

**Concern
Worldwide (UK)**

Strategic Plan 2021→2025

Our ambition is to mobilise resources, people, decision makers and partners to respond to rising poverty and humanitarian needs, improving the lives of people living in extreme poverty in the world's poorest and most fragile countries.

CONCERN
worldwide



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Cover image: Concern is working in Marsabit, Kenya to provide families like Marin Lemotou and her one-year-old baby Peter with nutritious food.
Photo: Ed Ram/Concern Worldwide

This page: Eight-year-old Atiir's family live in Turkana, Kenya, where Concern works with rural communities to combat malnutrition.
Photo: Gavin Douglas/Concern Worldwide

Introduction

The UK strategic plan was developed during an extraordinary period. With every country where Concern works affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the impact on people's health and livelihoods has been substantial. The longer-term effects are likely to be more severe for those who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged.

To date, we have seen reduced access to preventative and life-saving healthcare, children kept out of school and millions of people unable to earn a decent income. Globally, the World Bank estimates that Covid-19 could push an additional 120 million people into extreme poverty in 2021, and the World Food Programme has warned that the crisis has more than likely doubled the number of people experiencing acute hunger.

Despite the uncertainties surrounding the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the future direction of UK aid, we are confident that this strategic plan will help us achieve our goals to raise more funds and provide greater resources for our country programmes, while influencing policies and power holders to address the root causes of extreme poverty, with a particular focus on hunger, climate change and conflict.

The strategic plan sets out how we will work as an organisation, building on the changes brought about by the Covid pandemic and the strengths we identified as a result. The plan seeks to enhance both our agility and our ability to innovate in response to a changing and uncertain environment.

It also recognises that the people who make up Concern Worldwide (UK) are our greatest asset and we will improve the diversity, wellbeing, development and motivation of staff and volunteers, as well as capitalising on our skills and knowledge by becoming more inclusive.

The plan embeds the work of Concern (UK) within Concern Worldwide, harnessing our expertise and competitive advantages in the UK while leveraging the strengths and experiences of the global organisation. It aims for greater connectedness between the UK, country programmes and support offices in Ireland, the US and South Korea, sharing knowledge, experiences, ideas and products. Over the course of this strategic plan, we aim to strengthen our position as a trusted and valued member of Concern Worldwide, making informed decisions for the UK market while contributing towards the achievement of the global strategic plan.

“The plan seeks to enhance both our agility and our ability to innovate in response to a changing and uncertain environment.”

Finally, we want to enhance and build on our new interconnectedness. We will bring the voices of people engaged in Concern programmes closer to donors and supporters in the UK, enabling them to communicate the reality of their lives.

The fundamentals: who we are

Concern Worldwide (UK) was formally established in 2004, bringing together fundraising offices in Belfast, Glasgow and London. Since then, Concern (UK) has thrived and its role has evolved to become significantly broader than fundraising, making the most of opportunities arising from:

- The UK NGO sector being one of the strongest and most vibrant in the world
- The UK government being the one of the largest aid donors in the world
- The UK government, through the Department for International Development (DfID)/Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), being a progressive and influential donor
- London's position at the heart of policy dialogue and formulation, as well as civil society action

Based in London and Belfast, Concern (UK) now has 65 members of staff. Concern (UK) does not deliver programmes directly but supports Concern Worldwide by providing technical assistance, funding and advocacy, as well as increasing awareness of our work and the voices and stories of those with whom we work.

Our identity: Concern Worldwide is a non-governmental, international, humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries.

Our vision: is a world where no-one lives in poverty, fear or oppression; where all have access to a decent standard of living and the opportunities and choices essential to a long, healthy and creative life; a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Our mission: is to help people living in extreme poverty achieve major improvements in their lives, which last and spread without ongoing support from Concern. To achieve this mission we engage in long-term development work, build resilience, respond to emergencies and seek to address the root causes of poverty through our development education and advocacy work.



These women make an arduous five-kilometre journey every day to find water in the Lake Chad area, where Concern is working to provide clean water and sanitation facilities for rural communities. Photo: Gavin Douglas/Concern Worldwide

Our values: build on our history and the voluntary, compassionate commitment of Concern's founders:

→ **We focus on extreme poverty:**

We are driven by a clear focus on eliminating poverty in the most vulnerable places and responding to humanitarian crises.

