



Approach to Emergencies

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1. Purpose and scope of the paper

Concern is a humanitarian organisation. Preparing for and responding to emergencies is a core part of our organisational identity and mandate. This paper sets out our approach to working in emergency contexts, and the requirement that anyone working for Concern may be expected to support the delivery of rapid, appropriate and effective responses to people in need. It places our emergency preparedness and response activities in the wider organisational identity, vision, mission and values and outlines the link between our humanitarian, development, and advocacy work.

The paper is for all Concern staff and is intended to foster a deeper understanding and commitment to the humanitarian imperative to respond to the needs of people affected by disasters and conflict by delivering principled and high quality interventions.

2. The current context

The number of people affected by disasters, and the cost of meeting their needs, are both at an all-time high and are continuing to grow year on year. OCHA's Global Humanitarian Overview for 2018 indicates that 135.7 million people are in need of assistance¹, with more than half of these people coming from five countries experiencing protracted conflict: Yemen, Syria, Nigeria, DRC and South Sudan². Most countries in which there is a need for international assistance are affected by multiple disasters, with many conflict-affected countries also having large internally displaced (IDP) and refugee populations, and experiencing natural hazard derived disasters. By the end of 2016, the number of people forced into displacement by conflict or violence reached 65.6 million – nearly two-thirds of whom were internally displaced - the highest number of displaced people on record, and reflective of a pattern of sustained increase in displacement.

Consistent with our approach to addressing the factors that cause and sustain poverty outlined in *How Concern Understands Extreme Poverty*, it is evident that poverty, vulnerability and crisis are closely linked. Nearly 90% of all people deemed to be living in extreme poverty – at least 661 million people – are living in countries affected by fragility, environmental vulnerability, or both, but even this may be an under-estimation of the true level of need due to the limited or absent data for some of the world's most vulnerable countries³. Despite the recent decline in the overall number of people living in extreme poverty⁴, the proportion of extremely poor people living in high-risk contexts continues to increase⁵, and it is in these countries that Concern focuses its efforts.

Reflecting the growing impact of climate change and the increased risk of famine in a number of countries, the *State of Food Security* report⁶ for 2017 warned that “the long-term declining trend in undernourishment seems to have come to a halt and may have reversed”. This apparent reversal appears to be particularly concentrated in conflict-affected states. This point is reflected in the 2017 *Global Hunger Index*⁷ which noted that long-term progress in reducing hunger has been uneven, millions of people are experiencing chronic hunger, and that some isolated and war-torn areas are ravaged by famine.

¹ Although this is the headline figure used in the GHO report, the total number of people in need rises by 19% to 161.3 million if you add together all of the people identified in each country included in the appeal. Similarly, the number of people identified as likely to receive aid rises by 22% from 90.9 to 100.6 million people.

² <http://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/>

³ <http://devinit.org/post/intrinsic-links-poverty-crisis-data-tells-us/#>

⁴ USG and ERC Mark Lowcock, Opening remarks at the 2017 Global Humanitarian Policy Forum, 13 December 2017: “Between 1990 and 2015, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.9 billion to 836 million”.

⁵ Fewer, but still with us, The Economist, 30th March 2017: <https://www.economist.com/news/international/21719790-going-will-be-much-harder-now-world-has-made-great-progress>

⁶ https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/SOFI2017_EN_WEB.pdf

⁷ <https://www.concern.net/insights/global-hunger-index-2017>

Climate change is expected to affect the number, scale, intensity and impact of future climatic disasters. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁸ has forecast that an increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will boost temperatures over most landmasses, leading to: an increased risk of drought; an increased intensity of storms, including tropical cyclones with higher wind speeds; a wetter Asian monsoon probably leading to greater levels of flooding; and, possibly, more intense mid-latitude storms. Additionally, melting glaciers and ice caps are expected to cause sea levels to rise, which would make coastal flooding more severe when a storm comes ashore.

An estimated 60% of undernourished people, and almost 80% of stunted children, live in countries affected by conflict⁹. Reflecting the importance of addressing conflict, now the key driver of humanitarian crises, UN Secretary-General António Guterres entered office vowing a “surge in diplomacy for peace”¹⁰.

With the continued cost of responding to conflict and the consequences of climate change, humanitarian requirements will continue to outstrip the currently available level of resources. In 2016, the estimated global total of humanitarian funding increased for the fourth year running, reaching US\$27.3 billion, the 6% increase on the 2015 figures was significantly lower than increases in recent years. At \$22.5 billion, the UN-coordinated appeal for 2018¹¹ is the largest appeal ever, but is only likely to increase in the course of the year as conflict situations deteriorate further and new crises emerge. More than one third of this total has been identified for the two Syria crisis-related appeals alone, and the top seven crises now accounting for more than 83% of the total¹². The fact that the top three crises account for more than 60% of the total has a distorting effect on total figures, and there are increasingly significant shortfalls of funding for sudden onset emergencies driven by climatic or seismic events. In addition, the chronic underfunding of appeals¹³ means that there are massive and compounding gaps in meeting acute needs. Reflecting the pattern of growing funding gaps, the report of the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing¹⁴, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit¹⁵, estimated that there was an annual gap in humanitarian funding of \$15 billion. This report gave rise to the Grand Bargain¹⁶, a set of 51 commitments intended to reform humanitarian financing to make emergency aid finance more efficient and effective to which a limited number of donors and implementing agencies have signed up to.

Concern is currently working in thirteen¹⁷ of the 21 countries listed in OCHA’s Global Humanitarian Overview for 2018 and is seeking to become operational in a fourteenth – Yemen. Of the 21 appeals included in the appeal, 19 include a major element of conflict. The same number of countries has seen humanitarian responses for each of the last five years, and three (DRC, Somalia and Sudan) for each of the last eighteen. It is this pattern of protraction, rising costs and rising gaps in meeting those costs, that is driving the current calls for reform of the humanitarian system. There are also calls from the humanitarian community for development and resilience funding to come on line much sooner in a

⁸ <http://www.ipcc.ch/index.htm>

⁹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2017), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017: Building Resilience for Peace and Food Security* (Rome: FAO), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-I7695e.pdf>, p. 29.

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2017/09/interview-un-must-lead-surge-in-diplomacy-for-peace-guterres-says-ahead-of-72nd-general-assembly/>

¹¹ <http://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/>

¹² The two Syria appeals total \$7.66 billion and account for 34% of the total; the two South Sudan-related appeals, \$3.23 billion – 14%; Yemen \$2.6 billion – 11%; DRC, \$1.69 billion – 7.5%; Somalia, \$1.5 billion – 6.7%; the two Nigeria-related appeals, \$1.26 billion – 5.6%; and Sudan, \$1 billion – 4.4%.

