

Your Concern

WINTER 2025



Photo: Salkat Mojumder/Concern Worldwide



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Find out how your support is changing lives across the globe

Photo: Gavin Douglas/Concern Worldwide



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Growing hope: how one mother's garden feeds a family's dreams

From communities to hospitals, your support is strengthening healthcare across the globe

CONCERN
worldwide



A word from Davina Jeffery, Concern Country Director in Sierra Leone

Looking back on last year it can be hard to stay positive. Both Sudan, where I lived for 4 years and was evacuated from with my family when the war broke out last year, and Gaza, another country in which I lived and worked, remain locked in unimaginable horror. It is hard to understand how these atrocities could happen now, in 2025. Surely this was behind us.

But they are happening, and we can only do what we can, and try to do better. For myself, I have found it is important to find sources of hope, and this brings me to Sierra Leone. This is a country that has seen civil war and Ebola, but now, coming out of that, it is certainly a place of great hope. Sierra Leone remains one of the countries with the highest maternal death rates, but thanks to our staff working with health professionals and communities mothers work together, we have been able to bring these numbers down.

On a recent trip to visit our health and livelihoods programmes, I was struck again by the positivity of those with whom we work. Mothers are excited to share new recipes which are healthier for their children, and communities are proud to show us how healthy those young children are now. Women who have started thriving small businesses due to access to community savings and loans, and men who say the work on gender equality was so important as they now have happy homes.

Thank you for making this work possible and for helping to sow the seeds of this hope.

Davina Jeffery

SAVING LIVES IN SIERRA LEONE: WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER HEALTHCARE

For 20-year-old Mariatu Kamara, expecting her first child, this means receiving vital pregnancy check-ups at the Mambolo health centre in Kambia District. “I decided to go to antenatal classes to ensure the baby grows well,” she shares warmly. Despite the 45-minute walk from her home, Mariatu, a dedicated student, never misses a session. Her husband, a soldier, has been supportive throughout her pregnancy. “He takes good care of me,” she says with appreciation. At the centre, Mariatu joins other mothers-to-be



Pregnant mum Mariatu Kamara (20) at Mambolo health centre, which is supported by Concern.

Photo: Darren Vaughan/Concern Worldwide

in learning about nutrition and health through interactive classes that end with songs to help the women remember what they learned. Now feeling prepared for motherhood, Mariatu looks forward to welcoming a baby girl.

Sierra Leone's healthcare system has faced many challenges, at the government hospital, nurse Mary Kadie has seen remarkable progress during her three years of service. One of the biggest improvements came two years ago when new solar panels were installed, allowing the hospital to care for patients even after sunset.

Working across six districts, Concern partners with five other organisations – Helen Keller International, Humanity Inclusion, Kings Global Health Partnerships, Send Sierra Leone, and WelBodi Partnership for the Saving Lives in Sierra Leone 3 programme. As part of this work, we help families start vegetable gardens to improve nutrition for pregnant women and young children, while also teaching about healthy eating and pregnancy care. This practical support is vital, as many expecting mothers must walk for two to three hours to reach their nearest health facility – an especially difficult journey during pregnancy and the heavy rains.

The programme focuses on training local healthcare workers rather than bringing in outside staff. **Sierra Leone has one of the highest rates of mothers dying during childbirth and ranks fifth globally for deaths of children under five. Together, with our supporters Concern is working to transform healthcare delivery across the globe, helping communities access better medical care and support.**

Like many expectant mothers around the world, Mariatu looks forward to holding her baby for the first time. Her story shows how access to good healthcare can transform lives in Sierra Leone. As she walks those 45 minutes to her check-ups, confident and hopeful about her future, she represents thousands of mothers across the country who deserve the same chance at a healthy pregnancy and a safe delivery. With continued support and care, more women like Mariatu can experience the joy of motherhood without fear.



Mary Kadie Soloku is a nurse at the Concern-supported Kambia Government Hospital.

Tipping the scales from starvation to survival in Cox's Bazar



Photo: Saklat Munder/Concern Worldwide

Ayesha* (25) a Rohingya mother visits the Concern nutrition centre with her malnourished son Anwar* (9 months). Anwar gets weighted and measured in the nutrition centre at Camp 13, Cox's Bazar.