→ **We believe in equality:**

People are equal in rights and must be treated with respect and dignity.

→ **We listen:**

Listening and partnership are key to empowering the poorest and most vulnerable to transform their own lives.

→ **We respond rapidly:**

People affected by disasters are entitled to have their most basic needs met through rapid, effective, and principled responses.

→ **We are courageous:**

Taking necessary risks, balanced with sound judgement, allows us to work in the most challenging contexts.

→ **We are committed:**

Going the extra mile to support communities in times of need and in the face of very difficult operating environments.

→ **We are innovative:**

Finding effective solutions requires innovative thinking combined with a pragmatic approach.



Farhad with his two nephews, Rasho and Abdullah, outside the family tent in a displacement camp in Iraq, where Concern has been working through a local partner to improve waste management and water facilities. Photo: George Henton/Concern Worldwide

* Names changed to protect the identity of individuals.

The external view: rising poverty and humanitarian needs

The previous decade was marked by increasing global fragility and political instability, with a sharp escalation of conflict and displacement, in places like the Middle East, and across central Africa. At the same time, through the experience of extraordinarily intense weather events such as Cyclone Idai and the prolonged East African droughts of recent years, we have witnessed how climate change is wreaking a ferocious level of damage, hitting the poorest first and hardest.

We now enter what should be a decade of action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. However, progress has slowed and in some cases gone into reverse. With levels of inequality growing, the call to leave no-one behind becomes even more pressing. Of particular note is the slow progress towards gender equality. There is a vital need to prioritise prevention of gender-based violence and increase women's economic empowerment as a response to the Covid crisis. Women's leadership and their representation at all levels will be critical in advancing this agenda.

Despite growing needs, the intentions of the UK government to address global humanitarian challenges and support efforts to reach the SDGs are unclear. The merging of the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) into the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was the first of many changes to jeopardise the future of UK aid as a means to transform the lives of people living in extreme poverty. While some degree of independent oversight remains, the Integrated Review of Defence, Foreign Policy, Security and Development did not present a clear policy direction and lacked commitments to reduce poverty.

The systematic erosion of the aid budget presents a clear direction in terms of the UK's commitment to act as a force for good in the world. In 2020, cuts to the aid budget of £2.9 billion, in response to an anticipated drop in GNI, are being followed by much deeper cuts in 2021, as UK aid is reduced to only 0.5% of national income. When and if the budget will be restored to 0.7% is currently unclear. A rethink is needed as to the role of civil society as a constructive critic, holding government to account on behalf of those who don't have a voice, and as a recipient of donor funds.

Social movements around the climate crisis and Black Lives Matter and have shown how connected we all are and the need for action and change. Some of these issues resonate with the people we work with and there are opportunities to contribute to these movements for change. Others, such as those highlighting racism in the aid sector, the need to decolonise aid and the shift to promoting locally led responses, speak directly to our work, increasing accountability and driving change.

Concern is fortunate to have loyal supporters who campaign, donate and engage with our work. However, public support for aid and international development is decreasing with the

number of people in the UK who donate to a global poverty NGO falling from 36% in 2013 to 19% in 2019. With public trust and interest in INGOs waning, voluntary fundraising from the public becomes harder, particularly during a post-Covid economic crisis and with the impacts of Brexit still emerging. While humanitarian crises are on the increase, they are mostly protracted and 'political' rather than natural disasters which can make it harder to generate interest and a sense of urgency. On top of that, research shows that younger people join issues and movements rather than align themselves with institutions¹.

However, with digital becoming front and centre of how we work there are genuine opportunities to mobilise audiences in greater numbers, to build their understanding of the work they are supporting and to bring supporters in the UK much closer to the people they wish to assist. Digital technology is already helping our supporters connect with our teams delivering our work overseas and to bring together like-minded supporters through social media channels. These opportunities will grow and allow us to better understand and respond to our supporters' interests and motivations on a much more individual basis.

1. Taken from The Existential Funding Challenge for Northern INGOs: Barney Tallack May 2020

Aligned with the Global Strategic Plan

The UK strategy aligns with Concern Worldwide's Global Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and sets out a clear contribution to the overall organisation. The overarching strategic goal is to achieve:

- the greatest possible impact for those furthest behind - mobilising our global network to respond to rising poverty, hunger and humanitarian needs while empowering more communities at the furthest frontiers of an increasingly fragile world.

