

**CONCERN**  
worldwide

# Seize the Opportunity

Turning ambition into action for the world's most vulnerable people



People wait in line to check into a general food distribution in protection of civilian (PoC) site one in UN House, a UN base on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan. Photo: Crystal Wells



**WORLD  
HUMANITARIAN  
SUMMIT**

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# FOREWORD



Within the humanitarian world, it is during the defining crises of our times - Biafra, the Rwanda genocide, the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Haitian earthquake – the times when we are most stretched, that the strengths and limitations of our collective response are brought to the fore. Out of the fire of these crises the humanitarian community reflected and reformed. We achieved greater professionalism, more rigorous thinking, more transparency, efficiency and accountability, often in some of the world's most challenging and dangerous working environments.

We should take stock of our progress, but in Istanbul we must focus our attention on those we are still failing. The brutal reality is that we are still remarkably absent in hundreds of communities across war-torn Syria, Yemen, South Sudan and Central African Republic.

The twin scourges of conflict and climate change have led to a remarkably high level of global suffering and the patchwork humanitarian system that has evolved over the past 70 years is unarguably struggling to handle the burden of today's crises. We need to think hard about

what we need to change. We can and need to do better.

We must also recognise that we cannot bear the responsibility for what is beyond humanitarian capacity and control. Ebola was a failure of prevention and of development policy. Syria is a shameful failure of the global political system.

Our central message to send to national leaders at the Summit, is that humanitarian aid can no longer be used as a substitute for failed diplomacy or the lack of political will to find solutions to protracted conflicts.

Concern welcomes the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon's report, One Humanity: Shared Responsibility, and the resultant Agenda for Humanity. The Agenda is bold, ambitious and has a vision with the potential to be truly transformative. The challenge now is to turn ambition into action, to turn rhetoric into reality, and to genuinely tackle the causes of humanitarian need and the biggest obstacles to effective humanitarian action.

The World Humanitarian Summit represents an historic opportunity to shape the future of humanitarian action and to make a difference to the lives of the 125 million disaster affected people around the world. It cannot be satisfied merely by proposing more structural changes to the humanitarian system. It must tackle the root causes of crises at a political level, and the political decisions that allow conflict to flourish. Anything less would be a failure.

We need political and moral leadership that is courageous, far-sighted and grounded in the founding values of human rights. Our language must be bold, clear and unambiguous, turning rhetoric to reality and reframing our commit-

ments, not as future aspirations but as rights: the right to have enough to eat; to access health services; the right to work; and to equality, freedom from fear, persecution and violence. Language is important - if we talk of these as rights, we move from aspiration to obligation, and from ambition to action. We need that rigour, discipline and accountability if we are to deliver on the promise of leaving no one behind.

Concern is drawing on almost 50 years of experience reaching the poorest and most vulnerable communities. In this document, *Seize the Opportunity*, we have published 23 commitments aligned to the Secretary General's Agenda for Humanity, which include our commitments on prevention, preparedness, increasing our response capacity, as well as ensuring that at least 25% of Concern's humanitarian funding goes through national partners. In addition, we are leveraging our position as a networked organisation to deliver three key commitments for achieving greater global impact.

1. Delivering faster, more effective, more accountable, and more efficient humanitarian responses in the poorest and most vulnerable contexts through our leadership of Alliance2015, which brings together seven NGOs operating in 89 countries with a collective budget of over \$950 million.
2. Fulfilling our goal of training 20,000 frontline humanitarian staff and stakeholders in improved humanitarian response through the Building a Better Response initiative by 2018.
3. Using our leadership at the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, to support a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender based violence in conflict and crises.

