

**CONCERN**  
worldwide



# A MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

Ending extreme poverty,  
whatever it takes

June 2024

# At a glance: Four priorities for tackling extreme poverty

## 1 Restore the aid budget to 0.7% GNI and provide additional climate finance

Funding must reflect the scale and urgency of extreme poverty and climate change. The humanitarian funding gap will not be addressed without scaled up investments, not only in humanitarian response but also in addressing the underlying drivers of extreme poverty.

**Restore Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) and provide additional climate funding, exploring new sources of public, grant-based finance to avoid increasing the indebtedness of low-income countries.**

## 2 Reach those furthest behind first

UK ODA can be invested in people and places that would not be possible for other types of funding. It should be used to develop solutions for hard-to-reach and marginalised people, particularly those living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

A targeted and strategic approach is needed to effectively deliver for people living in extreme poverty; the UK government must develop a clear strategy to guide funding and prioritisation.

**Women are still more likely than men to live in extreme poverty and experience gender-based violence. The UK should promote gender-transformative approaches to sustainable development and humanitarian response.**

## 3 Quality funding for transformative impacts

The UK should fund long-term programmes aimed at the root causes of conflict and crises. Humanitarian crises are often protracted or predictable. Funding should allow programmes to move from humanitarian response to resilience-building and development, and back again, as the context changes.

**Deliver ODA through long-term funding, with flexibility built in to enable early action in response to new humanitarian needs, to build resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.**

## 4 Become a good partner for locally led development

The UK must demonstrate its commitment to redressing enduring global power imbalances and systemic inequalities. Shifting power and resources to affected communities, and local and national actors, is crucial for addressing humanitarian crises and building long-term resilience in a way that is sustainable and best meets people's needs.

**Aid responses must be led, managed and controlled by those closest to the affected communities.** This requires supporting the empowerment of local civil society, government, the private sector and the affected populations. The UK should set out the ways it will enable locally led development, with clear targets and actions. It should also hold its international partners – multilateral agencies and international NGOs – to account.

## Who we are

Concern Worldwide is an international development and humanitarian organisation. We have been operating for more than 50 years, and work with 30 million people across 26 countries in some of the hardest to reach and most fragile places. We are dedicated to ending extreme poverty, whatever it takes. We have decades of experience of working with communities that have been marginalised and affected by conflict and crisis.

Our manifesto draws on our experience of working with communities in fragile contexts, as well as lessons from the humanitarian and development sector. It sets out the key challenges facing the UK government, and practical steps and approaches it should take to halt extreme poverty and build resilience in the most fragile countries. It shares the approaches that we have found deliver the best results for people living in extreme poverty globally.

Houré Assoumana has brought her two-year-old daughter Fidawssou to a Concern-supported health centre in Niger. Healthcare staff at the clinic carry out screenings for malnutrition, provide emergency therapeutic food and give advice on good sanitation and hygiene to the 3,000 families who live there.

Photo: Darren Vaughan/Concern Worldwide



# Global context

## A positive role for the UK in the world

As a major global economy and influential political actor, the UK can and must play its part in eradicating extreme poverty. Global hunger is rapidly increasing, driven by conflict and climate change. Aid cuts have reduced vital support for people living in extreme poverty. This includes women and girls, those with disabilities, and others in need who are disproportionately affected by poverty. The cuts have also damaged the UK's reputation globally as a good development partner. With focused action, this situation can be reversed.

## The challenges facing a new UK government

Globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty declined from 36% in 1990 to 10% in 2015. But the pace of progress has slowed since then, with the trend reversing in 2020. World hunger levels have been rising since 2015 and in 2023, 735 million people faced undernourishment.

**735 million people**  
undernourished

The number of people forcibly displaced from their homes is trending steadily upwards, and is expected to reach 130.8 million in 2024. These trends have been driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, inflation, recession, conflict and climate change. Inequality is also increasing, both within and between countries. Although global poverty has now reduced to pre-pandemic levels, recovery has been uneven. Extreme poverty remains persistently high and is increasing in lower-income and fragile and conflict-affected countries.

