

**Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence**  
**Meeting on Education**  
**3pm Ireland / 6pm Mogadishu, 8 February 2022**

- Honourable Chair, ladies, and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.
- My name is Ahmed Ali Dirshe. I joined Concern's Somalia office in 1994, one year after our education programme was established. We have been providing education in Somalia, almost without interruption, since 1993.
- "I am among the fruits of the tree that Concern planted," says Said Ahmed, a Member of Parliament in South West State.
- In the [video](#) we shared before this meeting, you will also have seen the testimony of Ubah Mohamed, a young woman from Mogadishu who studied in one of the schools Concern supports and went on to become the Deputy Headteacher.
- These are just two of thousands of students Concern has supported through famine, drought, flooding, and conflict, with support from Irish Aid, ECHO, Education Cannot Wait, the Global Partnership for Education, and others.
- We rehabilitate damaged classrooms and provide food, water, and sanitation and health facilities. We have seen significant improvements in learning outcomes by training teachers, reviewing school curricula, providing textbooks, and tackle gender-based violence and corporal punishment. From 2004 to 2020, we supported 42 schools.
- In 2021 alone, we enrolled more than 10,000 children, 47% girls, and supported almost 400 teachers, one third of them women. Our retention rate of 85% was almost evenly spread across boys and girls. Generations of professionals have emerged, among them nurses, teachers, politicians, and engineers.
- Our approach is centred on partnership with learners, parents, elders, local institutions, and communities. By establishing Community Education Committees, and ensuring that members of the community are themselves involved in the design, construction, and management of schools, we have increased community ownership and school enrolment.
- In providing education in emergencies, our focus is on access, quality, wellbeing, and continuity. To ensure that our investment in education is sustainable, we advocate for the government to engage.
- The government has now taken over management of seven Concern-supported schools in Mogadishu, in partnership with communities, and the work to ensure ownership is continuing.
- A key aspect of our work with government has been to develop the Community Education Committees policy framework and training manual, both of which were endorsed by the Ministry of Education.
- To roll this out, we have trained dozens of facilitators who gave training in no fewer than 651 schools, reaching 4,557 Committee members.

- I think you'll agree that this is an excellent start, but more must be done to further institutionalise the policy framework.
- A lesson we have learned is the need to plan for unforeseen costs and be ready to adapt to crises, such as flooding and pandemic. To be able to respond and adjust quickly to new realities, we also need flexibility from our donors.
- The generous support of Irish Aid and the Irish public has enabled generations of young Somalis to receive an education. I would like to take the opportunity of addressing you today to call for:
  - Strengthened support for peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts to address the root causes that threaten education, students, and teachers, and investments made to date; and
  - Continued funding for education in humanitarian and development assistance, which is an investment in the youth and future of our country.

**Additional Resources:**

- For further information on Concern's education programme, which has a technical focus on improving the lives of extremely poor children by increasing access to high quality primary education and supporting child wellbeing, please see:  
[Knowledge Matters – Education: Access, quality and wellbeing | Concern Worldwide](#)
- The short video, mentioned above, showing the positive impact of Concern's education programme in Somalia is available to watch here:  
[Fruits of the Concern Tree: Education in Somalia - YouTube](#)