Concern is also calling on global leaders to:

1. Commit to a world where affected populations receive essential humanitarian aid - food, shelter, water and protection - within 24 hours of the onset of crises.
2. Expand UN Resolution 2286, intended to prevent attacks on medical staff and facilities, to include all humanitarian aid workers, and hold to account those who violate this resolution.
3. Reinvigorate negotiations for a global, intergovernmental mechanism for compliance and violation monitoring of international humanitarian law.
4. Establish a more robust preventative diplomacy rapid deployment mechanism, based on the Elders model, to seek resolutions at the onset of emerging conflicts
5. Close the funding gaps, increasing humanitarian funding to 20% of total ODA, making it longer term and genuinely accessible to key humanitarian responders

The vision of the Sustainable Development Goals, agreed by all world leaders at last year's United Nations Summit, is one of a more peaceful, sustainable world achieved by 2030. As a humanitarian community, it is our responsibility to embrace this vision and to harness the momentum generated by its ambition and global reach. The Sustainable Development Goals however, will never be achieved if we do not seize the opportunity in Istanbul to deliver real transformative political change that tackles the root causes of humanitarian crises. The commitments delivered at the World Humanitarian Summit must be forged into a new binding Humanitarian Agenda that compels us to address the deficit of humanity that has led to levels of suffering, cruelty and hardship that we thought we had left behind last century.

**Dominic MacSorley**

*Chief Executive, Concern Worldwide*

# CONCERN WORLDWIDE'S PERSPECTIVE AND COMMITMENTS



*Women wade through contaminated flood water, to collect drinking water, at the displacement camp on the UN base in Bentiu, the capital of oil-producing Unity State in South Sudan. Photo: Crystal Wells*

Based on almost fifty years of working in diverse humanitarian contexts with a dual mandate of humanitarian response and development work, and a specific focus on working in the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries, Concern sees the following as areas in which the Summit must deliver:

## ➤ **Core Responsibility 1:** Political leadership to prevent and end conflict

The Summit takes place at a time of heightened global conflict. A downward trend in armed conflict following the end of the Cold War has been in reversal since 2011, with exponential year-on-year increases in violence. The nature of conflict has also changed, with an increasing

incidence of proxy conflicts, greater numbers of non-state actors, and with indiscriminate violence and the violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) becoming the norm.

The human impact of conflict is growing at alarming rates. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) analysis indicated that 172 million people were affected by 33 conflicts across 25 countries in 2013, and this number has only increased since then. Globally, 50% of the world's poor now live in conflict-affected and fragile states, and that figure is set to rise to more than 80% by 2025.

The international structures in place to prevent conflict are either antiquated or have become overly politicised, most notably the United Nations Security Council, and the failure to prevent the rising level of global conflict is

evidence of the need for change. Concern welcomes the call for a renewed international focus on the prevention and rapid de-escalation of armed conflicts as outlined in the Secretary General's report. The recent rise in conflict globally has been facilitated by a number of factors, amongst them the lack of effective early diplomatic intervention. The complexity of the conflict in Syria in particular leads many to be defeatist about the prospects for peace. However, the experience of Northern Ireland and the Balkans, amongst other conflicts, where external political intervention was a major catalyst for peace, should not be forgotten. A central outcome of the Summit must be a renewed and radical approach to inclusive diplomacy.

### **Calls:**

1. A renewed international focus on the prevention and rapid de-escalation of armed conflicts.
2. A renewed and radical approach to wholly inclusive diplomacy.
3. A rapidly deployable diplomatic mechanism of international influencers based on the Elders Model to seek resolutions at the onset of emerging conflicts.

### **Concern's commitments:**

1. For every major conflict emergency to which Concern responds, we will produce messaging on the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in line with humanitarian principles.
2. Disseminate across the humanitarian community evidence of innovative and effective programming that addresses conflict.

## **➤ Core Responsibility 2: Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity**

Approximately 80% of global humanitarian aid is allocated to conflict zones. In many current conflicts, a growing pattern of attacks on hospitals, civilian populations and aid workers is making access and programming increasingly challenging. Siege and starvation tactics have been used, most notably in Syria, where the systemic deprivation of food and other basic necessities has resulted in mass suffering, death and outward migration.

