Gender equality is the most common form of inequality around the world and continues to be a major barrier to ending poverty. When women and girls have quality education, access to health care, sustainable livelihoods, and a seat at the decision-making table, communities benefit and economies shift.

But exploitation, discrimination, and gender-based violence (GBV) prevail in many countries, keeping the gender gap wide. This restricts women in the workforce, excludes them from decisions that impact their lives, and leaves entire communities vulnerable. When women can’t contribute fully to society, we all suffer the consequences.

Our Approach

We specifically focus on gender equality as a means of empowering people living in extreme poverty to improve their lives. Every program that Concern implements is “gender sensitive,” meaning that it identifies and takes into account the different needs, abilities, and opportunities of men, women, girls, and boys.

This approach regularly places women and girls at the center of our programs, providing them with the knowledge, skills, and resources to build personal agency and self-sufficiency. We do this by providing livelihoods opportunities, skills trainings, school attendance improvement, teacher trainings, and health and nutrition support.

Our ultimate aim, however, is that our programs are not only gender sensitive but gender transformative, with all programs seeking to address the root causes of gender inequality at all levels of society.

Equality by the Numbers

1 in 3 women will experience some form of gender-based violence in her lifetime

Approximately 650 million girls and women alive today were married before their 18th birthday

34 million girls are out of school

Globally, over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men

Read more about our work in Gender: concernusa.org/gender
Our Programs

Equality begins with reflecting on deeply-rooted attitudes and gender norms. For example, the fight against gender discrimination can’t be won by women alone. Concern’s Engaging Men projects are currently being implemented across 9 countries from Liberia to Lebanon and are a crucial part of our work on gender equality.

“Extreme poverty hits women and girls worst and first in all sectors — in education, in financial inclusion, in health... Yes, poverty is sexist.”
— Bono, Activist and Concern Supporter

In Malawi, we are implementing a 5-year program to help the most vulnerable households lift themselves out of poverty. As part of this, couples take part in dialogue sessions in which they explore the gender norms that affect the success of their livelihoods activities, such as decision-making, gender roles and violence. We aim to transform attitudes and see greater benefits to the entire household.

In Sierra Leone we are testing a 5-year, multimillion-dollar Safe Learning Model to improve learning outcomes and address school-related gender-based violence. By addressing issues early on, we can help reshape the societal roles both boys and girls will play, which ultimately will also change decision making when they become men and women.

Our Impact

Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme to each of our programs in 24 countries

In 2018, we reached over 12 million women and girls worldwide

Supports UN Sustainable Development Goals including Gender Equality and Decent Work and Economic Growth

Concern’s work in Somalia included establishing women’s self-help groups in vulnerable communities. These incubators for economic equality between genders gives women a system of pooling resources to assist one another with loans ventures like starting a small business. When drought in 2017 drove many Somalis away from their homes in search of food, members from 10 of these women’s support groups collected items from their communities — including rice, soap, and clothes — and distributed them to 68 families who had arrived in a displacement camp and had yet to receive any other assistance.