¹³ Only 60% of the 2016 consolidated appeal was met, and an even lower level of funding was raised for the 2017 appeal.

¹⁴ High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the Secretary-General: *Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap:*

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/%5BHLP%20Report%5D%20Too%20Important%20to%20fail%20-%20Addressing%20the%20Humanitarian%20Financing%20Gap.pdf>

¹⁵ May 23rd and 24th 2016. See: <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/>

¹⁶ https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/grand_bargain_final_22_may_final-2_0.pdf

¹⁷ Afghanistan, Burundi, CAR, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Syria.

crisis and for the development community to be less risk averse, particularly in protracted crisis contexts.

3. The foundations of Concern’s commitment to emergency programming

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.

Our Values

Built 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.
- **We are accountable:** Accountability and transparency are central to all of our actions and use of resources.

The fundamental humanitarian principles

In our humanitarian responses, we are committed to upholding and promoting the fundamental humanitarian principles set out in UN General Assembly Resolutions 46/182¹⁸ and 58/114¹⁹: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. We believe that maintaining an approach that is informed by these principles is essential to ensuring that we can deliver responses that are appropriate and target those in greatest need, and for creating the level of acceptance from disaster

¹⁸ UN General Assembly Resolutions 46/182: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm> - 1991

¹⁹ UN General Assembly Resolutions 58/114: <https://www.preventionweb.net/files/resolutions/N0350142.pdf> - 2004

and conflict-affected communities that is essential to allow us to operate effectively and safely. All Concern staff should be familiar with these principles and able to explain them to communities in a clear manner.

In all of our responses, and consistent with the first common principle of the Humanitarian Charter, we should seek to ensure that the dignity of the disaster and conflict victims whom we seek to support through our interventions, is respected and protected²⁰. Adherence to the standards and codes outlined in this paper is a key way in which we seek to do this.

Adherence to the principle of **humanity** means that Concern must seek to address human suffering wherever it is found, paying particular attention to those who are most vulnerable. In the *Red Cross Code of Conduct*²¹ - of which Concern is a signatory - the obligation to respond to those in need is described as the **humanitarian imperative**. For Concern, this means that all country programmes must ensure that they are prepared to respond to emergencies in a timely and effective manner, and that all of our responses seek to save lives and protect livelihoods. This is a core responsibility for everyone who works for Concern.

It is important to note that meeting the humanitarian imperative does not mean that we must always provide assistance ourselves. It does, however, require us to properly assess situations to determine if there are unmet needs and, if we can, to respond to them. Where appropriate, we should support others – including local government, local or national civil society organisations, and suitably established and placed international organisations, especially Alliance2015 members – to respond and, where necessary, we should seek to build their capacity to do this.

Adherence to the principle of **impartiality** means that our responses must be provided solely on the basis of identified need, without discrimination between or within affected populations. This principle is the basis of all ‘needs-based’ programming and requires us to assess the impact of disasters and to design programmes to support those most affected by them. Our responses should also be *proportional* to the level of identified need.

Consistent with the criteria of relevance and appropriateness, we retain a wide range of programming capacity and the technical expertise to deliver essential programmes including WASH, health and nutrition, food security and livelihoods, camp management, shelter, NFI distribution, education in emergencies, and humanitarian protection. Cash transfers are also an important and growing part of our programme modalities.

Our responses should never adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach. We must disaggregate identified needs, considering - as a minimum – gender, age and disability dimensions, and address these to the extent possible.

We recognise that impartiality can be undermined when humanitarian agencies fail to *co-ordinate* adequately as this may lead to inclusion and exclusion errors in the overall response. As such, all Concern country programme teams must actively engage in any co-ordination mechanisms that have been established, including those established by governments, and be compliant with directives or standards emerging from these, but we should also seek to inform and influence such decisions based on our understanding of the context on the ground.

²⁰ Point five of the *Humanitarian Charter* - <http://spherehandbook.org/en/the-humanitarian-charter/> - states in part: **The right to life with dignity** is reflected in the provisions of international law, and specifically the human rights measures concerning the right to life, to an adequate standard of living and to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

²¹ *The Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief*. See: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/>

Respect for the principle of **independence** means that the sole purpose of our humanitarian activities is the relief and prevention of suffering of people affected by crises. It requires us to respond in a manner that is not influenced by political, economic, military or other objectives, and to formulate and implement our own policies independently of government policies or actions.

In adhering to the principle of **neutrality**, we must ensure that our responses do not favour any side in a conflict, or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Neutrality is perhaps the most challenging of the fundamental principles and was not explicitly included in the *Red Cross Code of Conduct* because some organisations felt that its application may limit their opportunities for lobbying or advocating on issues. This is not necessarily the case, and UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182²² includes neutrality alongside humanity and impartiality in its guide for the provision of humanitarian assistance. However, we must ensure that any advocacy positions that we take are informed by and reflect a deep understanding of our operational context. Despite our ambition to establish a distinctive voice in terms of humanitarian advocacy, we must also recognise that maintaining an operational presence in some contexts may mean that we cannot take any public positions (either in terms of advocacy or towards the media) in relation to specific emergency responses. However, most of the advocacy work in which Concern engages at the national level, and with donors, is conducted in private in the form of persuasion or mobilisation, and this must remain a key part of our overall approach. For some countries, much of the preparatory work for such advocacy is informed by cross-organisational advocacy working groups.

As with the other fundamental principles, adherence to the principle of neutrality is essential in trying to gain acceptance from all parties to allow our programmes to operate as effectively and safely as possible. In some conflict contexts, the requirement for the country programme team to be perceived as neutral may require Concern to work in territory controlled by more than one party to the conflict, even if the level of need is not as great in that area.

Among the challenges in adhering to this principle, and to that of independence – and in being seen to do so – is the nature and source of *donor funding*. In some contexts, and especially in conflicts, we may choose to avoid seeking funding from some donors, especially if those donors are from countries that are actively participating in the conflict, due to concerns as to perceptions of our neutrality, and the consequences that such perceptions may have on the security of our staff. Any decision as to whether we accept donor funding in conflict contexts must be made on a well-informed basis, documented, and in deliberation with the International Programme Director (or the Emergency Director for new countries of operation).

It is essential that all programme teams understand that neither the principle of neutrality, nor that of independence, should in any way prevent them from opening and maintaining *dialogue* with all parties in an emergency response context. Dialogue and transparency are preconditions of humanitarian effectiveness, building trust and facilitating access to those in need. In all responses – and especially in conflict contexts – mechanisms should be found to allow programme teams to establish dialogue with those who may affect our ability to deliver programmes in a manner consistent with the humanitarian principles.

²² UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 (<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm>) addresses ways to strengthen the coordination of the humanitarian system and provides the framework for emergency relief.

Programme quality criteria²³

We must design and deliver the right programmes at the right scale in the right way and, where appropriate, with or through the right partners. The principles developed by the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee²⁴ to evaluate development and emergency responses²⁵ are essential in considering how we programme and whether we are meeting our ambition to deliver larger, faster and better humanitarian responses²⁶. As such, all of our humanitarian interventions should meet the following key criteria:

Relevance requires responses to be consistent with the needs and priorities of the affected community, and is complemented by **appropriateness** which requires the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs to increase ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness. Relevance and appropriateness require us to base our interventions on strong and well-maintained contextual analysis and to tailor activities and approaches to the needs and capacities of different gender, age and other groups, including people with disabilities. Relevance is generally determined at the level of the overall goal and purpose of a programme, while appropriateness is more focused on the specific activities and inputs meet this goal.

It is not sufficient though to deliver high quality, relevant and appropriate emergency programmes. We must also deliver them at such a *scale* that our programmes have an impact on a sizeable portion of the disaster affected population. Country programme management teams must ensure that their responses support the needs of the greatest possible number of affected people, but that the balance and tensions between quality, scale and need are fully considered. In all of our emergency responses, we should seek to do as much as we can, as well as we can, for as many as we can.

Consistent with the needs-based nature of humanitarian action, and the importance of co-ordination to avoid duplication or gaps in the delivery of responses to those in greatest need, **coverage** requires that aid must reach all major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are. Our programmes must support this in their focus on targeting those in greatest need who are least well served by the wider humanitarian response. This approach may result in a higher cost per beneficiary due to access, transport and security costs, and it is important that we continue to engage donors to encourage them to allocate funds to where the need is greatest, rather than most visible.

Taken together, the relevance, appropriateness, scale and coverage achieved by our interventions – as well as the manner in which they are designed and delivered – have a considerable bearing on the level of acceptance that we may attain, and so on the level of security that our staff may have in delivering programmes.

Efficiency measures how well financial, human, technical and material resource inputs were converted into outputs, and seeks to ensure that resources have been used appropriately. It should also indicate whether there are better possible uses of the available resources. Factor such as the urgency of response to the assessed needs of the affected population, and a consideration of alternatives methods and means of delivery should also be considered. There are links between this, the appropriateness of choice of intervention, and effectiveness.

Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves the purpose and stated objectives of an intervention, and considers whether these could be expected to happen on the basis of the

²³ This section is informed by ALNAP’s *Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria. An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies* (2006): <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/eha-2006.pdf>

²⁴ *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*, OECD DAC, 1999 – <http://www.oecd.org/development/developmentassistancecommitteedac.htm>

²⁵ Adapted from *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*, OECD DAC, 1999; and ‘Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management’, OECD-DAC, 2002 - <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf>

²⁶ Strategic Goal 2, Concern’s Strategic Plan 2016-2020, *Leaving No-one Behind*

intervention's outputs. It considers the use made of and benefits gained from the resources used in the response. At the assessment phase, consideration is also given to understanding whether and why the response was effective.

Effectiveness should also consider whether the most vulnerable groups have been adequately identified in the needs assessment, and then targeted in the programme delivery.

A key part of the effectiveness criterion is the **timeliness** of our response – not just of the initial response, but also of the phasing of the overall response and whether it was carried out in a way that best supported the affected population. We must ensure that we respond to those affected by conflict or disaster in as timely a manner as possible. A key element of this is preparedness, and the extent to which PEER²⁷ plans are developed and used by country programmes.

Impact looks at the wider effects of the intervention – social, economic, technical, and environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, direct and indirect, and measured at the macro (national), meso (district) and micro (community or household) level.

While impact often relates to programme delivery, we must also consider it in terms of our ability to influence key stakeholders on issues that affect both wider the humanitarian community, and issues that relate more specifically to responses in our countries of operation. We must seek to develop a distinctive humanitarian voice on key issues and maximise the opportunity to influence that we may gain from seats on HCTs and engagement in clusters and technical working groups at the country level, or international mechanisms such as the Emergency Directors' Group²⁸ and in key networks such as InterAction²⁹ and Voice³⁰, as well as through our own statements and reports.

While *sustainability* was included as a criterion in the original OECD DAC guidance on evaluating humanitarian assistance³¹, the extended DAC principles used by ALNAP suggest that this is better considered under **connectedness**³² which refers to the need to ensure that our emergency responses consider longer-term development issues and approaches. It requires us to ensure that our emergency response and recovery interventions address the consequences of disasters, and that their design is sufficiently informed by the operating context that they limit the negative impact on development gains. Given the recurrent nature of emergencies in our countries of operation, connectedness is an important criterion for determining whether our longer-term programmes identify and address the severity, frequency, or impact of hazards. This is the principle that underpins our approach to disaster risk reduction³³. As Concern often remains in a country after the initial emergency response, it should seek to address the underlying causes of disasters and move to recovery at the earliest possible stage.

Given the prevalence of armed conflict in many of our countries of operation, we need to be aware that our ability to address conflict at anything other than the most local level is extremely limited. Our approach to working *in* and *on* conflict is outlined in our *Conflict Strategy Paper*.

²⁷ Preparing for Effective Emergency Responses

²⁸ The IASC Emergency Directors support humanitarian operations by advising the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the IASC [Principals](#) on operational issues of strategic concern, and by mobilizing agency resources to address operational challenges and gaps, in support of HCs and HCTs. See: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/emergency-directors-group>

²⁹ InterAction is a coalition of US-based humanitarian and development NGOs that serves as a convenor and voice of the US NGO community on humanitarian action, development, NGO accountability, and advocates towards the US Government. See: <https://www.interaction.org/>

³⁰ VOICE - Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies - is a network of European NGOs that is the main NGO interlocutor with the EU on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction. See: <https://ngovoice.org>

³¹ See page 22 of the OED DAC Guidance: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2667294.pdf>

³² See page 27 of the ALNAP guide: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/eha-2006.pdf>

³³ See: Concern's *Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction*, October 2016

While the original intent of the criterion of **coherence** was to ensure that all policies took account of humanitarian and human rights considerations, the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit have seen growing pressure for greater coherence between security, developmental, trade, military, defence and humanitarian policies and practice³⁴ – generally referred to as the ‘humanitarian-development-peace nexus’. The challenges of coherence relative to the specific and separate intent of these different approaches is important and should not be underestimated. In its *New Ways of Working* document³⁵, UN OCHA notes that, while seeking to ensure greater interconnectedness between humanitarian and development action, including through the identification of collective outcomes, we must also ensure that “nothing should undermine the commitment to principled humanitarian action, especially in situations of armed conflict”. OCHA also recognises that “humanitarian principles are immutable and must always guide humanitarian action and be respected”. We fully support this position, recognising as it does the need for distinctive and principled humanitarian action. All Concern country programmes must ensure that their humanitarian responses adhere to the fundamental humanitarian principles.