International Humanitarian Law allows for conflict-affected non-combatant populations to access humanitarian assistance, but this assistance remains beyond the reach of millions of civilians across many conflict contexts. The current culture of impunity evident in many conflicts has facilitated an open disregard for IHL and the protection of civilians.

We are operating in a context in which technology is being used to amplify the speed and scale of terrorist messages and influence. Social media is being used on a global scale to promote violence and spread extremism. We need to be as smart about using social media as a force for good. There is a need to drive out initiatives that highlight the positive force of humanitarian action and the dignity of every individual.

Beyond financial investment, we need to make a broader investment in the political commitment to put humanity first. Attacks on refugee camps cannot become the new norm. Systemic bombing and starvation of civilian populations cannot go on unchecked. We must not become inured to the barbarity of today's conflicts. Even war has limits. We must work together at the Summit to forge tangible outcomes to reassert the authority and primacy of respect for human life, and to ensure that in the years to come we will not look back on this time as the low point, but rather, the starting point for change.



A Syrian refugee boy stands between the tents at an informal tented settlement in Lebanon, Photo: Dalia Khamissy

### **Calls:**

1. Remove the power of veto from permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in relation to humanitarian crises.
2. Expand UN Resolution 2286, intended to prevent attacks on medical staff and facilities, to include all humanitarian aid workers, and hold to account those who violate this resolution.
3. Reinvigorate negotiations for a global, intergovernmental mechanism for IHL compliance and violation monitoring.
4. Adopt the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, placing the onus on Member States to prevent and respond to violations of these principles.
5. Mount an aggressive social media campaign using the force of human values of decency, respect and dignity.

### **Concern's commitments:**

1. Advocate for the full and unimpeded access of populations affected by disaster and conflict to humanitarian assistance.
2. By 2018, all Concern programme staff will receive training in the guiding principles of humanitarian action.
3. Continue to expand knowledge of, and adherence to, our Programme Participant Protection Policy to all staff and partner organisations to reduce the incidence of sexual exploitation and abuse of local populations.

### **➤ Core Responsibility 3: Leave no one behind**

In championing the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Ban Ki-moon stated that we will leave no one behind and will reach the furthest away first. Agenda 2030

is hugely ambitious, but we can achieve it by changing the language from 'goals' to that of 'rights', because the SDGs are rights - the right to have enough to eat; to access health services; to a job; and to the rights of equality, freedom from fear, persecution and violence. Language is important - if we talk of these as rights, we move from aspiration to obligation and from ambition to action. We will need that rigour, discipline and accountability if we are to deliver on the promise of leaving no one behind.

The Summit must harness this momentum for action. Leaving no one behind is the ethos at the heart of the SDGs and the *Agenda for Humanity*. It is logical and necessary that the WHS and the SDGs share this vision. As an organisation with a dual focus on humanitarian response and long-term development, Concern has a particular appreciation of the nexus between these two spheres, and believes that establishing linkages between humanitarian and development contexts is essential.

The prevention and early resolution of conflict - the single largest driver of crises, poverty and displacement - must be centre stage at the political level if we are to save countless lives and avoid consigning millions of men, women and children to lives in refugee or displaced camps for decades, surviving on an insufficiently funded humanitarian life-line.

Women and girls suffer the most. The 2015 UN General Assembly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2015/453) put it starkly: "the brutalization of women remains a consistent and persistent feature of conflict".

There is no end in sight to the conflict in Syria. More bombs mean more people will have to flee the conflict, and more displaced people will come into ever more crowded camps in Jordan, Turkey or Lebanon, where they either cannot or have only limited access to work. While not forgetting that two-thirds of all displaced people are IDPs, we need to establish ways for refugees to be integrated into, and to lead productive lives in, their countries of refuge, a

more equal model for accepting refugees, and for ensuring their right to work.

We need to address the funding crisis. The *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015* notes that despite humanitarian funding reaching record levels in 2014, the gap between the level of funding received and the amount needed was also at an all-time high, with a 38% shortfall for UN appeals. Inadequate funding leads to impossible choices: cutting food rations, reduced shelter kits, reaching fewer people. We must increase pressure on donor countries to close the massive and persistent funding gaps in humanitarian funding.

