for pastoralists that ensures flexible access to pasture, water and markets is vital for pastoral livelihoods. Interventions that promote mobility are currently local, supported by NGOs. Larger scale (even transborder) and better coordinated interventions are required if initiatives such as grazing reserves and enclosure removal are to have long-term benefits. Secure communal access to, and management of, land and water resources is also needed in the face of increasing privatisation of land and enclosure of pastures. Decentralised governance is essential to support resilience, as flexible decision-making is imperative for the efficient use of land and water resources. In the ASALs, which are characterised by high uncertainty, risks and large variations in availability of productive resources, enhanced engagement by state agencies and NGOs is required to strengthen pastoral institutions. A key feature of pastoralism is reliance on social organisation and customary institutions.

Pastoralism, being the dominant livelihood for the foreseeable future, and a profitable one, given growing demand for livestock products, should be supported as a key component of development and resilience strategies. The way forward should be a balance between promoting movements out of pastoralism and transforming pastoralism to become more resilient. Central to this, is the expansion of people's options to maximise their physical, economic and social mobility. In light of growing socio-economic disparities in the drylands, largely spurred by the rise of the international commercial livestock trade whose standards can only be met by large scale pastoralists, as well as the selling off of livestock at times of crisis to more affluent pastoralists, more equitable approaches to development growth are needed that support poorer and more vulnerable groups. There is also a need to further reduce pressures on productive resources caused by population growth, by creating alternative livelihood options that are compatible with pastoralism. These pressures have the potential to stimulate conflict, insecurity and poverty-driven migration.

Harmonising both humanitarian emergency and development interventions when working with poor pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities is crucial in order to apply solutions before, during and following times of crisis. Building resilient livelihood interventions include: improved range and pasture management, rotational grazing and pasture improvement, ensuring livestock mobility, regeneration of degraded rangelands, water harvesting, soil and water conservation, community-based seed production and natural resource management.

Finally, there needs to be change in the way that development policy approaches resilience. Policies for a more poverty-focused approach in pastoralist areas would support a strategy of herd growth for poorer households. This would also include regulating rich pastoralists to ensure their
Promoting community resilience in Kenya

practices support poorer groups, e.g. using mobile systems and common land for grazing (as opposed to privatisation of land), and providing jobs and income to hired herders.

3. **Provision of social protection for the most vulnerable.** Despite high and growing levels of poverty and vulnerability, social protection is only recently becoming a priority in Kenya. A Social Protection Policy was approved in May 2012 and a National Social Protection Strategy and Implementation Plan is being developed to build “a just and cohesive society with social equity in a clean and secure environment”. The most significant experience of social protection in Kenya is the Hunger Safety Net Programme (2007–17), which is being piloted in northern Kenya and funded by DFID. It involves regular, direct and unconditional cash payments to meet basic subsistence needs. The goal of the programme is to reduce extreme poverty in Kenya from 17.5% in 2005/6 to 10% by 2017, and the percentage of children under five who are stunted from 34.7% in 2005/6 to 25% by 2017. The 2012 annual review of the programme confirms that, while cash transfers are having a positive effect on building the resilience of recipient households in the face of ever worsening conditions, they do not, on their own and at the current level of transfer, support a widespread graduation out of poverty.

While the Hunger Safety Net Programme is a welcome initiative, it does not challenge some of the root causes of poverty caused by the dominant development paradigm. Aid donors have long assumed that for pastoralists in the Horn of Africa a linear relationship exists between “better access to export markets” and “poverty alleviation” and thus support has gone to the export of live animals and related certification, quarantine and other inputs. However, a recent report from Tufts University found that investments in market infrastructure and export markets have not benefited poorer pastoralists and that, while the livestock export trade from the Horn of Africa has continued to grow, so have levels of pastoralist destitution.

4. **Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation approaches.** Community managed disaster risk reduction holds promise for strengthening community control over development and pays attention to the unpredictable high risks in the drylands. This approach provides a channel for pastoralists to obtain relevant information and strengthens their capacity to influence decision-making. Supporting community-led adaptation to climate change can ensure that strategies meet local needs and help prevent local conflicts over access to land and water. Studies suggest that policies promoting community-led adaptation to climate change are efficient, with environmental, social and economic benefits outweighing the costs in virtually all scenarios.

5. **Improved early response to early warning.** Quite sophisticated early warning systems have provided the international community with the information needed to take cost-effective, preventive action in crises. Yet, early warnings in the 2010/2011 food crisis in the Horn of Africa did not lead to early action and the opportunity to protect more lives and livelihoods was lost. The failure to take preventive action, often cited as linked to inefficiencies of the aid architecture and the politicisation of food aid, to mitigate the impact of the crisis cost millions of dollars and tragically, hundreds of thousands of lives. This occurred despite an understanding that early response is more effective and less costly than late response. A recent study for DFID estimated that early interventions to support pastoralist livelihoods over a 20-year period of cyclical droughts in Kenya and Ethiopia could have saved more than $1,000 per beneficiary. Modelling in the Somali National Regional State in Ethiopia suggests that the financial impact of livestock mortality during a drought can be as much as $4.8 million per day.