What We Will Do in the World

With four strategic goals, set out in the graphic opposite, the plan deepens our commitment to work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, recognising our dual mandate which requires us to respond to emergencies while addressing the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability through longer-term programming. The plan deepens the organisational commitment to locally led humanitarian action, building on experiences over the past decade and seeking to apply these in the most fragile contexts. Concern's work will continue to span four main programme areas: emergencies, livelihoods, health (including nutrition) and education, while the commitment to quality programming means that we leverage the potential of a multi-sectoral approach to maximise impact.



Sustained Support and Commitment

The plan commits to bringing a strong voice, anchored in experience on the ground, to address global policies, attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate extreme poverty, inequalities and the high levels of risk and vulnerability that drive humanitarian crises. Concern is committed to amplifying the voices and experience of the individuals and communities that we work with. By communicating the reality of these experiences, we will go beyond simply raising awareness of issues, but rather, propose solutions that are practical, empowering and embedded in those realities.

Within the plan are commitments to: security, safety and wellbeing of staff, consistently improving practice related to protection and safeguarding, strengthening practice and outcomes around equality, diversity and inclusion and deepening of environmental commitments.



Concern staff wade through flood water to reach vulnerable communities in rural areas of Aweil, South Sudan. Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Concern Worldwide

Looking back to move forward: our achievements under the last strategic plan and strategy refresh (2016–2020)



↑ 1. We raised over £39 million from the UK public in voluntary fundraising and secured support worth over £100 million from UK institutional donors, first and foremost DfID/FCDO. As a result, we contributed over £123 million to fighting poverty and responding to emergencies.

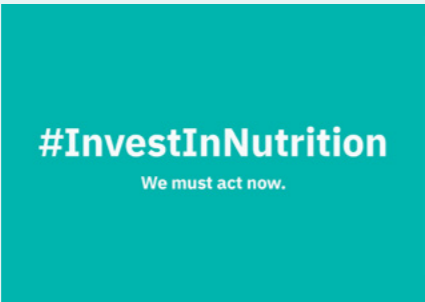


↑ 2. We worked with the DEC to deliver six appeals, mobilising £3.65 million in DEC funds while raising awareness and engaging supporters and the broader public through creating content, providing spokespeople and hosting visits in impacted countries. Supported places included Afghanistan, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Yemen and East Africa.

Women draw household water from underground tanks installed as part of Concern's BDR project in Pakistan. Photo: Kanwal Manzoor/Concern Worldwide



↑ 3. We successfully submitted our first tender for funding under a contract, and delivered the subsequent Building Disaster Resilience in Pakistan programme with consortium partners ACTED, WeltHungerHilfe and IRC, with outstanding results for crisis-hit communities.



↑ 4. We launched our Can't Stomach Hunger integrated campaign and recruited more than 16,000 campaign supporters with over 30% of those completing a follow up action to promote UK investment in nutrition.

5. Effective advocacy on nutrition contributed to the UK government exceeding its commitment to reach 50 million women and girls through high-impact nutrition interventions. →



A community outreach worker assesses two-year-old Nya Goa at a nutrition centre in Gambella, Ethiopia. Photo: Kieran McConville/Concern Worldwide