Last autumn, your kindness helped ensure vital nutrition services could continue in Cox's Bazar. **Thanks to your generous response, children and families in the world's largest refugee camp are receiving life-changing support.**

Our supporter's generosity meant we could react quickly to the devastating flooding of 2024. We provided people affected with food and nutrition support,

repaired damaged homes, reduced the risk of water and vector borne diseases as well as supported people in restarting their livelihoods.

In Concern nutrition centres dedicated workers like Programme Director Shahana Hayat and her team provide emergency therapeutic food, Super Cereal, and essential nutrients like folic acid for pregnant women.

Your support goes beyond immediate nutrition – families are now growing vegetables in small spaces within the camp, providing both nutritious food and potential income. Your generosity is creating **sustainable solutions in extremely challenging circumstances.**

With your continued support, mothers like Ayesha* can give their children the best start in life under unimaginable circumstances.

Christmas Appeal: Somalia update

Thanks to your incredible response to our Christmas Appeal, Concern's Maternal and Child Health (MCH)

Centres in Somalia continue to provide vital support to families facing severe challenges.

With up to 1.6 million children at risk of acute malnutrition, our supporters' contributions make a direct impact for mothers like Ayan* who has visited the health center several times when her children were sick. She was able to get all six of her children treated there, getting vaccines, medicine, and learning more about health.

"I love gaining health awareness and spreading the word to other mothers," said Ayan.

Beyond emergency treatment, the centres offer vital preventative care. Pregnant and new mothers receive nutritional supplements and attend antenatal classes, learning crucial skills like safe food preparation and nutritious meal planning.



Ayan* (39) with her 18 month old child Ahmed* at the Wiil Waal health centre.

Photo: Mustafa Saeed/Concern Worldwide

*Names changed to protect identity

DEC appeal: responding to urgent needs across the Middle East

The Disasters Emergency Committee launched its emergency appeal in October 2024 to respond to the devastating humanitarian crisis in the Middle East. In Gaza, Lebanon and the wider region, millions of people face desperate circumstances.

In Lebanon, we are responding directly as well as through partners. Concern's teams are providing vital humanitarian assistance where it is needed most.

In Gaza, where over 1.9 million people have been forced to leave their homes, half are experiencing near-famine conditions. So far we've been able to supply nearly 180,000 people with clean water and distribute hygiene kits to displaced families.

Meanwhile in Lebanon, more than 1.2 million people – almost 20% of the country's population – had to flee to safety. Our Programme Director Chris Connelly and his team in northern Lebanon have been working to ensure emergency accommodation with proper insulation and heating systems ahead of the winter.

They are providing families with essential supplies including blankets, mattresses, and hygiene kits, while also offering psychological support to help children process their experiences.

“Life is already harsh and in survival mode here in Lebanon,” explains Chris. “The winter months have added another layer to this desperate crisis, but with continued support, we can reach more people with life-saving assistance.”

Our supporters' ongoing kindness helps ensure we can continue reaching those most affected by this humanitarian crisis. Every contribution helps provide essential aid to families facing these extremely challenging circumstances.



Sayyeda Salam, Concern UK
Executive Director at Concern UK
event “Ending Extreme Poverty,
Whatever it Takes” in the Churchill
Room event space at the Houses
of Parliament.

Photo: Kevin Percival/Concern Worldwide



A CONVERSATION WITH SAYYEDA SALAM: FINDING HOPE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

As we begin 2025, we sat down with our new Executive Director, Sayyeda Salam, who joined Concern last September. She shared her journey to Concern and her vision for our future.

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Q: Could you share what brought you to Concern?

I joined Concern after fifteen-and-a-half years at Save the Children, and it took a lot to get me to leave. Concern was really the only organisation I would have left for. I was so aware of Concern's work in 26 countries around the world and how respected they are in the sector. Whether that's in Haiti, where we're still operating in Cité Soleil despite really difficult situations with gang violence, or in Democratic Republic of Congo in some of the most remote parts – **the thing about Concern is that we go to the hardest to reach places and stay there.**

Q: As we begin 2025, could you share a standout moment from your first months with Concern where you saw our teams making a real difference in communities?

