

Country Strategic Plan

Bangladesh
2022-2026



Our Identity

Concern Worldwide is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries.



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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.

Introduction

The optimism of recent years that hunger and poverty can be eliminated has suffered a major setback with the triple impact of COVID-19, the challenges of climate change and the effect of conflict. For the first time in 20 years, the absolute numbers in poverty and hunger globally have started to increase, with expectations that the pandemic pushed over 100 million additional people into extreme poverty in 2020.

In Bangladesh this is seen in increases in the number of people described as being multi dimensionally poor and the job losses attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. This requires a doubling down on global efforts to ensure that we achieve the commitments to end hunger and extreme poverty by 2030, and ensuring that no one is left behind, encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Founded in 1968 Concern has grown into a global organisation, supporting operations in the world's poorest and most vulnerable contexts.

Concern is a dual mandate organisation, meaning we have an obligation to respond to emergencies and we seek to address the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability through longer-term work. We are driven by an organisational culture, encapsulated in our identity, vision and mission.

The following outlines our five-year ambition and areas of focus for 2022 to 2026 in Bangladesh. It is the culmination of a comprehensive process that considered the external environment, both in country and globally, as well as looking at our strengths and weaknesses and how well we have performed in terms of delivering our previous Strategic Plan. This strategy will signal 50 years since Concern Worldwide's first engagement in Bangladesh (in 1972) with an emergency response to natural disasters, subsequently evolving to include long-term development programmes targeted at those living in extreme poverty.

The External Context

Bangladesh is considered a Lower Middle Income Country (since 2015), and is due to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries list by 2026. Remarkable progress has been made in poverty reduction (falling from 44% in 1991 to 20.5% in 2019) mainly driven by unparalleled economic growth (the economy grew at annual rate of 6.9% between 2011 and 2019). However, large pockets of poverty and extreme poverty persist in areas that have been marginalised from government policy, such as the slum areas of the cities and remote communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Since 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Bangladesh profoundly; as GDP growth decelerated and poverty increased, with a particular gendered element due to reduced female labour force participation and earning losses in the Ready Made Garment (RMG) sector. The government response in terms of providing Social Protection to an estimated five million households was widely praised, though a number amongst the poorest, particularly in the cities, did fall through the gaps.

With an estimated population of 161 million, Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim nation, with large Hindu, Buddhist and Christian minorities. While largely ethnically homogeneous, parts of the country are home to diverse tribal peoples. These groups face some discrimination under law as well as harassment and violations of their rights in practice and remain subject to occasional physical attacks, property destruction and land grabs. Societal discrimination against women, as well as against LGBTI+ people, limits their participation in politics, and religious, ethnic, and other marginalized groups remain underrepresented in politics and state agencies. Some legal recognition is available for transgender people, however, in practice they face severe discrimination. Women have fewer marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights than men, and face discrimination in social services and employment. Rape, acid throwing, and other forms of violence against women occur regularly despite laws offering some level of protection. Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage globally, despite a stated government commitment to abolish the practice by 2041.

While the primary school net enrolment rate is high, at 97.8%, the literacy rate of adults aged between 15 and 24 years is considerably lower, with 77% of males and 72% of females literate. The country has an under five mortality rate of 31 per 1,000 live births and a life expectancy at birth of 73 years. The urban areas of Bangladesh are home to approximately 64 million people, and remain very challenging for those who live on the fringes of society. According to a 2016 report by the Centre for Disability in Development, there are 16 million people with disabilities in Bangladesh, the equivalent of 10% of the country's population. Recent years have seen mixed fortunes in terms of governance, with improvements in terms of the rule of law, political stability and the absence of terrorism or violence, but worse performance in terms of regulatory quality, voice and accountability, the control of corruption, and government effectiveness¹.

1. Krefl, S. et al (2017). Global Climate Risk Index 2017. Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2015 and 1995 to 2015. <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/16411.pdf>

Future climate change projections for Bangladesh are less ambiguous than for many other countries with agreement among models that both temperatures and rainfall will increase significantly²; changes have already been observed with weather patterns becoming erratic and less predictable than before. Bangladesh's topography and geographical location³ make it particularly susceptible to extreme weather events including cyclones, floods and storm surges. Most of the country is less than 10 metres above sea level (and 10% is less than one metre). Due to its topography and climate, Bangladesh is subject to devastating **cyclones**, mostly in April-May and September-November, and is ranked first of all countries in the world in terms of vulnerability to tropical cyclones (the country is hit by a severe cyclone on average every three years). Bangladesh is also vulnerable to **flooding**, with 80% of its surface forming a giant floodplain. Floods originate from precipitation in the whole of the GBM Basin, not just the seven percent that lies within Bangladesh, and can therefore be of great magnitude. Riverbank **erosion** results in the loss of thousands of hectares of agricultural lands and affects the population for decades. Moreover, floods contribute to further **salinization** of coastal lands, causing not only loss of harvests but also of productive agricultural land.