Coherence can also be analysed within the humanitarian response to consider whether all of the actors are working towards the same basic goals and, as such, it may be seen to be linked to the question of *co-ordination* and effectiveness. Given the growing diversity of actors in many emergency responses, especially in response to complex emergencies, co-ordination is increasingly important and needs to be factored in to all programme designs, but this must be done in a way that acknowledges and supports the specificity of humanitarian action.

These criteria should be at the heart of the design, implementation and evaluation of all of our humanitarian interventions.

Accountability and the safeguarding of programme participants

In addition to these principles, we must seek to standardise the implementation of the accountability commitments in the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)³⁶ and adherence to the *Concern Code of Conduct (CCoC)* and its associated policies³⁷ to ensure that our actions do not expose people to harm, exploitation, isolation, or abuse.

Concern staff frequently work in positions of power and trust in relation to beneficiaries, other organisations and one another. This power and trust must never be abused. All staff have a responsibility to strive for and maintain the highest standards of behaviour. Any form of exploitation or abuse of power is incompatible with Concern’s fundamental belief in the human dignity of all people and with the organisation’s core values. Any inappropriate behaviour by anyone working for or on behalf of Concern will lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The **CCoC and its associated policies** address a range of issues related to safeguarding people, particularly beneficiaries, from the potential for exploitation or abuse. They are based on international legal standards and principles and reflect Concern’s core values and commitment to ensuring that staff always act in the best interest of programme participants. They provide clear guidance on the standards of behaviour that Concern requires of all staff and anyone working on behalf of Concern or any of Concern’s partner organisations, and give examples of conduct that is unacceptable. They

³⁴ See the European Union’s new ‘integrated approach’ and the UN’s ‘New Way of Working’ as examples of this.

³⁵ UN OCHA, New Ways of Working: https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002_0.pdf

³⁶ For more details on each accountability aspect, see *Concern Guidelines on increasing accountability to our target communities and local partners* and *Concern Accountability commitments* (2010). With regard to the CHS, see <https://core-humanitarian-standard.org/the-standard>

³⁷ The Programme Participant Protection Policy (the P4), the Child Safeguarding Policy and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Policy

are important tools and their consistent dissemination, implementation and monitoring should enhance the quality, impact and acceptance of our programmes.

The **CHS** offers a strong basis for ensuring our accountability to those whom our programmes assist, but accountability in the context of humanitarian aid must also include those who fund our programmes (public, corporate and government donors), the host governments (at local, regional and federal levels) of the countries within which we are working, and peer organisations. We must ensure that our programmes make the best use of the resources entrusted to us, that they are well targeted and adapted to the needs and circumstances of the contexts within which we work, are well co-ordinated, and are provided in a way that enhances prospects for recovery.

As part of the CHS process, Concern is committed to establishing a Complaint and Response Mechanism (CRM)³⁸ in all country programmes to enable people to raise concerns and report issues related to programmes delivered by Concern or its partners. Recognising that an effective CRM is an essential management tool for monitoring our performance and adjusting our programmes based on communities' feedback, considerable progress has been made on this commitment, and this must be continued.

4. The relationship between our humanitarian and development work

The impact of disasters on the poorest and most vulnerable countries and communities, and the extent to which disasters can exacerbate underlying social and economic vulnerabilities, is well established. Our approach to disaster risk reduction is informed by the understanding that “disasters are first and foremost a major threat to development, and specifically to the development of the poorest and most marginalized people in the world”, and the reality that “disasters seek out the poor and ensure they stay poor.”³⁹

We also maintain that “vulnerability to disaster is determined not simply by lack of wealth, but by a complex range of physical, economic, political and social factors”⁴⁰. As outlined in *How Concern Understands Extreme Poverty*, we must better consider the patterns of risk and vulnerability in all of our countries of operation, and ensure greater focus on delivering effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) interventions, or factoring DRR into our sectoral programmes, as a means of building community resilience. In addition, we must also seek to promote greater equality of access to our assistance, remaining aware of power dynamics, bias and imbalances, barriers to participation, and lack of meaningful access and agency, which may affect who is perceived as being in need and who is able to receive the assistance. This will often be related, but not limited, to inequality in relation to gender norms and dynamics.

As a dual mandate organisation seeking to achieve long-term gains for people living in the poorest and most vulnerable countries, we maintain a strong and consistent focus on poverty, risk and vulnerability. The advantages of being a dual mandate organisation are evident in allowing us to engage across the aid spectrum in the interest of people living in some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable countries. In our programming, we seek to ensure that there is a level of consistency and integration in the way in which we understand and respond to issues of risk and vulnerability, and address the pattern of recurrent or predictable disasters that exists in our countries of operation. It also allows us to ensure that we have an approach that encompasses preparedness, disaster mitigation, emergency response, advocacy, conflict management and, in the longer term, recovery.

³⁸ Complaint and response handling refers to the mechanisms through which we enable stakeholders to address complaints against our decisions and actions, and through which we ensure that these complaints are properly reviewed and acted upon. See: *Concern CRM Guidelines*.

³⁹ Didier Cherpitel, Secretary General of the IFRC, World Disaster Report 2002, IFRC.

⁴⁰ World Disaster Report 2002, IFRC.

To further enhance this, the risk and vulnerability aspects of our contextual analysis approach should be enhanced and our development programmes should seek to strengthen people's capacity to deal with future disasters. As disasters will still occur and may overwhelm any mitigative measures that have been put in place, all country programmes must include a high level of emergency preparedness, and maintain and implement their PEER plans. In countries in which we are operating alongside other Alliance2015 organisations, Joint Emergency Preparedness Plans (JEPPs) must be developed wherever possible.

Emergency preparedness and support to recovery must take account of the different vulnerabilities and capacities of people of different groups, including gender, age and other groups. When promoting recovery, Concern must take these factors into consideration to best support the capacities of different groups, ensure that we do not create or further exacerbate power imbalances, and seek to address the effects of inequality on the lives of the extreme poor.

As a humanitarian organisation, we must ensure that the humanitarian imperative and the principle of impartiality guide all of our emergency responses, and acknowledge that this may result in focusing on different target groups in our humanitarian and development programmes. Our programmes must work better together to prepare for and recover from disasters, and must seek out and work with the extremely poor and the most vulnerable. While our humanitarian interventions are not to be seen as a mechanism for the attainment of the SDGs, and must never be used as a crisis management tool, we recognise that if disasters are not prevented, or if their impact is not moderated, the SDGs will never be achieved.

