

In June 2025, UN Secretary General underscored to UN Member States the critical link between development and peace. His message was clear: “The further a country is from sustainable and inclusive development, the closer it is to instability, and even conflict.”<sup>1</sup>

Of the 700 million people worldwide living in extreme poverty, 40 per cent live in conflict-affected or fragile settings, and this is on track to worsen, with predictions of this number increasing to 60 per cent by 2030.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the global economy is slowing, and trade tensions are rising as aid budgets are being slashed while military spending soars.<sup>3</sup>

Concern Worldwide is deeply alarmed about the immediate and ongoing negative impact of cuts to humanitarian aid and development budgets. The decision by many governments to cut existing aid budgets while simultaneously increasing defence budgets is not only counterproductive, but also deeply harmful given how far funding can go when well invested in health, education, livelihoods and other sectors. The negative

impact of funding shortfalls is already becoming evident: for example, lifesaving therapeutic foods are projected to face global stockouts in the coming months, putting millions of malnourished children at risk.<sup>4</sup>

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*“At a time of increased conflict, in the face of humanitarian crises, cognisant of setbacks in global hunger and compounded by the existential threat of climate change, ODA is needed now more than ever.”*

*– Minister Neale Richmond*

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Ireland has a strong history of investing in development at a global level, guided by its commitment to achieving the vision set out in ‘A Better World’ and, preceding that, ‘One World, One Future’. Ireland’s Official

Development Assistance (ODA) is supporting communities across 100 countries globally. The current programme for government made clear commitments to support and act on issues related to climate change, peace and security, education and the safety of women. Through a continued commitment to ODA and collective action with partners such as Concern, Ireland can achieve its vision of a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world.<sup>5</sup>

## How Ireland Reaches the Furthest Behind

Concern and Irish Aid have a long-standing partnership focused on our common goals of tackling extreme poverty and reducing humanitarian need. For over 50 years, Concern Worldwide has been working with communities in some of the poorest and most vulnerable contexts. Grants from governments and institutional donors account for 74.6% of our total income. Of this amount, 22% came from the Irish Government. In 2024, through our partnership with Irish Aid under Ireland’s Civil Society Partnership (ICSP), Concern reached over two million people in 21 of the 27 countries we worked in. Our support contributed to improving food security, building sustainable livelihoods, improving child and maternal health and nutrition, enhancing water and sanitation infrastructure, and providing emergency support in response to crises. Funds raised from the public and philanthropic actors made up 25% of Concern’s funding, an essential support to people living in extreme poverty.

In Ireland, Irish Aid also supports Concern to engage the Irish public through awareness-raising and development education through our Global Citizenship Education (GCE) programme. Concern works with young people across the island of Ireland to explore the causes of poverty, encourage critical thinking, and promote meaningful action. In 2024, our programmes reached over 13,800 people across Ireland through 93 workshops and new multi-day programmes. Additionally, we facilitated 1,103 debates and several campaign and volunteer events, as well as 20 education training sessions – all aimed at supporting members of the Irish public to become active Global Citizens and build an understanding of Ireland’s contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Where Climate Change and Conflict Converge: Supporting Food Security through Climate Smart Agriculture in Sudan

#### THIS GOVERNMENT WILL:

#### *Advocate for greater attention on the conflict in Sudan*

#### *– Programme for Government 2025*



*Sudan - Alafia's\* family forced to seek shelter in camp on Chad border  
Photo: Eugen Ikua / Concern Worldwide*

In April 2023, the conflict in Sudan escalated, worsening an already-existing humanitarian crisis. Two years on, and the crisis is difficult to describe in a way that captures the sheer scale and complexity of the situation faced by communities and humanitarian actors on the ground. More than 30.4 million people need humanitarian assistance, 11.5 million people are forcibly displaced, and more than 24.6 million people do not have adequate access to food. In addition, 3.7 million children and women require treatment for acute malnutrition. Tragically, the crisis in Sudan is increasingly underfunded. In 2024, just 65% of the humanitarian funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan was secured and, despite escalating humanitarian needs, funding shortfalls will worsen this year.<sup>6</sup> At the time of writing, only 22.8% of the funding needed for 2025 had been committed.<sup>7</sup>

Concern has been working in Sudan for 40 years. Through the support of donors,

including the Irish Government, in 2024 we reached 483,991 people in Sudan with lifesaving health, nutrition, livelihood and WASH services. Prior to the outbreak of conflict in 2023, Sudanese farmers faced immense challenges due to the increasing impact of climate change, challenges that have now been further compounded by the instability and risks brought about by the ongoing conflict. To support these farmers, Concern implemented an EU-funded livelihoods programme in 2024 to provide training on climate-smart agricultural practices, including resilient crop production techniques, as well as cash assistance where possible. Through this programme, 200 farmers have been trained, who will share their knowledge and support a further 6,000 farmers over the next year. These efforts are strengthening the capacity of farmers to better manage and adapt to climate-related shocks.