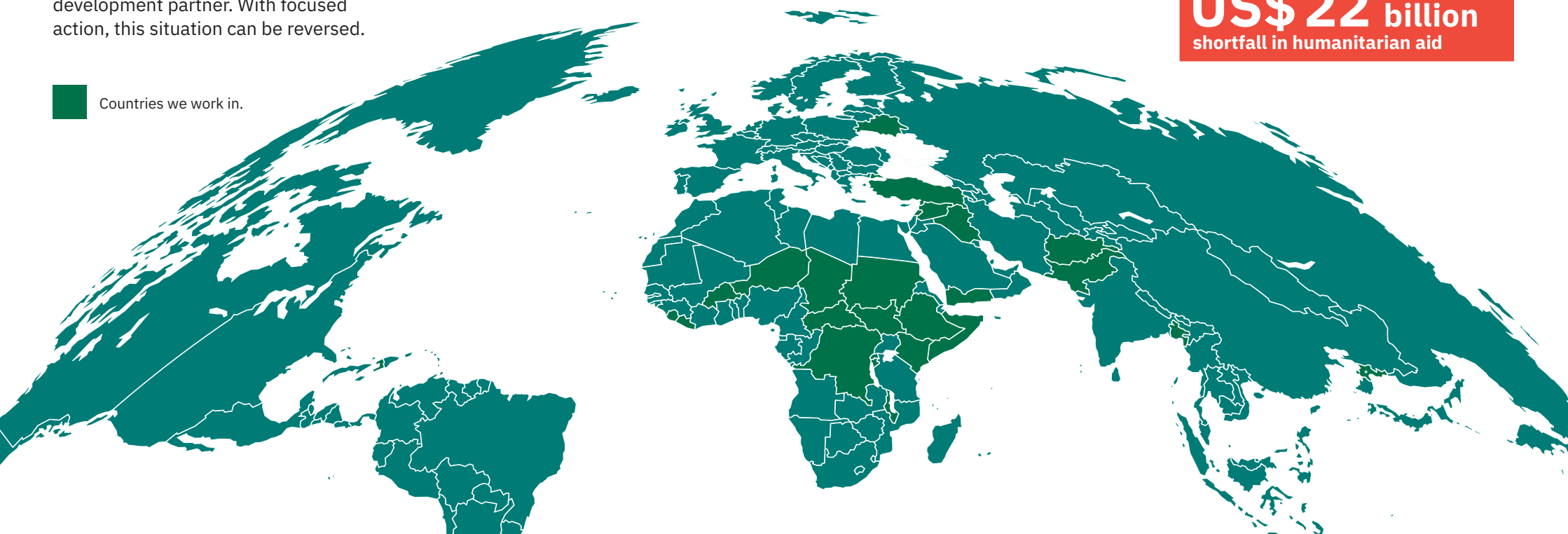
**130 million people**  
forcibly displaced

Humanitarian needs continue to grow at a faster pace than funding can keep up with. In 2013, the shortfall was US\$4.6 billion. By 2022, this had risen to US\$22.2 billion.

As a result, UN-coordinated appeals have met only 60% of their funding requirements on average over the past decade. In 2022, about a third (18 out of 46) of appeals received 50% or less of their requested funding. The number of countries with UN appeals that are experiencing protracted or recurrent crises is growing. An increasing majority of people in need (83%) live in a country that has had an UN-coordinated appeal for five or more consecutive years.

**US\$ 22 billion**  
shortfall in humanitarian aid

Countries we work in.



Shabana Khatun works in her vegetable garden in North Bedkashi, Bangladesh. The south-west coastal region of Bangladesh is prone to various natural and climate-related hazards, putting its 14 million inhabitants at significant risk.

Photo: Mumit M/Concern Worldwide

Conflict is the single biggest driver of humanitarian crises today. Fragile and conflict-affected places make up 24% of the world's total population, but are home to 73% of those people classified as extremely poor.

Climate change is another key driver. Without immediate ambitious action, the climate crisis will continue to act as a 'threat multiplier', deepening global inequalities and disproportionately affecting people living in the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries.

UK cuts to aid funding have resulted in the reduction of critical support to the world's least developed countries. Funding for nutrition programmes, for instance, fell by more than 70% in 2021, compared to 2019.

## 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a blueprint for peace and security

Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At the heart of the SDGs is the principle of leaving no one behind. This means not only reaching people living in extreme poverty, but also combating discrimination and rising inequality within and among countries, and their root causes. Our experience has shown that we need to make additional and deliberate efforts to reach people who are living in chronic and/or extreme poverty, or who are marginalised or in highly vulnerable situations.

With less than a decade remaining to reach the SDGs, the UK government must address the immediate and underlying drivers of extreme poverty.

Success will also require changes to the international humanitarian and development system, to ensure decolonised and decentralised development. Shifting power and resources to affected communities, and local and national actors, is crucial for sustainable and context-appropriate approaches to address humanitarian crises and build longer-term resilience.