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus

The international aid system has developed over decades with different mandates, bureaucracies, and financial instruments and mechanisms, and has seen a much-discussed divide between humanitarian and development actors and action. Dual mandate organisations like Concern seek to bridge this divide through establishing programme approaches that are implemented across different operating contexts, but there is a growing determination in the wider community that system-level changes are needed to address the scale complexity and cost of humanitarian needs.

There is growing support for the establishment of common objectives or collective outcomes for humanitarian, development and peace actors – the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. For its proponents, this nexus will help to address complex challenges such as food security and conflict, and will pool the collective capacity of humanitarian, development and peace actors towards common purposes.

Despite the very different mandates that exist between the humanitarian community on the one hand, and the military/political community on the other, commitment to this nexus approach has been evident in: the World Humanitarian Summit; the Grand Bargain; Agenda 2030; the UN's New Way of Working; World Bank studies on conflict prevention; the UN Secretary General's repositioning of development and his reform of the UN system⁴¹; and the EU's integrated approach⁴².

There are considerable concerns among humanitarian actors in relation to the implications of this nexus in terms of the potential threats that it may pose to future principled humanitarian action, and

⁴¹ See: Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet, 20th December 2017.

[https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2018doc/Advance%20copy%20of%20the%20Report%20of%20th%20Secretary-General%20on%20the%20UNDS%20repositioning%20%2B%20Annex%20\(21%20December%202017rev\).pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2018doc/Advance%20copy%20of%20the%20Report%20of%20th%20Secretary-General%20on%20the%20UNDS%20repositioning%20%2B%20Annex%20(21%20December%202017rev).pdf)

Key among the recommendations is that multi-year Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) will be linked to strategic UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAs) in cases of protracted crisis.

⁴² See: *EU Council conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises*, 22nd January 2018, from which Echo has sought to separate itself using its 'In-But-Out Approach' – see specifically paragraph 7.

independence in decision-making and action, particularly in conflict contexts. There is some concern that humanitarian action may be subordinated to political and military objectives and priorities, and that significant issues will emerge in relation to secure access to conflict-affected communities.

The UN Secretary General's intention to attach HRPs, annual plans that seek to respond to emergency needs, to the UNDAF, medium term results frameworks that describe the collective vision of the UN relative to national development priorities, raises concerns about the ability of humanitarian responses to meet the needs of people in areas beyond the reach of the State, especially in conflict contexts.

While the policy and practice around this area is evolving, it is essential that there is sufficient flexibility built into any emerging system to allow for principled humanitarian access and action. If we are to ensure that no one is left behind by humanitarian responses, we must ensure that we continue to promote the need for principled humanitarian action and funding in all relevant fora.

5. When and how we respond

5.1 When we respond

We must assess the need to establish emergency responses in the following situations:

- i. *Existing countries of operation*, especially when an emergency occurs in areas in which we are already working. Even if our programme areas are not the most affected, we should determine whether a response is needed in them alongside any expansion into new areas of operation. This will allow us to make informed decisions about resource allocation.
- ii. *Any country*, including those outside of the lower sections of the poor-vulnerable index (PVI)⁴³, if the *disaster is of a sufficient scale* to meet the criteria for an international or large-scale emergency, which we define as:

Any disaster, including conflict, that causes such destruction and loss to people, and to their social and physical infrastructure, that tens of thousands of people cannot meet their basic needs of food, water, health and shelter. It creates the need for external assistance that is immediate, appropriate, and limited to the time required to enable affected people to at least re-establish their former livelihoods and then manage using their own resources in a way that makes them less vulnerable to the negative impacts of future disasters.

A decision to respond may also be informed by any one of the following criteria:

- hundreds of people have been killed
- tens of thousands of people have been deprived of basic needs
- a national government issues an appeal for international assistance or declares a state of emergency

In all of our country programmes, and in those countries in which we do not have a presence but in which a major disaster has occurred, we must make decisions and respond very rapidly. We must seek to have a team on the ground in the affected areas as quickly as possible, (or for those countries in which we do not have a presence, to be on the move within 24 hours), to rapidly assess needs, co-ordinate with other actors, engage with the host country government and donors, and engage with the media. In the event of an international or large-scale emergency, we should assume that there will be a need for a response and ensure that the

⁴³ The PVI is collated by SAL based on secondary information and is designed to assist in strategic planning. The results provide a ranking of countries according to Concern's understanding of extreme poverty. The global PVI has been supplemented by the production of country level PVIs which are updated every two years.

assessment team is able to transition straight into an emergency response once an area of operation has been identified. The primary function of the Surge Team⁴⁴ is to provide a substantial part of this capacity, but it must be complemented by members of a fully-functional Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU)⁴⁵ and, when necessary, staff from Concern country programmes and across the wider organisation.

- iii. Any country, including those outside of the lower sections of the PVI, which are in such *obvious decline* that an international emergency would appear to be inevitable unless there is significant external intervention.

Responsibility for ensuring that we meet the humanitarian imperative in each of these contexts is as follows:

		Existing country programmes		No Concern presence
		<i>In project areas</i>	<i>Outside project areas</i>	-
Large-scale >>500,000 people affected Request for international assistance		A1	A2	A3
	<i>Assessment</i>	CD	CD + RD	Emergency Directorate
	<i>Approval</i>	CD + RD	RD + IP Director	SMT + Board
	<i>Management</i>	CD	CD	Emergency Directorate
Medium-scale 100,000 to 500,000 people affected Request for international assistance		B1	B2	B3
	<i>Assessment</i>	SD/PD + CD	CD + RD	Emergency Directorate
	<i>Approval</i>	CD + RD	RD + IP Director	SMT + Board
	<i>Management</i>	PD	CD	Emergency Directorate
Small-scale <100,000 people affected		C1	C2	C3
	<i>Assessment</i>	PM	CD	Direct response unlikely. Consideration should be given to supporting any Alliance2015 partner that is responding
	<i>Approval</i>	PD + CD	CD + RD	
	<i>Management</i>	PM	CD	

In the contexts outlined in points ii. and iii. in the text above the table, if the disaster occurs in a country in which Concern does not have a presence, approval from the Senior Management Team and Board is required prior to an assessment being undertaken, and to a programme response being established. The latter decision will be informed by the emergency assessment and a determination of our capacity to respond.

