

CONCERN
worldwide

**40 YEARS OF
SERVICE TO
THE PEOPLE
OF ETHIOPIA**

WELCOME

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here as Country Director in this important year for Concern Worldwide Ethiopia.

Concern came to Ethiopia first in 1973 just as a UN report and a film by Richard Dimbelby highlighted a growing but hidden humanitarian crisis in Wollo and Tigray. Concern responded.

Despite having to leave for a brief period in the 1980s Concern returned and played a major and important role under the Directorship of Fr Jack Finucane in leading the massive local and international response to the 1984/85 famine... That was 30 years ago.

Since that time Ethiopia has always been and remains a priority country for Concern. We have worked in most parts of this enormous country on relief, recovery and development programmes with diverse and often hard to reach communities assisting them in meeting their basic needs and empowering them to develop and grow.

This is in line with the core Concern values of targeting the poorest and responding to their identified needs. Concern, like most organisations, has its own particular characteristics. We like to think of ourselves as being close to the ground, in touch with the reality and with the people we serve.

Thanks to the efforts of the Ethiopian government, the donor community, the international organisations and NGOS like Concern and our local partners there has been remarkable progress.

To conclude, my overall impression of Ethiopia is positive. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator at a recent gathering said that Ethiopia is a country on the move and I agree wholeheartedly with that statement. It is a really interesting time to be here and to witness the major advances this country has made since the darker days of the 1970s and 1980s.

Ethiopia is full of able, committed and conscientious people and they are developing this country at speed. Goodness knows what it will be like in 40 more years and I hope that some of us here will be able to witness that.

Thank you all for your support over the years,

Kate Corcoran

THE FIRST DECADE OF CONCERN'S ENGAGEMENT: 1973-1982

In October 1973, the first volunteer, nurse-midwife Dolores Crudge, flew from Yemen to Ethiopia to start work in Wollo, just as a UNDP report highlighted the problems in Wollo and Tigray, and news of a developing famine began to spread.

By late 1973, foreign aid had started arriving and the aid community began to mobilise logistics for food assistance. Despite this, the efforts were too late to avert a major famine and Concern, along with other aid agencies, sought to address an increasingly desperate situation.

By the late 1970s, deteriorating security meant that Concern had to slow down its operations in Ethiopia for a number of years.

In October 1982 field director Fintan Farrelly visited the town of Korem in the Highlands of Ethiopia and was appalled to discover as many as 28,000 people in a makeshift camp outside the town.

“One by one the people were gently washed and disinfected and helped to feed themselves, a large hospital tent was set up, and by the following day the people in the barn at least had started taking an interest in life again and were helping their children to eat.”

Korem was known throughout the world as a town of famine and of hunger. Successive years of drought and official neglect had caused the vast migration from the hungry hills of Tigray and by late 1984 upwards of 50,000 people had trekked to Korem in search of relief. A combination of hunger and disease meant that thousands of people perished there.

Harbo Refugee Camp, Ethiopia, 1984, after the Israeli tents had arrived.



This triggered Concern's renewed engagement in Ethiopia, in the area of health and famine relief. Concern workers started the relief programme with minimum equipment. Large shelters were built, each holding about 200 people. Following

humanitarian responses in Korem and Harbu, there was a dramatic improvement in the general conditions of the population in the camps.



THE SECOND DECADE: 1984–1994

Alongside the relief camps, feeding stations and mother and child clinics, Concern started to put an increasing emphasis on addressing the broader causes of emergencies and combating the root causes of poverty.

Concern carried out a number of infrastructure development works in Wollo and Wollaita including grain stores, clinics, schools, grinding mills as well as roads and water supply schemes. The interventions also included various agricultural and health activities.

Rather controversially, Concern started collaborating with the Ethiopian government resettlement initiative which was meant to resolve the social and economic problems affecting the highland rural population, particularly those living in the heavily populated, drought prone areas. Resettlement was generally regarded as a failed policy, with some notable exceptions.

Over 52,000 people were supported to become self-sufficient through Concern's various interventions in the Jarso and Ketto resettlement projects (Wellega Administrative Region, near Ghimbi and south-east). Concern's interventions included relief aid, development activities and administrative and technical support.

An evaluation report released in December 1986 confirmed that...

“Concern’s contribution in various forms including health and nutrition, development, infrastructure and input provision (veterinary, agriculture and livestock) helped settlers to reach a stage of food self-sufficiency at Jarso within a remarkably short time.” – Concern's programme in Jarso and Ketto settlements-Evaluation Team Report, 1986.

During this decade Concern expanded its services to the people of Wollaita in Damot Weyde Woreda, Sike (Badewocho) Woreda, Hadya Zone, and Addis Ababa. The Sike programme, for example, focused on increasing the non-farm family income of vulnerable households through income generating activities like small trade and promotion of hand crafts.

The interventions of the widely-praised community based development programme in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, included building of houses, community kitchens and latrines, constructing access roads, and the provision of skill training and nutrition through 'food for work'. An evaluation carried out in 1994 attested that the food for work engineering programme had the twin benefits of improving food security and nutritional status of the population whilst at the same time assisting with the development of the areas through urban upgrading. Later in the decade the Addis Ababa programme focused on strengthening civil society and local government toward poverty alleviation. Concern's urban programme also included a HIV and AIDS intervention which worked with community-based organisations to provide care and prevention services to affected communities.