Two things have really stood out for me. One of them I call 'hope amidst chaos.' Last summer, we witnessed some really upsetting anti-immigration activism in the UK. In the midst of attacks on refugee accommodation and growing hostility, it felt quite hopeless. But when I joined Concern, I discovered our Global Citizenship Programme. We've been running this for 50 years, reaching

about 5,000 students annually through our Concern Debates. I had the great fortune of seeing this in action at Holy Cross Primary School in Northern Ireland. **Watching children engage with global issues, understanding why someone might become a refugee, and what it means to be a global citizen was incredibly inspiring.** One mother told me afterward, ‘It’s not just for the children – I’ve learned so much through my daughter doing this programme.’

The other standout has been meeting our incredible supporters. I was talking to someone the other day who’s been involved with Concern for many years, supporting us monthly. He was sharing his plans to leave Concern a gift in his Will, thinking through how his support could continue beyond his own lifetime – which I found incredibly moving. The fact that our supporters stay with us for so many years, and even think about continuing their impact after they’re gone, is really special. It’s what makes lasting change possible. I’ve met several supporters who’ve been with us for more than 20 years, and the loyalty and respect they have for Concern is just beautiful. People trust us to spend their money wisely and make a real difference with it.

Q: With climate change and global conflicts intensifying the challenge of extreme poverty, what gives you hope that things can improve?

We’re facing this triple threat of hunger, conflict, and climate change. **One in 11 people right now are hungry, and one in six children are growing up in a conflict zone. But whenever I feel really bleak, I see the best of humanity through Concern’s work.**

Let me share just one story from among the 30 million people we’ve reached this year. A woman called Amani in Sudan, which is one of the world’s most severe forgotten crises with 30 million people in need, she fled her home with her husband and five children. We supported her with a cash transfer that helped her start her own restaurant. Today, that restaurant is a thriving local hub, enabling her to support not just her immediate family but also her family members still in Sudan.

We’re also working to influence wider change, ensuring that evidence from our community work informs policy decisions, from COP29 climate negotiations to the UK’s commitment to international development.

Q: I understand you’ll be visiting some of our project sites this year – what are you most looking forward to?

I’m really excited – it’s going to be really special to get to see our work itself, and I know it’s an enormous privilege. Security allowing, I’m hoping to visit the Democratic Republic of Congo. What I’m most looking forward to is meeting our staff, local partners, and the communities we work with. I want to hear what keeps them going, what’s most helpful, and create that two-way dialogue between our work here in the UK and our programmes on the ground.

Q: Despite global challenges, what moments of hope have you witnessed in our work?

There have been so many! Seeing our face-to-face fundraisers out on the street on a cold day, still smiling and passionate about Concern’s work. Meeting our country programme staff in London and hearing them say how amazing our supporters are. Watching children engage with our Global Citizenship Programme in Northern Ireland. And recently, seeing our team come together for the Disasters Emergency Committee emergency appeal for our work in the Middle East – it was an incredible testament to the solidarity and brilliant culture in the Concern UK office.

Q: Finally, do you have a message for our supporters who make this vital work possible?

Thank you. You’re amazing and it’s very humbling to get to work with you and get to make a difference in 25 countries to 30 million people’s lives. So thank you.



OUR 'FUN'DRAISING SPOTLIGHT



Celebrating its 10th Year – The Fermanagh Beechvale Water Walk

We are delighted to showcase this wonderful annual

walk supported by our amazing Fermanagh Volunteer Group and hosted by Beechvale Water. Celebrating the walks tenth year, Eamon Kelly of Beechvale Water, said:

“We are proud to have supported Concern and the work they do, over the past 10 years. It’s a great event for walkers and runners, and I always look forward to welcoming the people of Fermanagh and from further afield.”

If you would like to organise your own informal walk, jog or run event with friends, family, or colleagues, we’d love to hear from you. It’s easier than you think, and we’ll will help you every ‘step’ of the way. Email us at getinvolved@concern.net or visit our website www.concern.org.uk/events-and-challenges.

A big thank you to our Concern shop founding member, Nelly Hill

A remarkable chapter in Concern’s history was celebrated recently as Nelly Hill, founding member of one of our first charity shops, was honoured for her lifetime dedication. Now 95, Nelly helped establish the Newcastle, Co Down shop in 1992 – a venture that has since raised an incredible £1.83 million for communities tackling extreme poverty worldwide.