Even though Bangladesh makes only a small contribution to global emissions, it ranked sixth on the 2017 Global Climate Risk Index⁴ of the countries most affected by climate change since 1995. In the ND-GAIN index (2017)⁵, Bangladesh ranked 160 out of 181 countries for climate vulnerability. Bangladesh faces significant challenges in adapting to the impacts of climate change, and while it is the 33rd most vulnerable country it is the 25th least ready country. However, vulnerability is caused not only by biophysical factors (being a flat, low, delta country exposed to flooding and cyclones),

but also socio-economic factors (such as high dependence on agriculture, RMG industry, population density, and poverty).

Bangladesh ranks 76th out of 116 countries on the Global Hunger Index and has shown an impressive decline in GHI scores since 2012, dropping from 28.6 points, considered serious, to 19.1 points in 2021, considered moderate. While Bangladesh has made considerable improvement in human development including nutrition, considerable challenges remain. Despite the Government of Bangladesh (GoB)'s strong commitment to addressing undernutrition, persistent undernutrition represents a significant and complex barrier to building a thriving, prosperous country. Undernutrition results in losses of an estimated \$1 billion US dollars of revenue per year in Bangladesh⁶. It is estimated that more than 36% of children less than five years old are stunted (low height for age), about 6.4 million children are affected⁷. Twelve percent of children suffer from acute malnutrition and are at increased risks of mortality⁸.

Though Bangladesh remains a peaceful, politically stable country – it ranks 33rd out of 163 countries on the 2020 Global Terrorism Index⁹ - it is home to 1.1 million Rohingya refugees, who were forcibly displaced from their villages and internally displaced people's camps in Rakhine State, Myanmar (early Rohingya Refugee Camps date back to the early 1970s and independence). The situation has evolved into a long-term one with no viable solution on the horizon; the 2022 Joint Response Plan seeks some USD 875 million to reach 1.4 million people in need encompassing the host communities and Rohingya refugees. The Government of Bangladesh does not recognize the Rohingya as refugees, rather as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), which is not the same as globally accepted refugee status. The Bangladesh Government plans to relocate 100,000 (approx. 10%) for the Rohingya Refugees to Bhasan Char Island.

2 This section draws heavily from the following publication <https://www.government.nl/documents/publications/2019/02/05/climate-change-profiles>

3 The country has a unique geography, situated on the Bay of Bengal and forming one of the largest deltas in the world with a dense network of tributaries of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna (GBM) Rivers.

4 Kreft, S. et al (2017). Global Climate Risk Index 2017. Who suffers most from extreme weather events? Weather-related loss events in 2015 and 1995 to 2015. <https://germanwatch.org/en/download/16411.pdf>

5 GAIN index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with readiness to improve resilience. <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

6 Howlader S et al., 2012. Investing in nutrition now: a smart start for our children, our future. Estimates of benefits and costs of a comprehensive program for nutrition in Bangladesh 2011-2021. PROFILES/Nutrition Costing Technical Report, Washington DC. Food & Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA), FHI360

7 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF Bangladesh. 2019 Progotir Pathay, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)

8 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF Bangladesh. 2019 Progotir Pathay, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)

9 This is produced by the Sydney-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GTI-2020-web-2.pdf>

Our Strengths

(And where we want to improve)

As part of the development of this strategy, we took the time to reflect on what we in Concern Worldwide, Bangladesh are good at – and the areas we need to focus on improving.

On the positive side, we have very committed staff who own the core values of the organisation – many of our team have been with the organisation for a long time. Working with our partners, we have a high level of engagement in the communities where we work and consider ourselves to be particularly good at reaching those who are the furthest behind (and hard to reach) – this is not just in terms of geography but also social and economic status. We consider that with our partners we deliver high quality programmes in these areas. What we do well, is intrinsically linked with how we work with local partners, much of which is backed up by good policies and practices. We have retained our funding target over the years.

However, we also see that there are areas for improvement that we need to address – we need to be better in working and liaising with the government at all levels to both ensure compliance, but also to achieve our programmatic objectives to bring about policy change for the people we work with. We know that we have to improve on our visibility at national level, improve on our documentation, branding value and showing cases of what works from our programmes, as well as diversify our funding base with new donors further and evolving our partnership approach in line with the localisation agenda. At country level we are also aware that we need to draw on the resources of the global organisation, sharing our experiences with other teams and increasing our opportunities for two way international cross country learning. There is also recognition that we need to shift to a more digital workplace that will ensure we are systematic and efficient in everything we do.

Our Five Year Ambition

Our overall objective for the period 2022 to 2026 is to contribute to

bringing sustainable, positive changes in the lives of people living in extreme poverty in Bangladesh.

Of particular importance is our commitment to evolving how we work with partners at local and a national level over the course of this programme as well as making sure the lessons of our work, are shared with others to improve programme quality and impact targeted at addressing extreme poverty.