A terms of reference must be developed for every assessment. Among the issues that every assessment must consider – in addition to the scale of the disaster, the areas of greatest need, and the nature of the programmatic response - are the following, with the expectation that the assessment team will propose options for addressing these:

- **Access** – can we get into the country? How? Will the government issue visas? What is the government's attitude towards INGOs? How easy will it be to become registered? How long might registration take? Can we implement programmes while pursuing registration? What percentage of the affected areas can we access? Can we access the most affected areas?
- **Security** – is it possible to work in the most affected areas? What are the potential security challenges and how might these be addressed?

⁴⁴ The Surge Team is a multi-disciplinary unit within the Emergency Directorate. Its members respond to emergencies in new and established countries of operation, and fills staffing gaps in existing chronic emergency contexts.

⁴⁵ The structure and function of the RDU is currently under review, but it is comprised of Concern staff working in our head offices and country programmes. It provides short-term (up to six weeks) additional staffing capacity for new emergency responses. Consideration is being given to broadening its remit to include support for chronic staffing gaps.

- **Capacity** – can we access the human and financial resources needed for the response without negatively impacting on other programmes? What are the most likely sources of funding?
- **Adding value** – can we make a difference? What capacity is available nationally? Is international support needed or can national NGOs or INGOs (especially members of Alliance2015) with an established presence address needs? Is it better to support these rather than establish our own response? Do we have the capacity to address the greatest needs?

It is important that we ensure that our needs assessments do not unnecessarily raise expectations about the potential or nature of a future response, and that, as far as possible, we actively engage with inter-agency assessments and are open to sharing our assessment results with other organisations.

The determination of whether we should respond, and the nature and scale of that response, should be informed by a recognition that, acting alone, our ability to make a significant difference is less than it would be if working with others. As such, Concern will seek linkages with national and international partners, particularly Alliance2015 members, and will ensure that we acknowledge and utilise the capacity of local communities to enhance our ability to make a difference.

5.2 How we respond

Where we work

In addition to the contexts outlined in 5.1 above, we must seek to assist those people who are most affected by the disaster and least well served by the overall response to it, even if this means that access to them is more challenging.

Funding an initial response

While the development of project proposals for submission to donors and the raising of money from public donations are essential to the implementation of programmes, and must be prioritised at the onset of a response, the CEO's Contingency Fund allows for the immediate establishment of responses in the period during which external funding is being sought. We should seek to ensure that money allocated from this fund is replenished with money raised from any public fundraising appeal.

The Irish Aid Emergency Response Fund Scheme (ERFS) provides an important source of potential seed funding for the establishment of new emergency responses. In addition, the Start Fund⁴⁶ is a potential source of funding for underfunded small to medium size crises, spikes in chronic humanitarian contexts, and in anticipation of some impending crises. Country programmes should be familiar with the criteria and proposal templates for each of these possible sources of funding.

Rapidly establishing, and then maintaining, links with the key institutional donors is a key aspect of the responsibility of the country management team and must be given high priority to ensure that we understand donor priorities as early as possible in the response, and that we seek to influence these based on our knowledge of the level of needs on the ground.

In addition, most donors are increasingly open to the use of crisis modifiers and contingencies, and these should be built into as many programmes and donor proposals as possible, especially in countries in which there is a high frequency of disasters and conflict. They should be supported by active engagement with the donors at the time of the onset of a crisis to ensure that these modalities can be activated. Country management teams should ensure that there is clarity around decision-

⁴⁶ See: <https://startnetwork.org/>

making processes in relation to programme continuity, modification or suspension, approaching donors, diversion of staff to different programme areas or responsibilities, etc. and that reasonable timeframes are in place and followed for such issues.

Funding and support from the public remains an essential part of our ability to respond quickly and flexibly to disasters. Part of our traditional strength has been to seek to inform the public of the plight of the most vulnerable in global society in a respectful and ethical manner, reflecting the reality that while Concern works with victims of disasters, these people are the central actors in their own recovery and development. It is essential that we continue to get strong, clear and appropriate⁴⁷ messages and images out from the affected area as quickly as possible, and there is a vital role for our Fundraising and Communications teams in relation to this.

Emergency stocks

The United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) network is made up of six warehouses managed by WFP that are strategically located around the world to support areas prone to emergencies. As a UNHRD partner, Concern prepositions emergency stocks in the Dubai warehouse, where we hold NFI items to support up to 2,000 families. Items held include tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito nets, rope, sleeping mats, cooking sets and jerry cans.

Irish Aid is also a UNHRD partner and holds stocks within the UNHRD network. Irish Aid holds larger stocks than Concern and they are more widely dispersed across the UNHRD network. We can request Irish Aid to release their stocks to support an emergency response, but any such request must be based on clearly identified needs and only if other options for supply are not practical. If Irish Aid agrees to release stocks, we must distribute them immediately - the goods cannot go into stock or contribute to any centralised pre-positioned stocks. Formal requests for the stocks must be submitted with a short proposal explaining the need, and a detailed distribution report with photographs and case studies must be submitted to Irish Aid after the distribution. Irish Aid guidelines and templates for proposal and distribution reports must be followed.

Requests for the release of Concern's emergency pre-positioned stocks, or access to Irish Aid stocks, must be submitted to the Supply and Logistics Unit in Dublin.

Amongst the issues identified for learning from recent responses in relation to stock procurement and management are the following:

1. Systems staff must be involved as early as possible in considering systems related issues of programme design, especially in relation to the development of procurement plans, the consideration of procuring assets including asset recording and tracking, and inventory management.
2. Compliance with donor requirements, and with our own procurement and logistics standards, must start from the beginning of the response. It is essential that any items that have not been distributed to beneficiaries and which remain in our stores are clearly documented and recorded. No donor funded stock should remain unused at the end of a programme as this will likely be judged to be an illegible cost which we will have to reimburse.
3. Asset transfers between projects must be properly recorded on asset registers.

⁴⁷ One set of guidelines in relation to the images and messages that we may seek to use is the *Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*: http://www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Images_and_Messages.pdf

Protection and accountability

Concern's *Approach to Protection* paper outlines the relationship between protection and accountability, and is aligned with the Statement of the IASC on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action.⁴⁸ Protection is a cross-cutting approach to be incorporated into all of our sectoral programmes. Ensuring the safety and dignity of people accessing our programmes, and assisting people in a way that does not increase their risk of being harmed as a consequence of our actions, should be central to all programme design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Concern's humanitarian activities must be guided by the four key protection principles identified by the Global Protection Cluster:

1. *Prioritize safety and dignity, and avoid causing harm*: prevent and minimize to the extent possible any unintended negative effects of the intervention which could increase people's vulnerability to physical or psychosocial risks.
2. *Meaningful access*: arrange for people's access to assistance and services – in proportion to need and without any barriers (e.g. discrimination). Pay special attention to individuals and groups who may be particularly vulnerable or have difficulty accessing assistance and services.
3. *Accountability*: set-up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.
4. *Participation and empowerment*: support the development of self-protection capacities and assist people to claim their rights, including the rights to shelter, food, water and sanitation, health, and education.⁴⁹

All country programmes should integrate principles related to Child Protection and gender based violence (GBV) throughout their emergency responses, in line with the Child Protection Minimum Standards⁵⁰ and the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Action.⁵¹ In terms of child protection, programmes should ensure that the risks faced by girls and boys are addressed through adequate and tailored risk mapping and mitigation. In relation to GBV, programmes should reduce risk, promote individual resilience, and aid the recovery of communities and societies by supporting the existing capacity of services.