“*Our area is good for livestock and that is what we are used to. But this has challenges because of drought and getting enough water and pasture. There is more drought – every season there is drought now and animals are dying*”.

Malacha Diba, Kalacha, northern Kenya
Building resilience in Kenya: Concern’s experience

Concern has delivered a number of interventions promoting resilience in Kenya. Since 2006, Concern has been working in Moyale District, northern Kenya, implementing an integrated set of initiatives designed to strengthen resilience among pastoralist communities. Livestock accounts for 70% of household income in this area where 67% of the population live below the poverty line. Droughts in 2006 and 2009 eroded household assets and reduced the coping mechanisms available to communities. Knowing the changing drought cycle, communities supported by Concern have been undertaking a range of inter-related development activities whose timeframe and scope are flexible. These activities reduce poor communities’ risk and vulnerability to drought, and enable them to be better prepared through strengthening traditional coping mechanisms throughout the drought period, without loss of lives and by minimizing loss to livelihoods. By diversifying livelihoods, shifting herds to more drought resistant species and breeds, improving rangeland management, mitigating resource based conflicts and lengthening the water availability period, resilience is, increasingly, enabling pastoralists to withstand the rise in frequency of drought cycles.

In 2010, USAID’s Famine Early Warning System Network indicated that Moyale District was at risk of becoming ‘highly food insecure’. This warning led Concern, in collaboration with government and local partners, to begin an early scale-up of High Impact Nutritional Interventions across Moyale District. This included recruiting and training health workers, supporting the Ministry of Health to open six new health facilities, distributing water purification tablets and supporting a food voucher scheme for 3,000 poor households.

The result was that between December 2010 and July 2011, the rate of severe malnutrition fell in Moyale (from 3% to 1.5%), whereas in the two neighbouring districts it increased dramatically. In Moyale, the General Acute Malnutrition rate increased only slightly, whereas in the other two districts it increased substantially; the rate in Moyale was half that in the other districts. Several factors combined to enable Moyale to fare better than neighbouring districts:

- Community resilience was promoted over time through contextually appropriate, multi-sectoral interventions.
- Government capacity to respond was strengthened.
- There was an early, multi-sector scale-up of food, nutrition and livelihood interventions.
- There was coordination among agencies, with Concern working with local government services, the World Food Programme and other NGOs.

Concern also conducted a six-month emergency response in Marsabit County in northern Kenya, commencing in September 2011. Assessment called for immediate emergency intervention to address acute malnutrition and to save lives. Concern targeted very poor households in pastoral and agro-pastoral communities with cash or voucher schemes and livestock interventions. The project aimed to enhance food security and protect livelihoods from the effect of the drought. It targeted 5,000 vulnerable people and their households, including pastoralists who had settled around urban towns and who had limited livestock assets. An evaluation of the project found that households received 30-50% of their monthly food basket value, and that the loss of breeding stock was kept to below 10%. The evaluation also determined that it would have been over three times more expensive to purchase new breeding stock at the end of the project compared to keeping the livestock alive via the project’s feeding intervention. In addition, the food voucher acted as a resource base transfer and asset protection mechanism by helping reduce debt and, for those with assets, livestock disposal.
The global policy architecture for resilience remains in silos, with frameworks for development, emergency response, climate change, disaster risk and nutrition having limited connectivity with one another. In a post-2015 landscape, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will need to be brought together so that new development targets are disaster-proofed. If these links are not made, disaster risk and building resilience will be pushed to the margins of development objectives for the next 15 years. Development investments run the risk of being undermined by climatic disasters and future uncertainties. In turn, food and nutrition security programmes have not yet built sufficient linkages with disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation approaches. In regions prone to disasters such as droughts, as in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, this runs the significant risk of programmes not adequately tackling the underlying causes of malnutrition.

The financing of social protection, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction faces obstacles at national level. These policies often lack strong demand from recipient countries and can be perceived as donor interests. For disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, there is often little political will or financial incentive to invest limited resources in ensuring that something does not happen in the future, compared with investing in visible and popular infrastructure and food relief programmes. Governments can also take a short-term sceptical view of social protection programmes because of their recurrent costs and concerns about creating dependency, rather than seeing them as promoting longer-term development opportunities and safety nets to alleviate vulnerability to crises.

The international system is not set up to act early when early-warning indicators are triggered and there is often a dichotomy between the policies that promote long-term development and the principles of emergency response. On the ground, aid workers tend to specialise in either humanitarian or development work and often struggle to move between these disciplines. These divisions are perpetuated by an aid architecture that is similarly disparate.