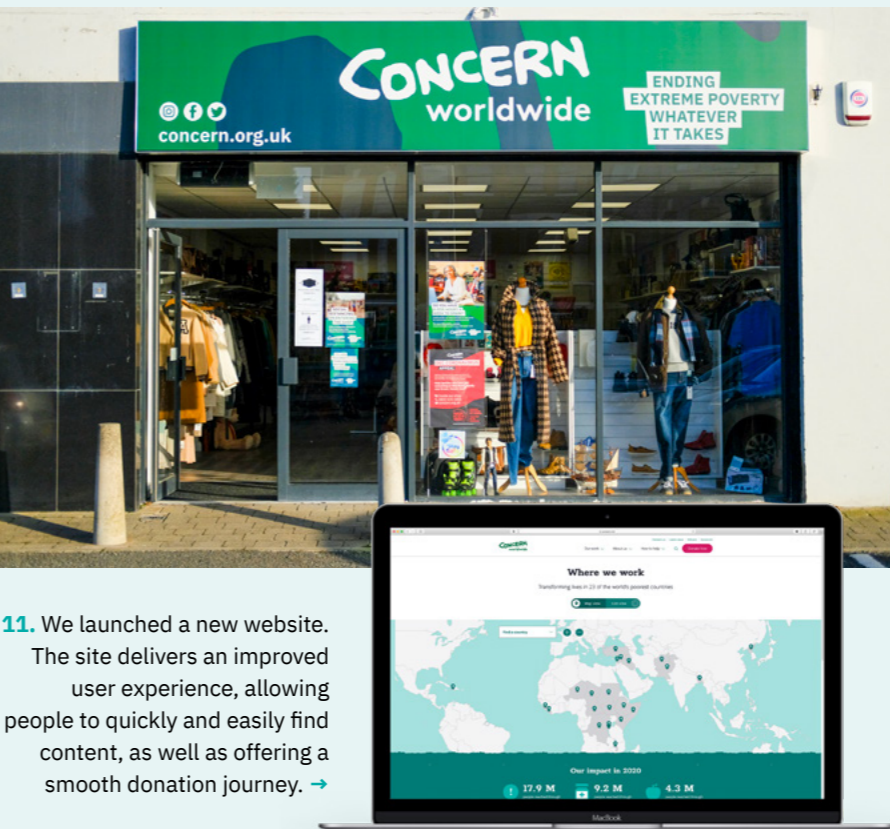
← 6. We produced evidence-based policy briefings to engage with decision makers on our key issue areas including *Nutrition: The Key to Unlocking UK Aid's Impact*, *A Review of Community-Centred Early Action Systems* and the *At What Cost* report highlighting gaps in climate adaptation financing.



↑ 7. We launched new fundraising products including the Ration Challenge, Through to 2, the Concern Philanthropic Circle and the women's livelihoods cash proposition – and revitalised our virtual gifts.

← 8. We forged strong partnerships with funders such as the Innocent Foundation and Whole Planet Foundation and increased income from trusts and foundations by over 60%.

Photo: Darren Vaughan/Concern Worldwide



11. We launched a new website. The site delivers an improved user experience, allowing people to quickly and easily find content, as well as offering a smooth donation journey. →

← 9. We expanded our network of charity shops, almost trebling our retail income.

10. We launched a new brand which gave us a stronger voice and messaging around extreme poverty and working with fragile communities and delivered more joined up messaging for all teams. ↓



Our five-year ambition in the UK

Our ambition is to mobilise resources, people, decision makers and partners to respond to rising poverty and humanitarian needs, improving the lives of people living in extreme poverty in the world’s poorest and most fragile countries.

What we will do

GOAL 1

Grow our public fundraising and institutional funding

GOAL 2

Be a credible and powerful voice to drive policy change and urgent action on extreme poverty

GOAL 3

Be a diverse, responsive and inclusive organisation

How we will succeed

1.

Benefitting from partnerships

2.

More engaged supporters

3.

Connecting people across borders

GOAL 1:

GROW OUR PUBLIC FUNDRAISING AND INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

What we will do:



Fundraising



Partnerships



Specialisms

To grow our public fundraising, we will increase our supporter base, including individual donors and regular givers, high value donors and community fundraisers, as well as those who participate in events such as the Ration Challenge. We will continue to develop activities to attract new supporters, with a particular focus on digital engagement and the development of new digital fundraising products. We will remain committed to improving our supporters’ experience, taking advantage of our new relationship management system and research methods to understand what motivates our supporters, to encourage their long-term engagement. The strategy clearly sets out our intention to increase our fundraising from organisations, trusts and foundations, and from corporates more broadly. We will continue to strengthen our retail operation, grow our network of shops and increase the funds generated through our retail outlets. We will also seek to develop and launch a new mass participation event to attract new supporters and increase engagement with new audiences. Our growth in these areas will be driven by our ability to make successful cases for new investment from the global budget.

With the policy direction of the new FCDO still unclear, we are taking a pragmatic and informed approach to institutional fundraising. Early indications are that our specialisations in conflict-affected and fragile contexts and addressing hunger will remain broadly relevant and we will position ourselves strongly in these areas. As the FCDO will remain decentralised in its approach to funding, we will continue to equip relevant country offices with the skills and information they need to secure new FCDO funding through grants and contracts. We will strengthen this global contracting function for Concern, aiming to position the organisation to win more bids during the life of the strategy.