Rather than availing of the OECD directive that allows the use of ODA to cover the costs of refugees' basic needs during their first year in a host country, we urge European Member States to support any new model of refugee migration into Europe with new sources of funding.

Taking account of the recent SG report, *In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants* we support the call for new global commitments to address large movements of refugees and migrants in the form of a global compact on responsibility sharing for refugees.

### **Calls:**

1. A new deal for refugees that allows them better integration and greater rights and opportunities to work and contribute to their countries of refuge.
2. OECD Member States must identify new sources of funding to support the integration of refugees, rather than using ODA.

### **Concern's commitments in relation to displaced populations:**

1. Concern and its Alliance 2015 partners commit to having a programme presence in up to ten of the countries



Concern Field Officers distribute clothes to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Photo: Amanda Ruckel

with the greatest level of displacement.

2. Advocate and develop creative solutions to end protracted displacement.
3. Raise public and political awareness of the causes and consequences of displacement, to enhance public empathy and help reduce growing levels of intolerance and discrimination.

### Concern's commitments in relation to supporting efforts to strive for gender equality and reduce gender based violence:

1. Use our leadership of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence to support a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender based violence in conflicts and disasters.
2. Sign on to the Call to Action and its roadmap on the prevention of gender

based violence in emergencies, and implement the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action by 2018.

3. Ensure that all humanitarian responses are informed by gender and protection analysis, increasing the meaningful participation of women and adolescent girls in the design, delivery and review of all interventions.

### ► Core Responsibility 4: Changing people's lives - from delivering aid to ending need

The two major challenges facing disaster-affected populations over the next two decades will be conflict and climate change. Biafra, the Rwanda genocide, the Indian Ocean tsunami, and the Haitian earthquake – the defining

crises of our times – have shown the strengths and limitations of our capacity to respond. This is when we have taken steps to reform and reinvent - to bring about greater professionalism, standards, codes and efficiency. Today we are facing a similar tipping point.

The humanitarian system is struggling to handle the number and scale of today's crises. While we can and must improve the humanitarian system for greater effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, and a shift in power to promote locally owned and led responses, we must also acknowledge its limits. It cannot bear responsibility for what is beyond its control and capacity. The rapid spread of Ebola in West Africa was a failure of development. The ongoing crisis in Syria is a failure of the political system to find a solution to an emerging and then deepening conflict.

When we look at Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Yemen, Central Africa Republic and many other conflict affected countries we can see where our humanitarian efforts fall short. The failure to find political solutions for these conflicts has meant that humanitarian aid is time and time again being used as a sticking plaster to cover political failures. Our key message to the WHS is that humanitarian aid is essential, but should not be used to disguise failed diplomacy or a lack of political will to find solutions.

On a broader level, ending need will require a massive cultural and attitudinal shift. Prevention and preparedness, key development functions, need much greater engagement and funding. Development budgets must increasingly focus on the poor-vulnerable contexts in which the highest percentage of those furthest behind live. Given that we know that prevention saves money but, more importantly, saves lives, we need to reduce the need for response by using development budgets for investment in building community resilience to predictable, repeated and/or protracted crises such as drought or flooding. Even with crisis modifiers built in to development budgets, this should reduce the demands on the humanitarian system.

Structural changes to the humanitarian system will only be genuinely effective if they are made in tandem with changes to the international system. The humanitarian community must increase its commitment to finding ways to work with diverse actors, but do so in a manner that does not undermine humanitarian principles. But the greatest change that is needed is establishing the collective political will to prevent or bring about the early resolution of conflicts. Without this, any reforms of the humanitarian system will amount to little more than a tinkering at the margins of the real problem.