We will achieve this through working on Five Particular Pillars–



Sustained Change From Our Programmes (Predominantly in the Health and Livelihoods sectors)



Climate Change



Humanitarian Action



Working through Partnership



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



We expect that our programmes will directly contribute to progress against Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), along with the Government of Bangladesh’s 8th Five Year Plan and other relevant policies and strategies

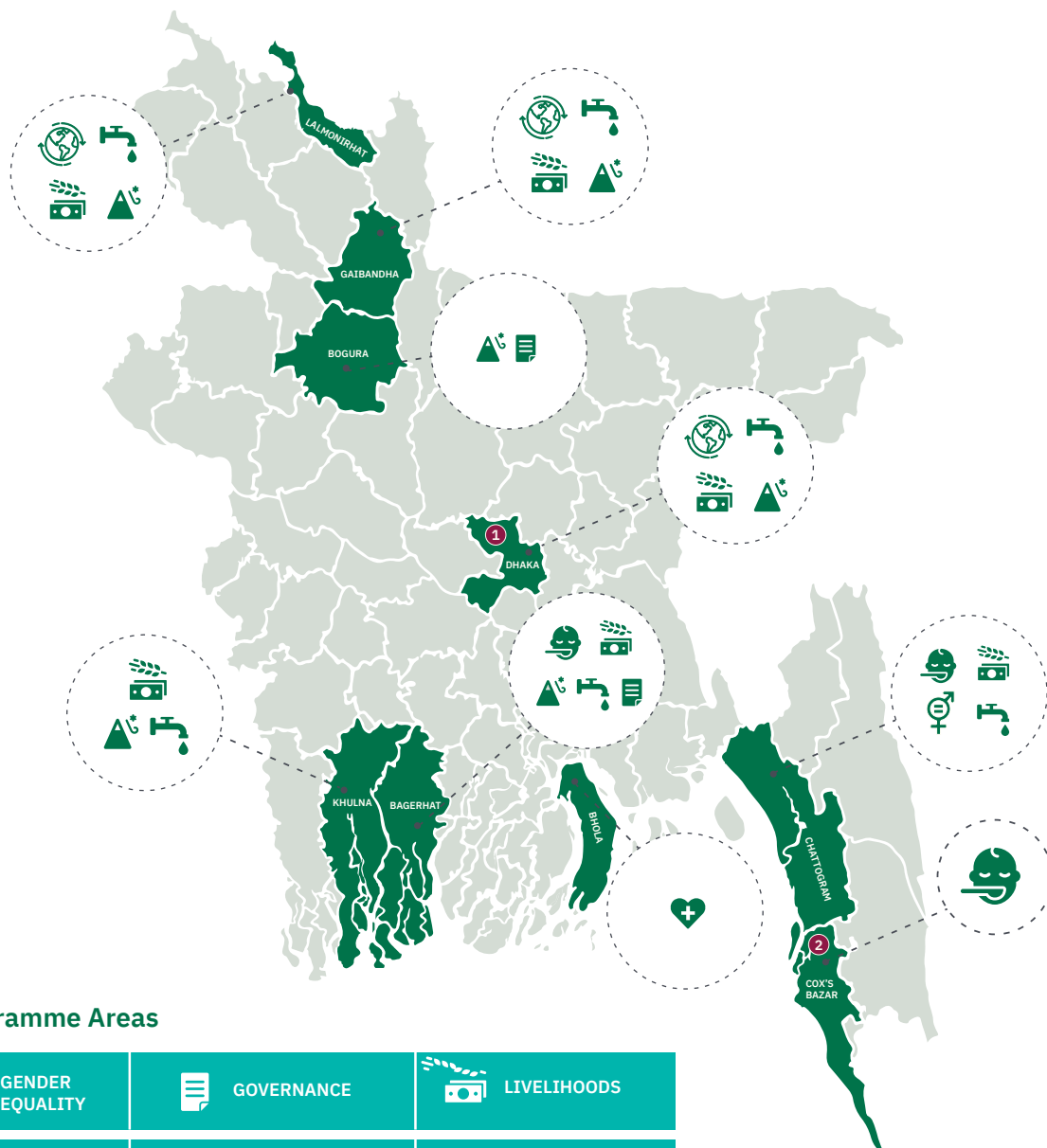
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| | <p>SDG 1
(No Poverty)</p> | | <p>SDG 2
(Zero Hunger)</p> | | <p>SDG 3
(Good Health and Well Being)</p> |
| | <p>SDG 5
(Gender Equality)</p> | | <p>SDG 6
(Clean Water and Sanitation)</p> | | <p>SDG 8
(Decent Work and Economic Growth)</p> |
| | <p>SDG 10
(Reduced Inequalities)</p> | | <p>SDG 13
(Climate Action)</p> | | |

What We Will Do

We aim to have a presence in approximately 15 of the most vulnerable districts over the coming years (we currently work in nine: Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Bagerhat, Khulna, Dhaka, Bogura, Bhola, Chattogram and Cox’s Bazar). All programmes will be informed by context and needs analysis that are updated on a regular basis.

Working with our partners, we will support the implementation of programmes directed towards people living in conditions of extreme poverty. Within this, we will focus on specific groups identified as being more vulnerable, particularly developing further our work with young people and people with disabilities. In addition, we will continue to provide support to communities in Cox’s Bazar as part of our response to Rohingya Refugee crisis and will respond to emergencies elsewhere in the country after a careful consideration of needs and who else is working in the area.