Strategic objectives

- Grow our base of engaged supporters: individual donors, regular givers, high value donors, community fundraisers, event participants and shoppers.
- Invest in innovation and research to build the base of digitally-engaged supporters across all Concern (UK) fundraising activities.
- Position Concern to be a key FCDO partner in relevant countries.
- Further develop a pipeline of commercial contracts.
- Build partnerships that mobilise resources and increase our impact.

Strategic actions

- 1.** Invest in a diverse range of recruitment channels and engagement activities to grow Concern (UK)’s support base.
- 2.** Maximise the potential of the new supporter relationship management system and other research methods to deliver an outstanding, individualised experience, to maximise supporter engagement and value.
- 3.** Develop, test and launch at least one new digital mass participation fundraising product.
- 4.** Develop at least two new donor propositions that operate exclusively or primarily through digital channels and significantly grow our base of digital supporters.
- 5.** Grow the number of Concern’s partnerships with charitable trusts and foundations.
- 6.** Grow the number of Concern’s partnerships with companies and corporate foundations and broaden our engagement with them.
- 7.** Position Concern as a preferred subcontractor, in its areas of programme specialism, with organisations that consistently win FCDO contracts.
- 8.** Develop a ‘business partnering’ relationship between Concern (UK) and selected country teams towards FCDO, and build capability to develop winning bids and implement contracts.
- 9.** Provide the wider organisation with timely and usable intelligence on emergent directions of FCDO, and arising opportunities.

GOAL 2:

**BE A CREDIBLE
AND POWERFUL
VOICE TO
DRIVE POLICY
CHANGE AND
URGENT ACTION
ON EXTREME
POVERTY**

What we will do:



Advocacy



Policy



Influence

Informed by our experience in some of the poorest communities and fragile contexts, we will advocate for policies and actions that can change things for the better.

We want to have a distinctive UK voice and presence both with government and the public on the issues that are of most significance to people living in extreme poverty. Guided by the International Advocacy Strategy and the key themes of hunger, conflict and climate change, we will adapt organisational positions so they are compelling in the UK market, commission research that gains traction and continue campaigning as a crucial mechanism to influence decision makers. We will continue our integrated approach to campaigning, led by policy and shaped by the changes we want to see. We will also seek to create opportunities for campaigners to get involved in fundraising activities.

With the changes to UK aid, we know we need to work hard to ensure development assistance goes to those in greatest need, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal commitment to leave no-one behind. We will work towards a stronger focus for the brand in the UK, situating our work more distinctively among other INGOs and speaking out on issues most relevant to the world's poorest people. We will continue to work with others such as Bond - the UK international development network, and the International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN) to amplify our voice while lending our unique perspectives to these bigger campaigns.



The Concern (UK) launch of the 2019 Global Hunger Index on hunger and climate change - at City Hall, London. Photo: Kevin Percival/Concern Worldwide

Strategic objectives

- Build a supporter base of committed individuals, who are passionate about taking action on extreme poverty.
- Influence decision makers on issues of climate, hunger, conflict and the future of UK aid.
- Raise public awareness of the challenges facing people living in extreme poverty, highlighting their resilience and capabilities, with a particular focus on climate change, hunger and conflict.
- Develop and leverage partnerships for collaborative and stronger influencing.

Strategic actions

1. Grow the number of engaged campaigners.
2. Build public pressure through campaign actions to influence decision makers.
3. Engage decision makers directly and through strategic partnerships and coalitions.
4. Develop clear and compelling UK positions and calls to action on themes relevant to our work.
5. Create connections across borders so that people can tell their own stories.
6. Engage with country programmes to distil key messages, gather evidence and share expertise and knowledge.

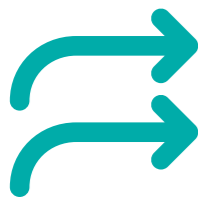
GOAL 3:

BE A DIVERSE, RESPONSIVE AND INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

What we will do:



Diversity



Agility



Sustainability

We have a small team of staff, packed with expertise and who perform at a high level. We want to promote an organisational culture based on shared values and trust and be people-focused by supporting staff wellbeing, learning and development, and flexible working. We commit to becoming more diverse and inclusive at all levels and to implement and monitor a diversity and inclusion action plan that will be developed at the start of this strategy period. We believe these investments will impact positively on the quality of our work, make our decision-making more robust and effective, improve the support we can offer to others across the organisation and increase our motivation.