THE THIRD DECADE: 1994–2004

With the return of peace and the arrival of the new government, opportunities for longer term development began to emerge. Concern intervened with local food security initiatives in Kalu woreda, South Wollo (1997-2002). This programme aimed to strengthen the capacity of communities and government to improve long-term food security while addressing short-term needs. In 2002, Concern also responded to an appeal for supplementary food to address malnutrition for children under five and pregnant and lactating mothers in South Wollo and Wollaita. This type of intervention continues to the present day, recognising that people's short term needs must be addressed alongside longer term development.

Evolution of Concern's programme approach

- A shift from a focus on annual emergency interventions 1980s
- To longer-term sector based programmes 1990s–2000s
- To long-term, multi-sectoral, integrated area based programmes currently
- From doing many activities to further specialisation in particular areas of expertise



THE FOURTH DECADE: 2004-2014

The second country strategic plan 2003–2006 sought to bring new thinking for Concern and give high profile to empowerment, accountability and innovation in programming. The emphasis was on strengthening partnership with Civil Society Organisations. Some of the partners include Mekdim, Pro-pride, Wollaita Development Association / WDA, Wontta Rural Development Association/WRDA, WSA, CHADET, Timret Le-Hiwot/TLH. Social Service for AIDS/OSSA, and others.

The strategic plan also identified the following as Concern Ethiopia's core competency areas: livelihood, HIV and AIDS, education, health and emergency response and cross cutting approaches like disaster risk reduction, equality, and social protection.

Our current thinking

Concern staff have come to understand the need to create resilient communities through multi-sectoral programmes in partnership with other NGOs, donors, government and local organisations.

Strengthen vulnerable communities' adaptive capacity to manage short-term shocks that lead to poor food security and long-term issues such as environmental degradation.

Our approaches

- 'On-the-ground' work that meets the needs of the most vulnerable as directly as possible.
- Partnering with a wide range of partners/institutions and in different ways to maximise our impact on poverty.
- Influencing work to bring the voice of the underprivileged to the attention of decision makers.

Our focus on women's empowerment includes

- Tackling discrimination via community and school conversations
- Social empowerment
- Economic empowerment
- Skills development
- Tackling early marriage
- Institution building of self-help groups

*Members of Megra Saving & Credit Association, a community based micro credit union, at their office in the village of Dessie Zruia in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia
Photo: Jiro Ose, October 2013*



One of Concern's biggest successes has been taking an NGO programme that evolved from an innovative emergency intervention into a longer-term initiative to support the Ethiopian Ministry of Health to integrate treatment services for severe acute malnutrition into the routine health system.

Concern was heavily involved in the piloting of the first Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) programme in Wollaita and Hadiya zone in 2000 and continued promoting and scaling up the programme (2003) throughout the country with the Ministry of Health Regional Health Bureau, woreda health offices and health centres. It assisted in institutionalising CMAM services through capacity building support and operational research for improved practices and learning. For example in Tigray alone, the scheme was piloted in nine woredas in 2007 and expanded to 36 woredas by July 2011.

Concern is still working for the realisation of improved access to CMAM and towards the reduction of morbidity and mortality among the under-five population and promoting improved child feeding practices in order to prevent under-nutrition.

Concern archive photography



The Kalu Health Programme aimed to deliver a sustainable improvement in the health and nutrition status of the population centred on better access to services and improved practices.

Our principles for programmes

- Do context analysis, risk analysis and plan for risk reduction
- Focus on asset building and creating sustainable livelihoods
- Address the drivers of inequality
- Build community absorptive and adaptive capacity
- Support capacity for emergency response-crisis modifier
- Develop effective institutions and partnerships

MARGARET FELTON-O'GORMAN WAS A VOLUNTEER WITH CONCERN IN 1973-1974

Looking back on her return to Ethiopia in April 2014, she wrote:

"I worked in Adigrat on famine relief and rehabilitation feeding and nutrition, vaccinations, and developing a women's programme. It was really good to be back there again – it felt like coming home. Of course there are huge changes in infrastructure, communication and education, and yet many of the problems and challenges are still the same. Traipsing up and down the familiar yet unfamiliar streets, it was a joy to see bright beautiful children going to school, especially so many girls proud in their school uniforms. I stopped to gaze at a small boy nonchalantly eating an apple – an apple in the middle of a street! Gone were the wizened hungry faces of emaciated children from the road sides and peering lifelessly from the shammas of desperate young mothers."

"In Mekele I met with the Concern team and they enthusiastically told me about their work; outreach, nutritional referrals and the weaning advisory service, the safeguards in place to protect against hunger and breaking the cyclical effects of poor maternal nourishment. It is sometimes difficult to grasp the scale of what organisations such as Concern are now involved in."

"I am now back at my desk in Brighton, UK, thinking of the mountains of Tigray, the steep terrains, the ploughed fields prepared and waiting for rain, the rock churches and the gracious people. A million thanks to Concern for giving me the opportunity to have a life changing experience in 1973-1974."

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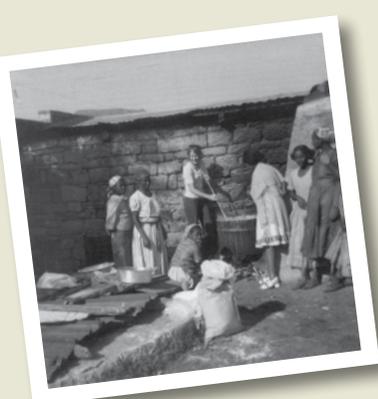
Mekbeb Alemu, 30, father of 3 children, stands by the area where the Water Shade Management Programme was implemented by Concern Worldwide. The once degraded and barren hillside has been transformed to a rich grazing area near his village of Dessie Zruia, Amhara Region, Ethiopia.

Concern is a member of Alliance 2015

Alliance 2015

towards the eradication of poverty

Photo: Jiro Ose,
October 2013



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