We will work with a variety of stakeholders (community, private sector, media, CSO, and government) in our programme areas to ensure a whole system approach is taken. We will also utilise our experience and the learning from our programme is documented and disseminated to try to influence policy implementation and direction at both the district and division level, and at national level.



Programme Areas

GENDER EQUALITY	GOVERNANCE	LIVELIHOODS
NUTRITION	WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE	HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING
CLIMATE CHANGE	DISASTER RISK REDUCTION	

Offices

1	DHAKA
2	COX'S BAZAR

To achieve our CSP, we will adapt our current programmes to work in the three broad contexts outline below:







Context

	People Living In Extreme Poverty And Who Are The Furthest Behind
	Communities Most Affected By Natural Disaster & Climate Change
	Protracted Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Who We Will Work With

	People Living In Extreme Poverty In Rural & Urban Areas Are Predominantly Engaged In Precarious Informal Sector Jobs That Provide Very Low Levels Of Income, In Turn Limiting Their Ability To Meet Their Basic Needs.
	People Living On The Front Lines Of Climate Change Where There Are High Levels Of Social Deprivation And Ecological Vulnerability To Flooding, River Erosion, Rising Sea Levels, And Increased Rainfall Variability.
	All People Affected By The Rohingya Refugee Crisis Which Has Become A Protracted Emergency With An Estimated 1.4 Million People Affected In The Camps And Immediate Host Community Which Are Vulnerable To Natural Disasters.

Sectors

	Emergency		Nutrition
	Health		Climate Resilient Livelihoods
	WASH		Disaster Risk Reduction

Approach

	Working With Local Partners And Government For Sustainable And Scalable Solutions
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Goal 1

To achieve systemic change at all levels and to improve the lives of people living in extreme poverty

Our work will focus on improving the food security and health and nutrition status of those living in extreme poverty, including developing a greater understanding of broader health and food systems and the linkages between urban and rural areas. We will take two broad approaches to achieving this – through the implementation of programmes that work directly with people living in conditions of extreme poverty, which will be done in conjunction with partner organisations; and through our advocacy work which aims to change policy and influence its implementation at both the district and division level (sometime referred to as meso-level), and national level (referred to as macro-level). Our advocacy work will be based on high quality evidence and research coming from our programmes. We will identify a small number of ‘specialised partners’ to work with us in this goal.

SO1: Deliver innovative approaches that strengthen the health and nutrition systems

Concern Worldwide in Bangladesh has a long history of working on health and nutrition, dating back to some of the very early Child Survival Programmes implemented in Dhaka and Mymensingh. Our recent interventions, such as the Essential Healthcare for the Disadvantaged (EHD) programme has supported government to address COVID-19 and has provided support to local government and health departments to establish satellite clinics.

As part of the Rohingya Refugee response, in 2020, Concern provided lifesaving assistance for **25,000** children under five years and for over **9,000** pregnant and lactating women to reduce malnutrition and improve health and well-being. Our work on health and nutrition vouchers, and our subsequent research into the effectiveness of this modality to support the poor and extreme poor in urban areas of Bangladesh has been well received and widely shared. We will build on this over the coming years, specifically focussing on:

- ④ Design and implement programmes that address issues related to Health and Nutrition Governance in both rural and urban areas (with a specific focus on social protection, service quality, systems development, and capacity development of different stakeholders)
- ④ Developing sustainable and scalable health financing solutions that contribute to Universal Health Coverage
- ④ Continue being a leading nutrition actor in the Rohingya Response whilst shifting gradually from direct implementation of nutrition services to supporting local partners to fulfil this role

SO2: Improve the wellbeing of people living in extreme poverty in urban areas following proven, innovative and sustainable approaches that are appropriate for urban contexts

Those living in extreme poverty in the urban areas are often overlooked in terms of the provision of services (such as safety nets); they struggle to make the most basic of incomes and are faced with exclusion and harassment. Many people including those who live on the pavements, are not able to access the most basic of services including being able to register their children when they are born, as they do not have an address to use, reinforcing the inter-generational aspects of extreme poverty. Concern's Irish Aid funded Integrated Urban Programme (IUP), implemented in Dhaka and Chattogram, has been addressing many of these issues, including supporting people to have a more sustainable livelihood and providing access to essential services and their human rights.. The programme has also undertaken some informative research on the livelihoods trajectories of those living in extreme poverty in urban areas. Concern has also received two consecutive grants from the European Commission to design and demonstrate innovative urban health system strengthen solutions. To build on all this over the lifetime of this CSP, we will:

- ④ Implement at least one Urban Graduation programme that demonstrates sustainable graduation from extreme poverty and demonstrates how we are addressing systemic barriers faced by those living extreme poverty in urban areas
- ④ Linking to SO1, we continue to build on our past experience around developing sustainable and scalable health financing solutions that contribute to Urban Universal Health Coverage
- ④ Linking to SO1, and based on past challenges around systematically addressing urban malnutrition all urban programmes will be nutrition sensitive, and there will be a concerted effort through our national level advocacy to address underlying weaknesses in the health system (linked to SO3)