We must put disaster-affected populations at the centre of humanitarian responses and decision making, empower local actors, and increase funding to national NGOs. While we welcome the initiative to commit to a greater localisation of humanitarian action, a responsible embrace of this approach requires it to be considered and tailored to the context in which the response is being delivered. We also recognise the challenges that often exist in conflict contexts. Improving efficiency is not a question of either international or national partners. Nor is it a replacement strategy. It is about complementarity, and harnessing the strengths of a diverse array of actors to best meet the needs of disaster-affected populations which are currently overwhelming the humanitarian system.

Over the last six years, the average allocation of Concern's humanitarian budget to national partners was 26%. Our long-standing commitment to working with national partners has shown us the value of complementarity in ensuring greater capacity to go to scale and meet best practice standards and donor compliance requirements. Our commitment to nationalise our country teams to the extent possible is a part of our strategy to finding approaches that are the most appropriate to the operating context. Ultimately, our priority is to find ways of working that best meet the needs of disaster and conflict affected people and deliver effective, impactful responses.

We need to make our technology smarter and drive more innovative ways of working. Cash transfers are an essential component of effective programming but they are not a silver bullet or a substitute for community engagement. We cannot take the 'human' out of humanitarian – sustained presence on the ground is critical. Proximity to people in need is essential to understanding needs and to building engagement and trust.

### Calls:

1. Humanitarian aid should not be used as a substitute for failed diplomacy or a lack of political ability or will to find solutions.
2. Donors should set a threshold of funding to be allocated to national partners, but this needs to be balanced with recognition of the need for a diversity of actors, and for these actors to receive and manage funding directly.
3. 'Maximised localisation' needs to be a priority for donors and international NGOs, but should be delivered with an approach and at a pace that ensures humanitarian action.
4. Invest development funding into resilience programming in situations of predictable, repeated and/or protracted crises, to save lives and minimise the need for major humanitarian responses.

### Concern's commitments:

1. Reinforce, rather than replace, in-country efforts for humanitarian preparedness and response, recognising that communities themselves are critical first responders.
2. Only respond when needed, and only establish our direct responses when

there are clear identified gaps and unmet needs.

3. Deepen our engagement with and accountability to disaster and conflict affected populations through our commitment to the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and other key good practice standards.
4. Increase our investment in actions that build the emergency response capacity of national NGOs and CSOs, ensuring that we have memoranda of understanding with partners that reflect and build on the Principles of Partnership.
5. Promote the participation of all affected populations, specifically women and girls, to ensure their full engagement in the design and delivery of programmes.
6. Expand and deepen national NGOs' understanding of humanitarian systems through continued training.

## ➤ Core Responsibility 5: Invest in Humanity

As we entered 2016, 82 million people in 38 countries were dependant on humanitarian aid for their survival. One of the immediate catalysts for organising the WHS was the need to address the growing gap between the level of funding required for humanitarian responses, and the amount available to deliver them. In 2015, almost \$20 billion was needed to meet the joint appeals, but only 52% of this funding was received. This is not just a number. It meant a shortfall of \$9.6 billion and that half of identified humanitarian needs were not met. It had unacceptable consequences - cutbacks in food rations, children being deprived of education, girls being forced into early marriages, and people being forced into destructive coping strategies. Simply put, there



*Adiya Hatou is a participant in a cash-transfer scheme organised by Concern in the village of Mogheur in Nger's Bambeye Commune, Tahoua. Photo: Jennifer Nolan*

are too many people in need, and too little funding available to meet these needs.

The funding pool for humanitarian response must move away from its reliance on a small number of donors. The 'Grand Bargain' emerging from the High Level Panel Report on Humanitarian Financing process reflects the ethos of shared responsibility that underpins the SDGs and includes an emphasis on the increased potential role of a diversity of funding sources, seeking to establish a modified system that would make aid delivery more efficient. While the details are still being finalised, the HLP report states that the Grand Bargain should "...not simply give more but give better, by being more flexible, and aid organisations would reciprocate with greater transparency and cost-consciousness".