“It really is unbelievable,” reflected Nelly at a special presentation ceremony.

“We thought the shop would only be open for a short time. We had no idea that after 30 years, we’d still be around, and still raising money for such a good cause.”

What began as a response to the Somalia crisis has grown into one of Concern’s most successful volunteer-run shops. The shop stands as testament to the power of community action and dedicated volunteering.

“This is a tremendous lifetime achievement,” said Jackie Trainor, Concern’s Northern Ireland Director. “The impact our volunteers have made on lives around the world over the years is incredible.” If you are based in Northern Ireland you can find your local Concern store by visiting www.concern.org.uk/shop-locations



Nelly Hill at celebration for her incredible achievement and work.

Photo: Concern Worldwide

Concern boutique opens: designer fashion meets global impact

Concern has unveiled its first boutique charity store on Belfast's Lisburn Road, offering an upscale shopping experience with a meaningful purpose.

"We're not your typical charity shop," says store manager Jane Hodgers.

"Every item is carefully selected, and displayed in coordinated looks, making it easy for shoppers to find their perfect style."

The boutique's stunning window displays have already turned heads, with many visitors surprised to discover it's a charity store.



The Concern Lisburn Road shop officially opened on 17th October, the eighth in Concern's retail network in Northern Ireland.

The shop represents more than just fashion – it's a vital fundraising initiative. The incredible generosity of Northern Ireland's communities, through their support of Concern's shops and local initiatives, helps transform lives in 25 countries worldwide.

Want to get involved? Our stores in Northern Ireland welcomes donations of quality clothing and accessories six days a week. Whether you're shopping, donating items, or volunteering your time, you'll be part of a community making a real difference in tackling global poverty – all while looking stylish.

A sold-out success: candlelit concert at Asylum Chapel



Ganda Boys perform at the Candlelit Concert.

Concern's winter fundraising concert brought together a full house at Peckham's historic Asylum Chapel in London. Where candlelight and music created an unforgettable evening in support of our work in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, and other vulnerable regions worldwide.

Performers included Fiona Bevan, Ganda Boys from Uganda and vibrant Afro fusion collective Limpopo Groove.

The sold-out event demonstrated how music can bring our community together in support of those facing extreme challenges around the world, with all proceeds going directly to Concern's humanitarian work.

After the success of the concert, the team is busy behind the scenes planning more events like it for 2025! Keep an eye on our social media to make sure you don't miss tickets to the next one!

Follow us on **Instagram @concernworldwideuk** and **TikTok @ConcernUK**

Thank you for helping shape our gifts in wills work

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in our recent research, whether through phone interviews or in-person discussions. Your insights and feedback are invaluable as we plan the future direction of our legacy work.

At Concern, legacy giving is crucial to ensuring the long-term sustainability of our mission,

enabling us to continue to make a lasting impact. By sharing your experiences and ideas, you've provided a clearer understanding of what matters most to you, our supporters.

If you haven't had a chance to share your thoughts yet, we would love to hear from you! Your input will help us create a program that truly reflects your

passions and commitment. Please contact Donna directly via email at giftsinwills@concern.net – we would love to hear from you.

To stay involved, or to be among the first to receive our exciting new legacy pack once it's ready, please get in touch to join our wait list.

Thank you again for your continued partnership in this important journey. We can't wait to share more with you.

GROWING HOPE: A MOTHER'S JOURNEY TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

In the heart of Bangladesh, Hosenare Aktar's garden flourishes with life. As a mother of two boys – 10-year-old Sakib and 2-year-old Rakib – she has transformed her plot into a thriving source of food and income for her family.

"Before, there was nothing here," Hosenare recalls.

"Now, after receiving training, I have created my farm. I am feeling so much better and more empowered."

Using climate-smart techniques learned through training, Hosenare tends to five vegetable beds and uses innovative tower gardening methods to protect crops during floods. What started with one gifted goat has grown to three, and her initial four ducks have multiplied into a bustling farmyard of poultry providing eggs for her family.

As a dedicated mother, Hosenare manages her flourishing farm while supporting her family. The income from her vegetable sales helps secure a better future for her children. Her success has inspired neighbours, who now seek her advice on farming techniques. "I dream to increase my small farming," she shares with enthusiasm.

