

# LESSONS FROM THE CITY: Concern's Work in Urban Areas



Concern Worldwide is committed to expanding our programming in urban areas as part of our response to an increasingly urban world and the likelihood that we will have to respond to a major emergency in a large urban area in the near future. Our approach is built on a number of years' experience working in urban areas (our first urban intervention was in 1973 in Dhaka, Bangladesh) and currently we have interventions in urban areas in 10 countries<sup>1</sup>.

## Who we work with

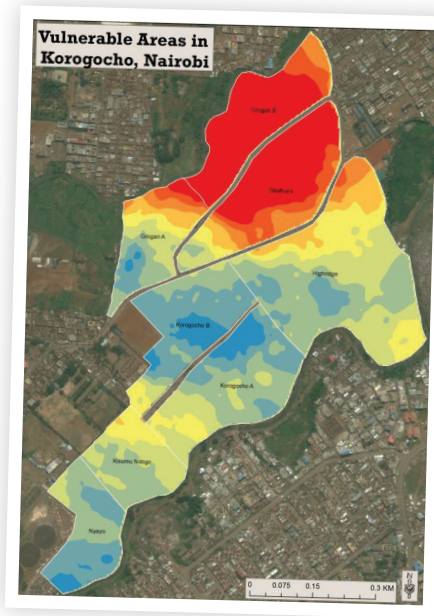
Our work focuses on the Extreme Poor – who we identify as those lacking in basic assets, or who have poor returns on these assets when they are available, a situation driven by inequality and risk and vulnerability<sup>2</sup>. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, we have worked with over 25,000 pavement and slum dwellers through our Amrao Manush programme<sup>3</sup>, addressing both the immediate risks associated with living on the streets and the underlying factors forcing people to live with risk. Working with partner organisations, we have established twelve pavement dweller centres (PDCs), designed to provide pavement dwellers with basic services in the areas of shelter, water, security, health, and livelihood support.



Nazma returns from selling food at local offices in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Her family used to live on the street but were supported by one of Concern's Pavement Dweller Centres. Their children still use the centres and the saving scheme helped Nazma to be able to establish the business. Photographer: Abbie Traylor-Smith/May 2016/ Bangladesh/Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide

In Mogadishu (Somalia) we provide cash transfers and focus our work on long term internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have fled from other regions due to drought, conflict or flooding, and are either dependent on casual work or humanitarian assistance.

1. Kenya (Nairobi), Sierra Leone (Freetown), Haiti (Port au Prince), Bangladesh (Dhaka, Chittagong and Mymensingh), Ethiopia (Addis Ababa), Liberia (Monrovia), Somalia (Mogadishu), Turkey (Sanliurfa), Lebanon (Tripoli and Akkar) and South Sudan (Juba).
2. The full document How Concern understands Extreme Poverty is available [here](#).
3. A review of the programme is available [here](#).



Hotspot Map showing areas of Vulnerability, Korogocho, Nairobi

Identifying specific groups to work with is important in the urban context. Our experience has shown that while a given area may be commonly considered as poor, urban averages can mask huge inequalities amongst residents of this area. Data we have collected in Nairobi reveals that even within slum populations, there can be significant variations in income and expenditure, with specific constraints experienced by the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (this is shown in the hotspot map, where households living in the areas shaded red show considerably higher levels of deprivation than the areas shaded blue). The Nairobi data comes from our Indicator Development for the Surveillance

of Urban Emergencies (IDSUE), which has been used to identify thresholds on a series of food security indicators that help to identify when a situation has moved from chronic poverty to a crisis<sup>4</sup>.

This methodology has been tested and refined over the course of several years in several informal settlements in Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa and has been handed over to our partner, the Kenya Red Cross, who continue to collect data in three informal settlements within Nairobi. Building on the foundation of IDSUE, Concern is currently working together with consortium partners (Oxfam and KRCS) and the Nairobi City County to establish an urban specific Early Warning framework that will see the County government take control of the system to monitor and identify potential food security emergencies in Nairobi.

## Our Humanitarian Focus

Collecting data to identify a potential emergency is not sufficient. To deal with this an early action component was built in to the intervention in Kenya to trigger a response when specific thresholds have been exceeded, as happened in Korogocho in 2014 and more recently in December 2017 in Korogocho and Kibera. This response was mounted with our partners Oxfam, Kenya Red Cross and the County Department of Health, which took the form of an emergency cash transfer for well-targeted households and Mass Screening and referrals of children (6-59 Months) for malnutrition.

4. More details on the IDS UE programme are available [here](#).

We have also responded to a number of large scale humanitarian crises in an urban context. In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Port au Prince, Haiti, we worked both in camps and directly with earthquake-affected communities to help them return to their old neighbourhoods and restore their old lives. Subsequently, the Integrated Reconstruction and Development Programme for Grand Ravine was designed to contribute to sustainable improvements in the living environment of neighbourhoods in the area including community level

infrastructure, such as canals in Ravine Vasquez, a bridge over Ravine Raoul, the installation of gabions and soil retention works, and the provision of 248 streetlights.