SO3: Through evidence based advocacy, address the underlying causes of extreme poverty, with a particular focus on addressing inequality, risk and vulnerability

Our advocacy focus will be on addressing issues that emerge as root causes of poverty, issues that prevent communities from progressing and block individuals from securing a livelihood; and issues that prevent Concern from providing the type of support and assistance needed by our programme participants. In the context of Bangladesh we see these as broadly falling under the heading of inequality, and risk and vulnerability. We are committed to making sure that our advocacy is evidence based, building on high quality research and the experiences from our own programmes that will help us define our advocacy message. In this respect we are keen to strengthen our links to local and international research centres and universities to examine further what works in terms of addressing extreme poverty. To achieve this we will:

- ④ Develop a five year Advocacy Strategy that looks holistically at ensuring the CSP goals and objectives are delivered and systemic change is achieved
- ④ Ensure effective knowledge management across all programmes to enable us to disseminate learning from local to global level to influence policy and practice discourse and inform new programmes. Learning to be shared in the most appropriate means for the target audiences

- ④ Produce pro-poor policy briefs that critically analyse existing policy, budget allocation and practice gaps, and provide pragmatic recommendations that will help address the underlying causes of extreme poverty
- ④ Engage with the private sector to ensure that our programmes are sustainable and scalable beyond the duration and target group, priority will be given to issues such as: ensuring decent, dignified work and health provision
- ④ Develop long term partnerships with key government partners (such as: City Corporations, Municipalities, IPHN, BNNC, and UPs) to ensure effective engagement and systemic change beyond the project period

Key Performance Indicators

To measure how well we are performing against our programming goal, we will report annually on the:

- ④ Number of our health/nutrition system strengthening innovations that have been adopted by the government and/or private sector
- ④ Number of people living in urban areas who have graduated from extreme poverty
- ④ Number of national policy level events addressing key advocacy issue are jointly facilitated by Concern and partners (disaggregated by (a) international (b) national and (c) divisional level)
- ④ Number of examples that demonstrate our influence on district and national policy, budget allocations, and practice in relation to addressing root causes of extreme poverty
- ④ Number of Concern programme participants that have access to Social Safety net programs (disaggregated by rural and urban)

Goal 2

People affected by natural disaster and human induced crisis are empowered to take action and build their resilience

Our humanitarian identity is central to our work and mandates us to prioritise the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies in countries in which we are currently operating. We are committed to engaging in any response as the need occurs, focussing on saving lives and reducing suffering, while strengthening community preparedness for future emergencies. We maintain a regularly updated Preparing for Effective Emergency Response (PEER) plan that allows for rapid scale-up of our emergency work, and are committed to engaging in coordination mechanisms at national and sub-national levels as part of any response. In line with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) we strive to put communities and people affected by crisis at the centre of our programme.

At Concern Worldwide Bangladesh, we pride ourselves on the quality of our emergency response – since 2017 we have been responding to the Rohingya refugee crisis, and on an annual basis we respond to floods caused by the Monsoon rains and fires, as well as to more extreme shocks, such as Cyclone Amphan. Over the coming five years we will continue to respond on the basis of need, in our existing programme areas, but as necessary outside of that as well. In particular we will focus on (a) Anticipatory Action and Preparedness (b) Response and (c) Early Warning Early Action.

Considering the Rohingya Refugee Response, we will ensure our structure, systems and processes evolve with the wider response in Cox's Bazar.

S01: Develop our emergency preparedness system at organization and partner level

As well as being ready ourselves to respond, we will also work with our local partners to develop their capacities to respond to emergencies.

This contributes to the achievements of objectives under the broader localisation agenda. Specifically we will:

- ⊗ Strengthen our own capacity, and that of our partners, on disasters preparedness, response and recovery
- ⊗ Ensure our Preparedness for Effective Emergency Response (PEER) plan is a pragmatic living document that is reflected in how our Emergency Response Team (ERT) works
- ⊗ Strengthen our internal Emergency Response Team, and identify where surge capacity can come from on areas as diverse as monitoring, communications, logistics and system support, and ensure clear roles and responsibilities
- ⊗ Establish framework agreements with suppliers prepared for emergency stock to ensure effective response within 24 hours

SO2: Effective responses delivered in medium to large scale emergencies through local partners

We will respond to medium to large emergencies, whether natural or conflict related, both within and outside our areas of operation after careful consideration of the context and who else is working there. We will prioritise a response through our local partners, but where local capacity is exhausted we will intervene directly ourselves. To achieve this we will:

- ⊗ Where donors permit, include emergency response preparedness and response budget in all programmes (in design)
- ⊗ Ensure effective collaboration at national and local levels in coordination with the broader humanitarian structure and stakeholders
- ⊗ Ensure that all our responses are based on high quality, rapid assessments, allowing for proper targeting and accountability mechanisms
- ⊗ Work closely with partners, both emergency and development, to ensure we are informing communities in all programme areas of their rights and entitlements, and that in all response areas we have a strong Complaints Response Mechanism (CRM)
- ⊗ Aim to ensure that our response does not have a negative impact on the environment, adopting climate smart approaches
- ⊗ Address issues of gender and disability within all of our emergency response