# Lessons on tackling extreme poverty

Several decades of international development experience have provided lessons on what does and does not work. Here we highlight the policies, approaches and funding strategies that have been proven to be effective.

## Funding to reflect the scale and urgency of extreme poverty and climate change

The scale of the challenges faced mean it is critical that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is increased to the legally-mandated level of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) at least. The humanitarian funding gap will not be addressed without scaled up investments, not only in humanitarian response but also in addressing the underlying drivers of extreme poverty.

Climate change makes it more difficult and more costly for lower income countries to reduce poverty. The costs of climate change are already being incurred by people living in extreme poverty. Flows of international adaptation finance to low-income countries are 5-10 times below estimated needs, and the gap is widening. It is not sustainable for these investments to come from existing aid budgets.

## “Climate finance must also be ‘new and additional’ to flows of development assistance.”

The UK must lead the way in beginning to identify new sources of grant-based public climate finance, to ensure that climate support does not come at the expense of vital ODA spending in other areas and does not add to the indebtedness of low-income countries. ODA budgets alone will not be sufficient to meet rising climate finance costs alongside other critical development needs.

The UK’s international climate finance must be new and additional to 0.7% GNI ODA, be grant-based, and cover the three pillars of tackling climate change: mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage.

## Targeted, better quality and more flexible funding

UK ODA should be used in places and ways that other types of funding will not be able to – **to develop solutions for hard-to-reach people and conflict-affected populations.** The UK previously had a commitment to focus on fragile contexts. This commitment should be continued.



Godfrey Sain and Agness Bowa harvest pigeon peas in their home garden in Lundu Village, Malawi. As well as being a lead farmer, a role that involves supporting others with training and advice, Godfrey is also a gender champion within his community. Photo: Chris Gagnon/Concern Worldwide

## Case study: Transforming gender dynamics to cut poverty in Malawi

Concern’s Graduation programme was designed to boost people’s livelihoods and income, improve their self-confidence and reduce social exclusion. In Malawi, the programme uses a gender transformative dialogue, called Umodzi. Concern staff worked with male and female spouses in their homes, discussing marriage practices, sex within marriages, understanding and preventing violence, healthy

relationships and communication, the division of household labour, budgeting and decision-making as well as positive parenting. Staff also facilitated discussions in mixed and single-sex groups.

Research by Trinity College Dublin has shown that this gender transformative dialogue not only improves women’s agency and men’s mental wellbeing, it also contributes to increased levels of food consumption, food security, household income and livestock ownership.



Concern team members on the streets of Cité Soleil in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Photo: Kieran McConville/Concern Worldwide

### Case study: Building community acceptance and trust – our work in Haiti

Concern has been working in Haiti since 1994. Our work goes beyond emergency response. We also focus on peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives, working closely with communities, young people, women and local organisations. In Haiti, where conflict and insecurity are huge challenges, community acceptance and the communities' trust in us is central to our ability to reach the people most in need of assistance.

Our ability to access parts of Port-au-Prince during the height of gang violence was only possible due to our acceptance, built up with the community over years of community-led programming.

One of the ways we are able to work consistently with communities over long time periods is by having long-term, consistent, flexible funding. All the funding we receive in Haiti is multi-annual. With long-term investments, we are able to go beyond emergency response to work with people to make significant changes to their lives.

## INVESTMENT IN NUTRITION PAYS DIVIDENDS



Every £1  
INVESTED IN NUTRITION



£16  
TO LOCAL ECONOMY

TOTAL  
ECONOMIC GAINS  
TO SOCIETY



US \$5.7  
TRILLION P/A  
BY 2030

US \$10.5  
TRILLION P/A  
BY 2050

The UK should fund long-term programmes aimed at the root causes of conflict and crises. Humanitarian crises are often protracted or predictable. Funding should allow programmes to move from humanitarian response to resilience-building and development, and back again, as the context changes. **The UK should enable and champion efforts to support longer-term planning, flexible multi-year funding, and investment in resilience and preparedness.** The recurrent, protracted and complex nature of crises reinforces the importance of developing longer-term interventions that address humanitarian needs, as well as development and peacebuilding challenges.

### Strengthen the voice of people who are marginalised

Enable the delivery and access to services for people who are marginalised, including women and girls, and strengthen their voices in decision-making.

Despite some important progress in recent years, women have not achieved equality with men in any country, and women are still more likely than men to live in extreme

poverty and experience gender-based violence. **The UK should promote gender transformative approaches to sustainable development and humanitarian response.** Programmes that go beyond targeting women to actively promote women's empowerment and challenge harmful gender norms improve outcomes in multiple areas. We have found that gender empowerment training for both men and women increases household income, including household business income and women's incomes, more than just simply targeting women with programmes.