### Reaching the Furthest Behind: Supporting Women's Health in Rural Afghanistan

Today, Afghanistan remains one of the world's most complex humanitarian emergencies. Recent political, social and economic shocks have resulted in a massive deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The crisis is exacerbated by the international isolation

## THIS GOVERNMENT WILL:

### *Work with international partners to keep attention on the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan*

#### *– Programme for Government 2025*



*Afghanistan – Women and children in rural Northern Afghanistan  
Photo: Marissa Droste / Concern Worldwide*

of Afghanistan since the takeover by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in 2021. In recent years, Afghan women and girls have experienced increased restrictions on their lives – women are rarely permitted to work outside the home and most girls do not receive education beyond Grade 6.

For many women living in remote areas of Afghanistan, access to health services can be challenging. Afghanistan has one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates; one woman dies every two hours during pregnancy, childbirth, or its aftermath from causes that are largely preventable with access to skilled care.<sup>8</sup> In rural areas, particularly remote mountain villages of Northern Afghanistan, health facilities are limited in number. In a major step toward improving healthcare access in remote communities under the **Irish Aid Long-Term Development Programme** initiative, eight new health clinics were opened in early 2025 in some of the hardest to reach areas in Northeastern Afghanistan. This

project aims to bring essential medical services to areas that previously lacked basic health facilities, where residents were forced to travel long distances to access care.

These clinics provide women and children with access to reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) services including safe delivery, antenatal and postnatal care for women, as well as malnutrition treatment for pregnant and lactating women and children under five. Plans are also underway to introduce immunisation services to ensure access to life-saving vaccines for children. These eight clinics collectively cover more than 50 communities, serving a total population of over 80,000 people in remote areas of northeastern Afghanistan. This vital work not only addresses immediate health needs, but also contributes to the long-term wellbeing of women and children in Northern Afghanistan. Since their opening, the clinics have reached 9,980 patients, including 95 women who were able to deliver their babies safely, 828 antenatal and 248 postnatal care visits, 3,947 outpatient consultations for children under five and 4,862 outpatient consultations for women of reproductive age.

## How Ireland Can Go the Extra Mile in the 2026 Budget

- 1. Be Proud of Ireland's Commitment and Continue to Increase Investment in Official Development Assistance (ODA):** This investment not only supports vulnerable communities worldwide, but also strengthens Ireland's reputation as a principled and compassionate global donor, especially at a time when too many others are stepping back. Irish Aid provides high-quality, multi-year, funding that empowers partners to deliver sustainable, locally driven solutions and strengthen long-term systems. The Government's commitment to continue to increase ODA annually, working towards the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Income must be upheld and reflected in budget 2026. At a time of global retreat, Ireland must continue to lead by example, especially within the EU, championing increased investment and inspiring others to uphold their commitments to the world's most vulnerable.



- 2. Work with Humanitarian Partners to Deliver Lifesaving Programmes:** Critical shared services - such as humanitarian flights, security coordination, and supply chains - are under severe strain. Disruptions to these services threaten the ability of organisations like Concern to deliver life-saving programmes effectively, putting both operations and affected communities at risk. Ireland's consistent strategic support for the humanitarian system is essential. The global humanitarian system is facing a funding crisis, with rising needs and shrinking resources. Ireland's role is essential to maintain humanitarian services and programmes, whilst also supporting necessary reforms needed to improve the effectiveness of the humanitarian system.
- 3. Strengthen Ireland's Leadership by Increasing Climate Finance Contributions:** Ireland is recognised by Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States as a trusted partner in climate finance negotiations and has built a strong reputation through its principled, grant-based support. To maintain influence within the climate negotiations and impact through climate action, Ireland must scale its overall international climate finance contributions, while maintaining a focus on adaptation and loss and damage financing.
- 4. Recognise Across Government that Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is Essential for Building a Better World:** We need a world that values peace over war, equality over inequality, and a world where every person can live in dignity, peace and prosperity. GCE is a lifelong process, spanning all ages and stages, across both formal and non-formal education, that supports young people, empower educators, and supports dialogue within and across communities. It is an essential investment in our shared future, one from which everyone benefits. Now is a critical moment to scale up GCE through a coordinated, cross-government initiative that embeds global citizenship across policies and programmes.
- 5. Expedite the Implementation of the National Philanthropy Policy:** With rising humanitarian needs and shrinking funding, immediate government action is needed to deliver on the commitments outlined in the [National Philanthropy Policy](#), including identifying and championing appropriate fiscal measures to facilitate the growth of philanthropy in Ireland.

## References

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