Throughout the strategic planning process, we have emphasised the importance of the agility we have demonstrated during the Covid pandemic and the need to retain this capacity. We have identified the importance of planning, budgeting, resource allocation, monitoring and learning to ensure we remain effective and responsive to both challenges and opportunities. We have also revisited the importance of innovation in a fast changing and competitive market and intend to ensure there are opportunities for staff to be creative and generate new ideas. Underpinning processes which enable change and adaptation, we will continue to focus on maintaining our standards in finance, compliance and governance and to working with the global organisation on critical issues such as safeguarding, accountability and our digital future.

We are committed to remaining an employer of choice and a great place to work while internalising our values in the way we work. We recognise the negative impact of climate change on the livelihoods of the people we work with and the importance of the environment in securing sustainable futures. We will work towards becoming an increasingly environmentally conscious organisation, and guided by our environment policy, we will take steps to reduce our carbon footprint.



In 2020, Concern (UK) launched Women of Concern - a global community of change-making women.

Strategic objectives

- Increase diversity at all levels and commit to inclusive leadership that models, represents and nourishes a culture where all identities are accepted, valued and belong.
- Develop efficient, effective and creative ways of working to take advantage of opportunities and overcome emerging challenges.
- Enable staff and volunteers to perform to their best wherever they work.
- Manage resources well to achieve the strategic objectives.

Strategic actions

1. Develop and deliver a diversity and inclusion action plan.
2. Create environmentally friendly practices and processes.
3. Demonstrate a visible, active commitment to safeguard mental health in the workplace.
4. Provide flexible working conditions that are equitable and empowering.
5. Improve opportunities for learning and development to foster commitment and accountability for continued professional development.

How we will succeed

The consultations and discussions that informed our strategic plan highlighted three vital factors necessary for us to succeed. Each of them are spread across our strategic objectives and require attention and investment under this plan for us to succeed.



Ayaan's baby son Jon is recovering after receiving treatment at a Concern-supported nutrition clinic in Aweil, South Sudan. Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Concern Worldwide
* Names changed to protect the identity of individuals.

1. Benefitting from partnerships

Partnerships are an important success factor in achieving our financial goals and are an area where we already have significant expertise. We aim to increase and deepen these partnerships. However, we also recognise that in the UK there is a wealth of opportunity for us to increase our innovation, reach and impact for extremely poor people by working with others. We believe partnerships can enable us to harness the energy of people and organisations who want to get involved in making positive changes in the lives of the world's poorest. Through partnership, we think we can bring to

bear additional knowledge and resources and influence actors to tilt the balance in favour of those living in extreme poverty, having a bigger impact than Concern alone. We also believe that partnership can create opportunities to develop different ways of thinking and doing. We aim to increase our ability to mobilise resources, people and decision makers as well as enhance our own expertise through partnership. We know that to do this effectively, we will need to make sure we have the right approaches and attitudes and make the right strategic investments.

2. More engaged supporters

In the UK, we have a loyal and caring supporter base who engage with us, donate, raise funds, volunteer and campaign to improve the lives of the poorest people. Under this strategy, we want to increase the number of our supporters, deepening their engagement and knowledge and communicating with them in a way that fosters understanding and creates momentum and willingness to take action to end extreme poverty.

Above: The Wato family - Davilla (7), Patricia (5) and Gaus (12) - with their friends from the village of Gbatin, CAR, where Concern is helping communities produce their own food through seed and tool distribution and training in improved farming techniques. Photo: Darren Vaughan/Concern Worldwide

3. Connecting people across borders

If we can take a positive away from the Covid-19 pandemic, it was the experience of pulling together across all our offices, connected by previously under-utilised digital technologies. We saw the benefits of stronger connections being formed between staff in the UK and the wider organisation. We now want to become an increasingly strategic partner to our country offices, supporting our programmes to grow and strengthening

“We now want to become an increasingly strategic partner to our country offices, supporting our programmes to grow and strengthening networks that will improve funding and influence.”

networks that will improve funding and influence. In turn, we will learn from our colleagues and our engagement will inform our interactions and advocacy in the UK. We believe that linking our supporters and donors more strongly to the people and organisations we work with will increase their commitment to addressing poverty and inequality and create a deeper understanding of the lives of the people in the places where we work.



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CONCERN
worldwide

ENDING
EXTREME POVERTY
WHATEVER
IT TAKES

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