- ⊗ Ensure that all of our emergency responses are evaluated at least once during the period of this strategy

SO3: Scale up and expand Early Warning and Early Action System strengthening to reduce losses in disaster-prone areas

The third element of our preparedness and response will be to learn more about what works in terms of Early Warning / Early Action (EWEA), and to scale that up in a manner that contributes towards reducing loss and damage in disaster prone-areas, and increasing the resilience of households. Our learning will be documented and used to inform the national and global level discourse. Specifically we will focus on:

- ⊗ Embedding Early Warning / Early Actions (EWEA) systems thinking in both our development programmes and Rohingya Response
- ⊗ Organise a series of cross learning events to enhance our understanding of EWEA, while documenting our knowledge and learning in the area and sharing with key stakeholders
- ⊗ Undertake national and local level advocacy for effective implementation and financing of locally led disaster preparedness, EWEA and response actions
- ⊗ Developing a partnership with an appropriate expert technical organisation to support our efforts around Early Warning Early Action system strengthening

SO4: To provide immediate, long term support and build resilience among people affected by the rohingya refugee crisis and support Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities to withstand various shocks and stresses

The Rohingya Refugee crisis has become a protracted one and Concern Worldwide will continue providing both immediate and long term support to the Refugees and the immediate Host Communities. Specifically we will focus on:

- ⊗ Working with the nutrition sector a technical and implementing partner for the nutrition sector response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis
- ⊗ Developing a partnerships with local partner to deliver nutrition interventions in the Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Key Performance Indicators

- ④ Number of partners supported by Concern to complete their CHS self-assessments and put action plans in place
- ④ % of partners support by Concern to establish their ERT and have PEER Plan in place (or equivalent of)
- ④ % of newly designed programmes where emergency response is built in during design phase and where donor allows crisis modifiers are budgeted
- ④ Number of cross learning events focusing on EWEA and DRR facilitated by Concern
- ④ Number of learning publications that have been delivered that contribute to the EWEA discussion at the national and global level
- ④ Number of people affected by the Rohingya Crisis reached through appropriate interventions

Goal 3

To support all partners to implement quality programmes and strengthen accountability to stakeholders

As an organisation, we are committed to the localisation agenda and expanding the proportion of work we undertake alongside our local partner organisations, including both Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and local government. In Bangladesh, we have been working with local partners since 1998, and in 2020, we on-granted almost half of our total expenditure through 12 local and national NGOs. Over the five years of this plan, we are committed to identifying and working with a number of existing and new local partners as a means of adding value to the quality, reach, and sustainability of programmes. However, this relationship will not just be financial and we will take an approach that sees us support the organisational development of our partners.

This is based on an awareness that our partners are looking for a different type of relationship with us and to work with them on both programming and capacity building – moving beyond a project based relationship that helps them secure longer term funding and improve their ability to meet grant compliance regulations. We both see the need for us to focus on our comparative advantages in the relationship, whereby we bring in expertise in areas such as learning, innovation and research while our partners utilise their extensive knowledge of, and outreach to, local communities. Together we see an opportunity to work more on issues of advocacy for those living in conditions of extreme poverty and to enhance our focus on climate change (including helping partners prepare for emergency responses).

We recognise that this will entail a change in our way of working with a greater focus on capacity development and mentoring, rather than supervision; the provision of more flexible funding; identifying a number of partners to work with on particular areas; and on developing networks and relationships between partners.

S01: Institutional capacity building of partners to ensure our programmes are appropriate, relevant, effective and timely, whilst mitigating any potential risks

We are committed to moving beyond grant / project wise partnerships to more strategic and organisational partnerships. This will require us to provide long term institutional support and developing joint approaches to how we build capacity. Specifically we will ensure the following;

- ④ Develop a five year Partnership Strategy that looks holistically at ensuring the CSP goals and objectives are delivered and systemic change is achieved
- ④ Ensure we have the internal understanding and skills that enable us to provide partners with training and supportive supervisions that address issues around programme cycle management, organisational policy development and implementation, good governance fundraising, advocacy, partnership management
- ④ Review and update approach to our partnership selection, due diligence, on-boarding and day-to-day management to ensure this is up to date with the current localisation discourse

- ⊗ Create an open discussion with a smaller number partners and identify what capacity development support they would like from Concern, then develop individual partnership plans based on this
- ⊗ Promote cross learning between partners and Concern Worldwide and support partners to increase their exposure to donors and other stakeholders at the national and global level
- ⊗ Ensure that we carry our regular evaluations of our long term partners that looks holistically at the whole partnership, not just programme delivery

SO2: Collaboration with specialised partners for strengthening our learning, advocacy and networking

In areas such as advocacy and research, and in certain specialised technical areas, we recognize the need to work with a number of specialist agencies. At the same time, we are aware that we and our partners, need to be more active in specific national forums if we are to get key messages heard. To achieve this we will:

- ⊗ Identify and work with (including providing support to) a number of national forums on the technical areas which we are prioritising, this includes work on EWEA, urban development, nutrition and equality
- ⊗ Identify and collaborate with specialist partners that will work with us budget analysis, early warning systems, policy advocacy, etc

Key Performance Indicators

To measure how well we are performing against our programming goal, we will report annually on the:

- ⊗ % of programme budget on granted to partners
- ⊗ Number of grants secured by local partners in collaboration with Concern
- ⊗ Number of partner staff trained by Concern on issues identified in joint action plans
- ⊗ Number of specialist partnerships developed to deliver on CSP goals and objectives
- ⊗ % of partners that show at least a 10% improvement in CILPAT scores annually (scores and action plans to be reviewed annually)

Goal 4

To mainstream climate change and environment across programmes and the organisation

The impact of the climate crisis on Bangladesh will be tremendous - the country is already particularly susceptible to extreme weather events, for instance Bangladesh is the country most vulnerable to tropical cyclones, but both temperatures and rainfall will increase significantly in the coming years. Although making only a small contribution to global emissions, Bangladesh is ranked sixth in terms of the effect of climate change since 1995.

While our first goal focussed on what our long term programming work will look like, and the second presented our ambition in terms of our emergency response, across all of our work we are committed to focussing on addressing the impacts of climate change. It has been included as a standalone goal, however, as in addition to adjusting our programme, it will change how we work.

SO1: Through concern programmes, practice and advocacy, address the challenges of climate change and environment

We will work to minimise any negative impact on the environment from our programming, building in protection of the natural environment, while ensuring that all of our interventions help communities to adapt to the impact of climate change. In this sense we will develop a number of climate specific programmes, particularly in the cyclone and flood prone areas. We will do this in a consultative manner in the communities where we work. In particular we will:

- ⊗ Ensure all programmes are climate risk informed and ensure they are building on anticipatory, adaptive and absorptive capacities from the household up to the national level.
- ⊗ Work with local communities and government to ensure the Standing Order on Disasters is realized at the local level, and there is a strong gender and inclusion lens applied to related actions

- ⊗ In all communities we work in, ensure there is a Community Risk and Vulnerability Assessment completed, which is then supported either through Concern and partners or by linking the community with the relevant authorities

SO2: Through evidence based advocacy influence climate finance and policy from the local to global level

Linking to Goal 1 SO3, we will utilise the evidence generated from our programmes, and research we are undertaking on resilience (in particular around floods), to inform our advocacy on climate finance and policy, specifically we will:

- ⊗ Ensure the Concern Bangladesh Advocacy Strategy clearly articulates where Concern will contribute to influencing on climate finance and policy (Linking to Goal 1 SO3)
- ⊗ Develop a strategic work plan for engaging with the International Advocacy Team to advocate for climate finance at the local to global level
- ⊗ Using programme evidence and budget analysis, advocate for improved domestic climate change and environmental policies with the communities at the global, national and local level

SO3: Ensure our systems and processes are climate and environmentally friendly

One of the first actions we will take is to map out our carbon footprint, setting a baseline against which we can set targets for the remainder of the CSP. This will also help us to identify the areas (including from transport, energy, paper and printing) where we can make the most change, in a short period. We are also committed to taking advantage of various national and international climate and environment awareness days, to raise awareness of what can be done in our programme areas to mitigate against, and adapt to, the impact of climate change. Specific action include:

- ⊗ Undertake a carbon audit to map our carbon footprint in 2022
- ⊗ Reduce the carbon footprint and environmental impact of our programmes and organization by ensuring sustainable best practices, including promoting the use of recyclable materials, reducing our consumption of single use plastics, being more energy efficient and introducing an environmentally sensitive fleet management plan

- ⊗ Digitise our systems as a means of ensuring greener practices

Key Performance Indicators

- ⊗ % of programmes designed that clearly contribute to developing the anticipatory, adaptive and absorptive resilience capacities from community to national level
- ⊗ % of communities that we work in who have completed their Community Risk Assessments (CRAs)
- ⊗ Baseline for carbon footprint is conducted (in 2022) and annual reports on progress produced subsequently that clearly outlines Level of reduction of CO2 emissions directly attributable to the country programme
- ⊗ Number of events held annually to share the evidence/ findings from our work on climate change
- ⊗ % of stationary, visibility and office supplies budget that is categorized as environmentally friendly (i.e. no single use plastic, made from recycled locally produced materials, only materials that are needed are purchased, no wastage)

Goal 5

Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion externally and internally for sustainable development

One of the key drivers of extreme poverty in Bangladesh is inequality, and we will continue to address this through our longer term programme work, as well as being conscious of the need to address issues of equality, diversity and inclusion within our emergency response. We will continue with our focus on addressing gender inequality, but will start to do more in terms of working with other marginalised groups over the five years of this plan. Over the coming years we will seek to move beyond improving the access of all people to services, to addressing issues of power, self-confidence and self-esteem

When we say equality is central to our work, we mean that it cuts across our programme work and includes our internal systems – what we do and how we do it. Over recent years, we have made progress in terms of recruiting more women into Concern Bangladesh, but will continue to strive to make our workplace more conducive and capacity building of existing staff especially for women, and for marginalised people such as people living with disabilities. This is reflected in the following strategic objectives.