"I received just one goat and now I have three. I dream to have ten or more, to earn more."

Hosenare Aktar (28) is a mother of two. She has two sons Sakib (10) and Rakib (2), pictured. Hosenare had never farmed before. Concern gave her training, seeds and goats. Now she has ducks, goats and an abundance of vegetables. She also employs a lot of climate smart agriculture like growing in bags and making compost and growing on elevated terraces.

This Mother's Day, help more mothers thrive

Show your mum you care by giving a meaningful gift that supports incredible mothers like Hosenare. Whether it's a home garden kit to grow fresh food, climate-smart farming tools, or livestock to start a small farm, your gift can help another mother transform her family's future.

Give your mum a gift she'll love, knowing it supports mothers around the world. Visit gifts.concern.org.uk to find the perfect Mother's Day present that makes a real difference.

BREAKING BARRIERS: YOUTH EDUCATION TRANSFORMS HEALTH IN BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh's Bagerhat District, Concern's CRAAIN project (Community Resilience and Action for Advancing Integrated Nutrition) is revolutionising health education through its innovative Adolescent Forum. This youth-led group is transforming how communities discuss and address crucial health and hygiene issues that were once considered taboo.

The Forum, made up of elected young members from local schools, works to educate peers within their community. One such member, 15-year-old Lamia, describes the initial challenges: "We were especially focusing on menstrual hygiene. At first, we were so shy – we never talked about those issues. But slowly people started talking more. Now everyone can talk about this and it's easier."



Photo: Gavin Douglas/Concern Worldwide

Through the CRAAIN programme, this school has seven committees to encourage young people to become more active in their communities.

Working alongside nearly 500,000 people in the district, the CRAAIN project takes an integrated approach to improving maternal and child health. The Adolescent Forum plays a crucial role, providing peer-to-peer education about health, hygiene practices, and essential health information. This youth-led approach has proven particularly effective in breaking

down communication barriers and changing attitudes within schools and the wider community.

The Forum also advocates for better health services, successfully campaigning for improvements in local facilities and access to healthcare. Their work demonstrates how empowering young people to lead conversations about health and hygiene can create lasting change. As Lamia explains:

"We work with dedication, sincerity and honesty... That's how we want to work and people should engage with us."

Through this Forum, the CRAAIN project is not just improving health education – it's nurturing a new generation of community leaders who are actively shaping their community's future. With your continued support, we can continue to run our education projects around the world and be a part of empowering the changemakers of tomorrow.



Lamia is part of the forum and wants to be a teacher when she's older.

TRANSFORMING LIVES: CONCERN'S NUTRITION REVOLUTION

In the 1990s, Concern saw an opportunity to revolutionise malnutrition treatment. The traditional approach required lengthy hospital stays, reaching only a fraction of those in need. Our teams pioneered a radical solution: bringing treatment directly to communities using Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), a life-saving innovation that families could administer at home.



Mum-of-five Sahara* (40) and her 22-month-old son Hassane* in Tsernaoua village.

In Niger, Sahara's* son Hassane* aged just seven months was severely malnourished. He received vital RUTF treatment from the nearby clinic to recover. Concern also helped the family set up the sack garden to provide year-round food and ensure Sahara can keep her children well nourished.

Sahara said: "The home garden is very helpful for feeding my family. We've been cultivating vegetables for a year. We have really benefitted from the home garden, and not just the children, we have all benefitted from it."

Thanks to our supporters' kindness, we're continuing to pioneer new ways to end hunger and malnutrition, proving that positive change is possible even in the world's most challenging contexts.

*Names changed to protect identity

1990s



- Traditional malnutrition treatment required lengthy hospital stays
- Limited reach and effectiveness in emergency contexts
- High costs and strain on healthcare systems

2000

- Concern begins pioneering community-based treatment approaches
- Start of field testing new outpatient care models

2004-2005

- Concern leads development of CMAM (Community Management of Acute Malnutrition)
- Introduction of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) for home treatment



2007

- WHO and UNICEF endorse CMAM as international best practice



2010

- World Food Program recognises CMAM as gold standard for treating malnutrition
- Method adopted globally by humanitarian organisations



TODAY

- Reaching 9 million people through health and nutrition programs in 21 countries
- Combining CMAM with agriculture, education, and WASH initiatives



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