The *Approach to Protection* paper notes that **accountability** refers to the responsible use of power combined with the delivery of high quality programming.⁵² Effective accountability mechanisms engage and empower target communities in decision-making and contribute to more effective programming based on beneficiaries' perspectives of and feedback on our interventions.

Staffing a response

As outlined in the responsibility table above, when an emergency occurs in an existing country programme, the responsibility lies with the country management team to lead the response, supported by the Regional Director and the International Programmes or the Emergency Director as appropriate. The country-level PEER plan should ensure that country management teams are able to respond adequately to an emergency or to identify the surge capacity required to do so. Only when a country programme's capacity is insufficient to respond to the scale of the emergency should additional support be sought. This support should mainly come from either the Surge Team or the RDU, but

⁴⁸ See:

https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/centrality_of_protection_in_humanitarian_action_statement_by_iasc_pri_nci.pdf

⁴⁹ <http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/en/areas-of-responsibility/protection-mainstreaming.html>

⁵⁰ <http://cpwg.net/minimum-standards/>

⁵¹ <https://gbvguidelines.org/en/home/>

⁵² Concern defines accountability as accepting responsibility for doing what we say we will do, being open and transparent about what we do and why and how we do it, and responding promptly to complaints or concerns about our work.

responding to emergencies is a cross-organisational commitment, and all staff working for Concern should recognise that directly responding to emergencies is a potential part of their role, and this should be included in all job descriptions. Where possible, Concern will strive to have a gender-balance across all levels and functions of its emergency response teams.

As part of their PEER plan, some countries have identified and developed a capacity building strategy for surge team members to ensure that the country programme is better prepared for future emergency responses. This is an approach that should be more widely followed.

Security of staff

The organisational focus on poor-vulnerable contexts means that we are working in countries in which there is a high rate of attack against aid workers. We must ensure that our approach to security risk management is adequately developed to address the level of risk that exists in delivering programmes in these contexts.

Recognising this threat environment, the *Security Policy*⁵³ commits us to ensuring that we have procedures and practices in place that allow staff to establish and maintain a presence and to continue to deliver programmes in some of the most insecure countries in the world. A country specific Security Management Plan (SMP) must be developed and maintained in a timely manner for every country in which Concern works. In countries with regional or field offices for which there are different security risks, location specific contextual analysis and standard operating procedures (SOPs) are also required.

In addition, prior to the establishment of any significant new programme intervention or area of operation, a location-specific context and risk analysis must be undertaken, and appropriate SOPs must be developed to support the safe programming presence of all staff.

The central element of our approach to security management is through building and sustaining acceptance for our presence and programmes. It is essential that we engage all relevant stakeholders in the identification and design of our interventions and consider the impact of these on local power dynamics, and the potential vulnerability for the target populations arising from them. Programme choice, design, quality, scale and the mechanism of programme delivery all affect the degree of acceptance that might be gained from the community and those in positions of influence and power in our areas, or proposed areas, of operation and must be considered in the establishment of responses.

Working in partnership

Working with and ensuring the permission and support of national and local governments or authorities is an essential pre-requisite for all of our interventions.

In terms of programme delivery, working with or through national NGOs continues to be a preferred way of working⁵⁴, and this approach has been further reinforced by the Grand Bargain's focus on localisation. Building the capacity of national and local organisations to respond effectively to disasters must continue to be a key part of our overall approach.

This priority is balanced by the reality that, in some of our countries of operation, identifying national partners has proven to be challenging, and sometimes unrealistic. As clarified in our Capacity

⁵³ See *Concern Security Policy*, March 2016:

https://doj19z5hov92o.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/media/resource/concern_security_policy - feb_2016_review - final 0.pdf

⁵⁴ See *Concern Partnership Policy*: https://doj19z5hov92o.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/resource/2010/12/5000-policy_on_concerns_relationships_with_other_organisations - partnership_policy.pdf and the discussion paper: *Relationships with Local Organisations in Emergency Response Contexts*

Building Policy⁵⁵, in such situations we should establish and maintain directly implemented responses.

Similarly, identifying local NGO partners during an emergency response is often difficult, and the amount of capacity building which can be achieved during an emergency may be limited. In such cases, there may be a trade-off between the time spent in supporting national organisations to develop their capacity to respond, and the greater long term impact of this by not addressing the immediate problem ourselves. If those whom we seek to assist are to benefit most from our engagement with national NGO partners, the best option is to identify potential partners in advance and to work with them to ensure that they are well placed to respond effectively to future emergencies.

All MoUs established with our partners must be informed by the Principles of Partnership⁵⁶.

Co-ordination, engagement with the clusters and HCT representation

Co-ordination is an essential aspect of disaster response. When done correctly, it reduces the potential for the duplication or overlap of interventions, increases the likelihood that all disaster affected areas receive attention, reduces the likelihood of gaps in the response or unmet needs, improves accountability, standardizes services and provides technical guidance and programmatic support.

As an outcome of the IASC Transformative Agenda⁵⁷, the cluster model is no longer the default setting for the co-ordination of all humanitarian responses, with the re-introduction of sectoral, government-led management of crises in some countries. However, it is still the most common, and all country programmes must actively engage with it, and with any relevant technical working groups, and meet the twelve minimum commitments for participation in clusters⁵⁸. As already noted, the primary focus of our engagement with the cluster system will continue to be at the local and national rather than the global level.⁵⁹

In addition, all country management teams must seek, where possible, to be represented on the Humanitarian Country Teams and any other coordination bodies to which we would have access such as NGO forums.

Concern's country management teams must also actively engage in the development of Humanitarian Response Plans and inter-agency needs assessments following the occurrence of new disasters. Given the anticipated move to multi-year Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) that are going to be closely aligned with UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), it is important that we use all such engagement to ensure the prioritisation of humanitarian needs and adherence to humanitarian principles.