SO1: Ensure a gender transformative approach throughout all our programmes and interventions

It is our intention that by 2025 we will be able to show that all of our work is gender transformative, addressing the strategic needs (such as: status, power and decision-making capacity) of women, men, girls and boys. This means our work will transform gender relations to promote equality as a means to reaching programme objectives. Specifically we will:

- ④ Ensure a gender transformative approach is incorporated and budgeted for in all of our programmes and interventions and that all have a gender transformative action plan, that identifies the root causes of inequality, as a means of bringing about sustainable change
- ④ Design all of our programmes in a manner that is inclusive, ensuring community participation
- ④ Clearly articulate actions and targets around equality, diversity and inclusion in all of our programmes
- ④ All staff, with an emphasis on front line partner staff, will be provided with gender transformative training, following the approach developed with our partner, Sonke Gender Justice

SO2: Develop a diverse, empowered workforce that feel that their working environment supports them to achieve their role in an equitable and efficient way

Concern is a people-to-people organisation, and recruiting and retaining the right people, and developing our staff and our future leadership is a critical part of our strategy – at both international and country level. In this sense, in Concern Bangladesh, we will:

- ④ Develop our readiness for the future through investment in our people and developing their leadership capacities
- ④ Integrate wellbeing supports and adopt a more inclusive management approach that enables people reach and maintain their full potential
- ④ Support Extended Management Team (EMT) members, especially female members to grow and fill key leadership positions.
- ④ Support the secondment of staff to other country programmes as part of career path development
- ④ Remove barriers to attracting and retaining female staff ensuring that all female staff and their managers have a clear vision for how they can grow and progress in the organisation
- ④ Digitalisation for efficiency and effectiveness in different platforms for organisation and programmes

Key Performance Indicator

- ④ % of projects and programmes that include specific objectives around women leadership or their active participation and decision making at household or community level
- ④ % of women employed: organizationally (target 50%) and EMT (40%)
- ④ % of capacity development actions identified in PDRs at start of the year implemented (Inc. pathway and secondments)
- ④ Average score in the Staff Satisfaction Index (based on questions around well-being, inclusive management, opportunities for learning and growth including secondment, from annual staff survey)
- ④ % of promotions made from within the country team (from 2024)

Financing the Plan

Over the period of the previous plan, our budget in Bangladesh grew from €4 million (in 2017) to over €10 million (in 2020 and 2021). In part, this was driven by funding made available to support the Rohingya response, but it also came from more resources for long term programming in the health sector. It is our aim to keep our annual budget at around €10 million per year, unless there is a need to scale up our emergency responses, and to secure at least one large, multi-year programme in one of our areas of specialisation per year. Achieving this will require us to leverage our strong reputation for programme implementation, raise our profile nationally and to produce high quality learning products.

Our commitment under this strategy requires a number of new roles to be recruited, and to restructure in a way that ensures we are sustainably financing a technical support team that ensures programme quality, and preparedness for emergency response. We will cover the cost of these roles through redeploying existing team members, the better use of our current financial resources and building these roles in to new proposals that clearly demonstrates Concern's added value and cost effectiveness.

Within this we will continue to strive to find ways to ensure that the greatest proportion of our finances goes directly to the people and communities we work with which we will monitor closely over the timeline of the plan. We will reach to new donor segment in the coming years to reach our following financial forecast:



Managing the Plan

Our plan for 2022 to 2026 is ambitious, and as with any plan, its delivery depends on having the right people and structures in place and an ability to shift our ways of working. An even greater focus on partnerships requires staff who can work with organisations to develop their capacities rather than supervise implementation; our continued commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion requires an array of training on transformational approaches; and our commitment to addressing climate change (internally as well as programmatically) requires a specific skill set that we need to grow.

We also see that to increase our visibility all members of our team need to develop their external communication skills, while we need to build our expertise on documentation and learning. As well as continuously reviewing how our systems (including logistics, finance and IT) are functioning, we will make sure those who utilise them are familiar with the various processes and procedures. There will be gradual restructuring to ensure our teams spread across Dhaka and Cox's Bazar meet evolving programme needs. There will be clear roles that will ensure new business development, advocacy, and sectoral expertise as needed. We will ensure digitalization in our systems and process and we will also continue focus in our compliance, risk management and strengthen the relationship with government official.

Overall responsibility for implementing and managing the plan rests with Concern's Country Management Team in Bangladesh, however it is intended to be a living document to guide all staff. In this respect, we are committed to making sure that it is well understood by all in the organisation, including through producing an abridged accessible version. The team will be expected to have an action plan and report on an annual basis on progress towards achieving the goals identified in the Strategy and provide an update on performance against the indicators included under each objective.

Our Values

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.

**ENDING
EXTREME
POVERTY
WHATEVER
IT TAKES**

CONCERN
worldwide

House 15 SW(D), Road 7
Gulshan 1, Dhaka, Bangladesh
tel: +88 02 5881 6923, 22281253
www.concern.net

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