Though the exploration of diversifying funding streams is welcome, predictability of funding is also crucially important. We need to move from a model in which five countries provide two thirds of the global humanitarian aid budget. We should stop trying to reinvent the wheel, and

call on countries to honour their commitment to achieve 0.7% of GDP, but we then should look at the allocation of humanitarian funding within ODA, pushing for it to be doubled to 20%.

We need to protect, cherish and deepen public support for humanitarian action as an expression of solidarity with disaster affected populations. Public support is the lifeblood of most humanitarian organisations. Public taxes also provide institutional donors like the EU, DFID and USAID with their funds. The emergency responses of organisations like Concern is often seen as an expression of solidarity of the public with disaster-affected populations, and the work of INGOs provides a level of accountability for the use of funds generated from such taxes.

From an NGO perspective, funding needs to be more flexible and long-term in its scope. Predictable, multi-year financing is required to provide a comprehensive response to immediate needs, supporting the recovery process and building capacity and resilience to future shocks, thus in turn helping to bridge the

gap between short-term response and long-term development. As today's humanitarian crises are increasingly protracted, long-term funding is vital to ensure that essential services during crises, such as education and protection, are maintained. The immediacy of need in sudden onset emergencies requires us to maintain the capacity to establish rapid and effective responses and not to be delayed in agreeing 'collective outcomes'.

Summit participants should constructively push for development budgets to be focused more on the poorest and most vulnerable populations and the support of disaster risk reduction. While the overall amount of humanitarian aid given by donors is increasing, a decreasing proportion of that aid is going to the poorest countries - a trend that must be reversed. The delivery of robust, largescale and ambitious development programmes in areas of greatest vulnerability will be the most effective tool for mitigating the impact of external shocks and the need for emergency response.

### Calls:

1. All Member States must honour their commitment to achieve 0.7% of GDP. This will allow the funding pool for humanitarian responses to move away from relying primarily on a small number of donor countries.
2. Humanitarian funding must be doubled to 20% of total ODA.
3. Humanitarian donors should:
  - a. streamline and simplify their proposal and reporting requirements
  - b. introduce longer timelines in their budget cycles
  - c. release funding more quickly
  - d. adopt the more consistent use of crisis modifiers, allowing for greater flexibility and adaptation of funding allocations
4. Development budgets to be focused more on the poorest and most vulnerable populations and the support of disaster risk reduction and community resilience building.

### Concern's commitments:

1. Fully engage with the outcomes of the Grand Bargain for improved efficiency of humanitarian resources.
2. Continue to work through and provide funding for national partners (25% of our annual humanitarian budget) and clearly show national NGO partner funding allocations in our Annual Report.
3. Consistent with international standards, continue to implement transparent programme planning and reporting processes.
4. Continue to engage NGO-led financing mechanisms, and influence donors to increase their support for these effective disbursement processes.
5. Advocate with donors to close the funding gap and to ensure that all inter-agency humanitarian appeals are fully funded.
6. Advocate with donors for predictable multi-year funding commitments and instruments that enable humanitarian programming to look at longer term resilience-oriented solutions.



*Concern Staff getting ready to distribute vital supplies to displaced families, sheltering in over-crowded camps, in Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: Jennifer Nolan*





**UK**

13 - 14 Calico House  
Clove Hitch Quay  
London SW11 3TN  
**T** +44 207 801 1850  
**F** +44 207 223 5082  
**E** londoninfo@concern.net

**Republic of Ireland**

52 – 55 Lower Camden Street  
Dublin 2, D02 H425  
**T** +353 1 417 7700  
**F** +353 1 475 7362  
**E** info@concern.net

**USA**

355 Lexington Avenue, 19th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
**T** +1 212 557 8000  
**F** +1 212 557 8004  
**E** info.usa@concern.net

**Northern Ireland**

47 Frederick Street  
BT1 2LW  
+4428 9033 1100  
**E** belfastinfo@concern.net

**Republic of Korea**

Chunji Building, 2F, 374 1  
Seogyo-dong, Mapo-Gu  
Seoul, 121 894  
**T** +82 324 3900  
**F** +82 324 3901  
**E** info.korea@concern.net