### Prioritise sectors that are most effective at reducing poverty and inequality

Prioritise those sectors which have been shown to be most effective in reducing poverty and inequality, particularly: health and nutrition, education and social protection.

Good nutrition is essential for human survival and is one of the most effective investments for development. For every £1 invested in nutrition, £16 is returned to the local economy. The total economic gains to society from investing in nutrition could reach

US\$5.7 trillion a year by 2030, and US\$10.5 trillion a year by 2050. The FCDO needs a strategy for nutrition that includes the core sectors where nutrition-sensitive spend is low but critical for impact, including climate, health, economic development, agriculture and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

### Catalyse positive change and innovations

A large proportion of crises are predictable. There is growing evidence that early, preventative action is more efficient and effective. However, progress towards anticipatory action and risk reduction has been slow. The majority of funding globally is still channelled via mechanisms which cause delays in getting resources to frontline responders.

The UK has been a key driver of progress, for example through enabling the creation and resourcing of mechanisms like the Start Network. The UK's focus on driving further change and innovations remains essential.

### Shift power and improve partnership

Enable context-specific, community-driven programmes, ensuring that ODA-funded development programmes recognise, respect and build on local resources and assets.

The UK must demonstrate its commitment to redressing enduring

global power imbalances and systemic inequalities, and to promoting gender equality and racial justice.

Transforming the UK's approach to partnership is central to restoring the UK's credibility. The UK government should contribute to reshaping the global international development system, recognising other governments, civil society organisations and local communities as equal and expert partners.

In order for there to be a true shift in power, aid responses will need to be led, managed and controlled by those closest to the affected communities. This requires supporting the empowerment of local civil society, government, the private sector and the affected populations. The UK must put measures in place to ensure that all efforts to 'localise' aid are being conducted with the end goal of local leadership in mind.

The UK can ensure its approach to partnership builds trust by:

- Demonstrating the UK's commitment to redressing power imbalances by **establishing concrete commitments and measurable milestones** as well as a clear, systematic approach to tracking and reporting on localisation metrics. This should not only encompass access to quality funding, but also quality of partnerships, participation in decision-making and support to local leadership of programming and coordination.



Daahir\* inspecting his papaya fruits on his farm in Somlia. With the knowledge and support he gained from Concern, he was able to plant different seeds, and grow them successfully.

Photo: Mustafa Saeed/Concern Worldwide \*Name has been changed to protect the individuals identity.

### Case study: Building climate resilient communities in Somalia

Our joint programme targets villages most vulnerable to drought. With communities, we monitor early warning indicators and trigger a rapid local response when signs of a potential crisis emerge. In 2017, by the time famine was forecast as a possibility in Somalia, Concern's staff had already

been giving cash assistance and support to ensure the survival of livestock six months beforehand.

As a result, villages that were part of the early action programme had far fewer families forced to leave due to the drought. In fact, even though these communities were originally the most vulnerable, many became hosts to displaced people from nearby and previously "better off" villages.





60-year-old Bichara Kane is a community health worker at a Concern-supported clinic in Kolloma village, Niger which is home to around 900 families. She has been helping to screen children for malnutrition for the past four years. Photo: Darren Vaughan/Concern Worldwide

### Case study: Strengthening local health capacity in Niger

Concern is committed to localisation and strengthening local capacity. We collaborate with local organisations across our countries of operation, supporting more than 100 local NGO partners through funding and capacity strengthening to achieve greater and more sustainable impacts at a local level.

In Niger, we've worked to strengthen local health capacities through our community-based management of acute malnutrition. With local health facilities, we developed a 'Surge

Model' to support them to become more responsive to spikes in acute malnutrition and other diseases. Surge models aim to make health systems more resilient, equipping them to cope with periodic peaks in demand for essential nutrition and child health services – when the potential to save lives is often greatest – without undermining the capacity and accountability of government health actors. The model can contribute to building health system shock responsiveness. By demonstrating its effectiveness, this model has been endorsed by Niger's Ministry of Health and adopted into its national protocols.

- Using its position as a major donor of international aid to insist the same of the multilateral agencies and INGOs who receive their funds. It must **hold the UN system accountable for quality of partnerships**, support to local leadership and ring-fenced, accessible and appropriate funding for national NGOs.
- Evolving the ways of working in-country; in-country donor staff should make it a priority to meet with local civil society on a regular basis – perhaps setting a target.
- Walking the talk domestically. The UK must contribute its fair share to limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The next UK government should end all investment in new coal, oil, and gas at home and overseas. **It must also make sure it implements the SDGs domestically, respecting and protecting human rights, and alleviating poverty at home as well as abroad.**
- The UK gains much soft power from its work on international development and humanitarian issues and has considerable convening power.