Concern also works in areas in protracted crises – in Mogadishu, Somalia we provide an integrated health and nutrition programme that works concurrently on preventive and curative interventions. Services provided include ante and post- natal care, health, hygiene and sanitation awareness and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF).

Before and After Picture of the Construction of the Ravine Vasquez in Grand Ravine. Photos Katia Antoine and Frederic Mogin



## Developing Individual Capacities

In our longer term programmes, we work on increasing the livelihood opportunities for individuals and helping them to engage more in markets using the skills we help them develop. In Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), we have provided vocational training and skills certification for vulnerable youths. At the core of this project was the development of a training programme that matched the critical skills gaps in the jobs market. Similarly, through our work in Nairobi and Port au Prince we have used a combination of training and small grants to strengthen livelihoods and build employability by providing beneficiaries with technical skills necessary for employment within specific fields, and to help small business development. As part of our response to the Syria crisis, we have provided large scale skills development training including Turkish language lessons, vocational training, life skills and entrepreneurship training, and career counselling to Syrians in Şanlıurfa (Turkey); this is designed to enable them to access the formal labour market. In Lebanon, we have targeted our skills training at the most vulnerable women.

## Improved Services for the Extreme Poor

While urban areas generally have a greater level of formal service provision than rural areas, this can vary considerably across different parts of the city and for different groups. In this respect, we also work on improving access to services in locations

that are particularly poorly served (generally equated with slum areas). In Nairobi, we have provided high quality health and nutrition programming and have shown a dedicated commitment to improving the quality and access to primary education for slum children. This included undertaking some well-informed advocacy that focused on the unmet need for education in the slum areas and identifying opportunities for increased targeted investment for the poorest communities.

In Sierra Leone, we have implemented a highly successful Child Survival Project<sup>5</sup> in densely populated and more vulnerable neighbourhoods of Freetown. This assists the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) in its efforts to improve maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH). Project activities at the community level include intensive behaviour change communication initiatives and data collection for serious morbidity and mortality at the household level. The project also supported community structures, specifically Health Management Committees and Ward Development Committees in taking greater ownership of health activities, and in analysing community health data to make informed decisions that would improve health outcomes. At the district level, the project worked with health facility staff to improve quality of care through trainings, application of clinical protocols, and on-the-job supervision and mentorship.

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5. The final evaluation is available to download [here](#).



Mercy is at a low cost private school (St Francis) thanks to a cash transfer from Concern. Her parents Olivia Onderi (30) and Anthony Kinuthia (42) work on the Dandora dumpsite in Nairobi. Photograph: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide



Dandora dumpsite in Nairobi. Photography: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Panos Pictures for Concern Worldwide

In Bangladesh, after six years of implementing an integrated urban nutrition programme we have recently been awarded a grant to develop an Urban Health Programme. The new programme focuses on universal health coverage with a pro-poor focus. This will be done through the provision of a health voucher card; strengthening the preventive and primary

health care management system; and the health service programme of the City Corporations and Municipalities.

We have also worked on urban sanitation in Saint Martin and Grand Ravine in Port au Prince (Haiti) and in Monrovia (Liberia) and Freetown (Sierra Leone) through a variety of consortiums.

## Addressing Gender Equality in Our Urban Work

Throughout our programmes, we have focused on increasing our knowledge of the experiences of the extreme poor in an urban context. Within this, we are getting better at understanding some of the challenges women face in the urban context, for instance casual employment means limited time with the child, with the knock on effect of virtually no exclusive breastfeeding and poor complementary feeding. Women also face major issues of insecurity in the poorest urban areas.

In 2017, Concern undertook a series of pieces of qualitative research with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) investigating Gender Based Insecurity (GBI) and Mobility in Dhaka, Addis Ababa and Port au Prince.

While gender based violence (GBV) is commonplace, the research found that only looking at each event of violence leads to an incomplete understanding of how GBI impacts urban women. Even without an actual violent event, they face environments marked by enough insecurity that the sense of fear may have significant impacts.

Anecdotally, many women identify insecurity as the reason they are unable to seek care for illness, access social networks such as church groups, visit specific markets, take employment in certain areas or even use the toilet at night. Given their role as mothers and caretakers, this limitation can have further effects on child health and development. As a means to address this Concern are examining ways to bring our Engaging Men and Boys: Gender Justice approach into our urban work.

## Looking Forward

Over the coming years our urban programming will:

- Work with the poorest, often invisible, groups in urban areas, with clear targeting criteria, focusing on building social inclusion and social capital, and the representation of marginalised people in governance institutions.
- Take an area based approach that shows a strong understanding of context addressing the multi-dimensional nature of vulnerability, inequality, social capital and agency in these contexts.
- Work with government, in particular the local authorities, and the private sector to enhance service provision in education, health, water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Incorporate advocacy as a fundamental element of any intervention undertaken in an urban context.
- Focus on the concept of urban Graduation as a means to address issues of unemployment, particularly amongst urban youth.
- Develop our expertise and understanding on issues around nutrition in the urban context, in particular designing programmes that address the nutritional value of street food.



**FOR MORE DETAILS ON  
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Shahnaz set up this food cart through the help of Concern's INVEST project. She supplies food at lunch time to business people in the community, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photographer: Jennifer Nolan

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