Engagement with military forces

Given the number of conflict contexts in which we are working, many of our countries of operation are ones in which military forces (national and international) or groups are actively engaged in conflict, peacekeeping or peace enforcement.

⁵⁵ See Concern's Capacity Building Policy: <https://doj19z5hov92o.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/resource/2010/07/4684-capacitybuildingpolicy.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/Principles%20of%20Partnership%20English.pdf>

⁵⁷ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-transformative-agenda>

⁵⁸ See page 24 of Reference Module for Cluster Co-ordination at the Country Level, IASC, July 2015: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/cluster_coordination_reference_module_2015_final.pdf

⁵⁹ To ensure greater awareness of the humanitarian architecture, all country management team members are encouraged to complete Building a Better Response training. See: <http://www.buildingabetterresponse.org/>

While military forces may respond to humanitarian crises, we should remember that their role and mandate is completely different to that of NGOs. We must maintain our independence of decision-making and action, and can never operate under military command, although, and especially in active conflict contexts, there is an obvious need to share certain types of information through deconfliction⁶⁰ mechanisms.

In many of our countries of operation, the communities with which we seek to work are in areas controlled by non-state or armed opposition groups. Finding mechanisms for direct or indirect negotiation with them may determine the extent and effectiveness of our access to affected populations.

While we may co-ordinate some aspects of our programme and presence with military forces, our programmes should never be co-ordinated by the military. We must ensure that a clear distinction is made between military operations and humanitarian activities, and avoid overly close associations that may result in the blurring of distinction between ourselves and the military so as to avoid any questions as to our neutrality or independence.

In some circumstances, humanitarian responders may draw upon military assets, particularly for logistical and infrastructure support, including access to military aircraft. It is essential that military assets are only used as a last resort in support of humanitarian relief operations - i.e. where there is no realistic civilian alternative available to meet a specific and critical humanitarian need. Consistent with the MCDA⁶¹ and Oslo Guidelines⁶², any military assets made available for humanitarian responses must retain their civilian nature and character, and while military assets will remain under military control, the humanitarian operation as a whole must remain under civilian authority and control.

We should seek to avoid using armed protection or convoys for our vehicles, as this may compromise perceptions of our neutrality. However, it may be a requirement of the government or local authorities for vehicles to be escorted by police or military personnel, or we may feel that, for a period of time, escorts are necessary for us to deliver life-saving interventions in a safe manner. In such circumstances, approval for the use of armed escorts is required from the International Programmes Director (or the Emergency Director for new countries of operation)⁶³, and must be reviewed after six months.

Learning

In addition to the standard monitoring and evaluation requirements outlined in Concern’s PCMS process, we must evaluate and seek to learn from all of our responses, and be open to sharing our learning with academics and policy development specialists.

As outlined in the guidance paper on evaluating Concern’s emergency responses, CDs and RDs are responsible for ensuring that all responses are evaluated at the appropriate level, for ensuring that standard templates are used to ensure that the evaluations consider the correct issues, and that we create a body of evaluations that allows us to identify common issues and challenges that are being faced in different country programmes.

⁶⁰ Deconfliction generally requires the sharing of static humanitarian locations, and expected humanitarian movement plans to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian premises, personnel, equipment and activities in areas of active military operations. These mechanisms are usually managed by OCHA.

⁶¹ https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/01.%20MCDA%20Guidelines%20March%2003%20Rev1%20Jan06_0.pdf

⁶² [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Oslo%20Guidelines%20ENGLISH%20\(November%202007\).pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Oslo%20Guidelines%20ENGLISH%20(November%202007).pdf)

⁶³ See *Concern Security Briefing Note 2 - Use of Armed Escorts: Issues to consider*, revised 2017

We must systematically complete ‘wash-ups’ of all major emergency responses, ensure that they are evaluated in country, and that the reports from these evaluations are considered in the regular meta-evaluations that we conduct to identify recurrent challenges and good practice emerging from our responses.

Annexe 1 - Programme performance standards

Among the key **performance standards** that we should follow in our emergency responses are:

1. Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief⁶⁴
2. Sphere minimum standards in disaster response⁶⁵ and the Humanitarian Charter⁶⁶
3. Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability⁶⁷
4. The Concern Code of Conduct and its associated policies: the Programme Participant Protection Policy (the P4); the Child Safeguarding Policy; and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Policy
5. Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages⁶⁸

Additional **sectoral standards** include:

6. IASC Guidelines for Addressing HIV in Humanitarian Settings⁶⁹
7. INEE Minimum Standards for Education⁷⁰
8. LEGS – Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards⁷¹
9. Protection - Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action⁷²
10. CALP – the Cash Learning Partnership⁷³
11. SEEP's Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)⁷⁴

Specific **guidance in relation to engagement with military forces** should be developed in relevant contexts by OCHA, but will also be informed by:

12. The *MCDA Guidelines* on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support UN Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies⁷⁵
13. The *Oslo Guidelines* on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief⁷⁶

Key **Concern documents** referred to in this paper:

14. How Concern Understands Extreme Poverty, May 2010
15. Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction, October 2016
16. Approach to Protection, 2018
17. Concern Code of Conduct – revised version with attendant policies: the Programme Participant Protection Policy; the Child Safeguarding Policy; and the Anti-trafficking in Persons Policy, 2018
18. Guidance paper on evaluating Concern’s emergency programmes, 2018
19. Leaving no one behind – Concern Worldwide Strategy, 2016 - 2020
20. Preparing for Effective Emergency Response (PEER) Guidance Notes, March 2010
21. Security Policy, February 2016

⁶⁴ <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/>

⁶⁵ <http://www.sphereproject.org/>

⁶⁶ <http://www.sphereproject.org/handbook/the-humanitarian-charter/>

⁶⁷ <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

⁶⁸ http://www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Images_and_Messages.pdf

⁶⁹ https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/IASC_HIV_Guidelines_2010_En.pdf

⁷⁰ [http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1012/INEE_Minimum_Standards_Handbook_2010\(HSP\)-English_LoRes.pdf](http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1012/INEE_Minimum_Standards_Handbook_2010(HSP)-English_LoRes.pdf)

⁷¹ <http://www.livestock-emergency.net/resources/download-legs/>

⁷² https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/6819/pdf/cp_minimum_standards_english_2013_v2.pdf

⁷³ <http://www.cashlearning.org/>

⁷⁴ <http://www.seepnetwork.org/minimum-economic-recovery-standards-resources-174.php>

⁷⁵ https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/01.%20MCDA%20Guidelines%20March%202003%20Rev1%20Jan06_0.pdf

⁷⁶ [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Oslo%20Guidelines%20ENGLISH%20\(November%202007\).pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Oslo%20Guidelines%20ENGLISH%20(November%202007).pdf)