With some important exceptions, humanitarian funding largely becomes available only after an emergency is declared (and is short-term). Thus, when early warnings trigger, humanitarians are hamstrung by a lack of funds and a lack of tools (they specialise in response not prevention). Meanwhile, development actors, who are often better equipped to undertake the types of resilience-building interventions needed, often do not see it as their mandate and also lack sufficiently flexible funding to adapt their programmes.

This new paradigm requires major changes in organisational structures, funding architectures and ways of working. The most radical proposal is to break down divisions between humanitarian and development actors by designing a flexible integrated approach that promotes holistic multi-sector interventions. A more modest approach is to oblige development actors to bridge the gap by delivering more disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience based-programming, allowing humanitarians to focus on their speciality emergency response. Ultimately, the objective must be long-term sustainable programming that responds continually to early warning information, flexing between development, disaster risk reduction, preparedness, early action and emergency interventions, according to needs. Social protection, cash transfers and safety net programmes will be important tools within this.

This will not happen without strong and concerted leadership from policy-makers in donor, national government, UN systems and international NGO spheres. There are signs that things are starting to shift. National governments are developing drought prevention plans. The high-level informal grouping of Political Champions for Disaster Resilience has been meeting, the UN Secretary General’s current five year action agenda prioritises resilience, and several agencies, including USAID, DFID, CIDA, the EU, OCHA, FAO, and UNDP are developing resilience-based strategies. Yet, there is still a long way to go if the systemic transformation required is to be realised.
4. Conclusion and recommendations

Many current development policies that simply seek faster economic growth are not improving the lives of poorer households and malnourished children. There is growing recognition that radical changes need to be made to government and donor policy to address development failures and build resilience, in order to promote the livelihoods of the poorest families and transform their lives. This includes supporting integrated long-term, multi-sector development programmes, led by national governments, often with cash transfer and health care programmes to improve food and nutrition security, and generate pro-poor economic growth.47

Policy makers must ensure that disaster preparedness, risk reduction and community participation are an integral part of development policies. For example, when designing policies, drought needs to be treated as predictable and manageable rather than as exogenous and uncontrollable. Concern’s experience is that with these policies in place and, crucially, by working in partnership with communities themselves, people’s ability to withstand shocks and protect their livelihoods can be significantly improved.

It is vital that these changes are made. Recurring crises in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa give poor households no time to rebuild their livelihoods and protect themselves from further shocks. Many of the poorest households are in a downward cycle of debt and hunger and do not have sufficient resources to reverse that cycle themselves. Almost half the rural population in the Sahel face ingrained food and nutrition insecurity with no realistic hope of escape on their own.48

These changes require a shift in domestic and international thinking and practice. Community-led programmes, involving people in the design and implementation of projects, need to be central to strategies. Governments need to design development plans that build community resilience to shocks and stresses, and policies that benefit the poor and extreme poor. Partnerships between governments and donors need to involve long-term flexible funding. The distinctions between ‘humanitarian’ and ‘development’ need to be broken down. Better coordination between different actors and different levels of government need to be promoted. Information sharing and acting on information need to improve.

The following recommendations are among the critical policy changes needed:

**National Governments should:**

- Develop national level nutrition targets to reduce stunting and wasting, increase budget allocations to nutrition, and reallocate funds to promote multi-sector, comprehensive approaches to improve nutrition.
- Improve intra-government cross-sector coordination mechanisms to ensure that national plans and budgets in highly drought prone areas act to strengthen community resilience, particularly for poor and vulnerable groups, and improve food and nutrition security. For instance, supporting herd growth for poor pastoralists and regulating affluent pastoralist activity.
- Lead long-term multi-sector development plans including social protection and health care programmes to improve food and nutrition security and generate pro-poor economic growth.
- Respond early to early warning information, with a greater role for decentralised decision-making. Community level ownership and buy-in of plans and strategies, particularly for risk reduction and climate change adaptation are vital.

**International donors should:**

- Re-allocate development aid towards integrated multi-sector programme approaches that respond continually to early warning information, and flex between development, disaster risk reduction, preparedness, early action and scaled-up interventions as needed.
Conclusion and recommendations

- Provide more flexible long-term funding to foster equitable (pro-poor) growth through well-designed, targeted livelihoods programmes with social protection measures that extend to including additional households affected in times of predictable crisis.
- Put chronic child malnutrition and food and nutrition security at the heart of resilience strategies.
- Embed nutrition policies into disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, social protection and agricultural development.
- Ensure that the post-2015 development policy landscape is disaster-proofed by incorporating the Hyogo Framework for Action.

NGOs should:

- Design multi-sector holistic interventions in collaboration with local communities that build upon existing capacities for resilience, in coordination with a range of stakeholders.
- Ensure that comprehensive risk, vulnerability and equality analysis is conducted throughout the programme cycle and that nutrition sensitive approaches are adopted.
- Adjust and adapt organisational structures and processes to effectively implement integrated programme approaches, including planning, monitoring and evaluation and budgeting (multi-annual).
- Generate rigorous data and evidence of what works and what does not work with regards to building community resilience.