### Policy coherence and accountability across government

To be most effective and have greatest impact, wider UK government international policy and activity must work coherently together to build the strategic, political and operational leadership required to develop a global system fit for future challenges.

- There should be **oversight and accountability of all government departments spending ODA funds.**
- Wider policies of all government departments – from trade to tax – should also contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

**The UK government should use its position in all global forums to push for transformation and delivery of the SDGs.** For example, a new UK government could provide critical political leadership by signing up to the UN Tax Reform Convention and ending UK-controlled tax havens. This would release vital new revenue streams to strengthen the economies of lower-income countries and help the UK meet its international development funding commitments.

Shahinaz\* stands next to her tent at a camp in north-west Syria. As part of Concern's response to the Syria-Turkey earthquake, cash assistance is distributed to displaced families living in camps and temporary shelters to meet their immediate needs.

Photo: Karam Al-Masri/Arete/DEC

\*Name has been changed to protect the identity of the individual.



# Four priorities for tackling extreme poverty

## 1 Restore the aid budget to 0.7% GNI and provide additional climate finance

Restore the aid budget to at least 0.7% GNI and provide additional climate funding, exploring new sources of public grant-based finance to avoid increasing the indebtedness of low-income countries.

Funding must reflect the scale and urgency of extreme poverty and climate change. The humanitarian funding gap will not be addressed without scaled up investments not only in humanitarian response but also in addressing the underlying drivers of extreme poverty.

The UK should come to the 2024 UN climate change conference (COP29) – the Finance COP – with a strategy for delivering grant-based climate finance for adaptation, mitigation and loss and damage, additional to ODA. It should champion an ambitious needs-based new collective climate finance goal at COP, with a significant and transparent public finance component provided by high-income countries, in line with their historic responsibility and capacity, and clear sub-goals for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage.

The UK should also review and increase the funding pledge made on nutrition ahead of the next Nutrition for Growth Summit in March 2025, and play a leading role in showing accountability on the previous N4G pledges made.

## 2 Reach those furthest behind first

UK ODA can be invested in people and places that would not be possible for other types of funding. It should be used to develop solutions for hard-to-reach and marginalised people, particularly those living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

A targeted and strategic approach is needed to effectively deliver for people living in extreme poverty; the UK government must develop a clear strategy to guide funding and prioritisation. This should include:

- A focus on least developed countries and fragile and conflict-affected contexts. At least 50% of ODA should be spent in these areas.
- The principle of ‘leave no one behind’ at its centre, promoting gender equality, disability inclusion and addressing all forms of marginalisation.

- Establish an oversight body, reporting to the Minister for Development for transparency and accountability of all departments responsible for ODA spending, to ensure all ODA is spent in a targeted and strategic way.

## 3 Quality funding for transformative impacts

The UK should fund long-term programmes aimed at the root causes of conflict and crises. Humanitarian crises are often protracted or predictable. Funding should allow programmes to move from humanitarian response to resilience-building and development, and back again, as the context changes.

Deliver ODA through long-term funding, with flexibility built in to enable early action in response to new humanitarian needs, to build resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

## 4 Become a good partner for locally led development

The UK must demonstrate its commitment to redressing enduring global power imbalances and systemic inequalities. Shifting power and resources to affected communities, and local and national actors, is crucial for addressing humanitarian crises and building long-term resilience in a way that is sustainable and best meets people’s needs.

The UK must prioritise locally led development and provide a roadmap for how this will be achieved through ODA and ways of working. The UK should set out concrete steps, milestones and how it will be held accountable through tracking and reporting on localisation metrics.

The UK should also hold its partners in the UN system, including multilateral agencies and INGOs, to account. This should not only encompass access to quality funding, but also quality of partnerships, participation in decision-making and support to local leadership of programming and coordination.

Fatouma Ilassane is a health volunteer in the Concern-supported intensive nutritional rehabilitation centre in Illela, Niger.

Photo: Ed Ram/Concern Worldwide



**Cover:** Mahadia Gamar (24) showcases her watermelon at her farm in Karo village, Chad. Mahadia has received cash assistance as part of the Green Graduation programme in Sila province.

Photo: Eugene Ikua/Concern Worldwide

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