The Challenge

The water crisis facing much of the world is one of the most serious threats to human development and the quest to end poverty. Health, food, women’s empowerment, markets, even education are adversely affected by a lack of clean, readily available water and restricted access to sanitation. Children fall sick and often die, farmers’ crops wither in the fields, girls stay home from school, and women waste countless hours of productivity hauling water for long distances — simply because they are poor and vulnerable.

Our Approach

Ensuring access to clean water and sanitation and providing hygiene information and training are key aspects of Concern’s work, with active water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs in 18 countries.

We have dug, drilled, and bored thousands of wells in remote and disadvantaged communities across dozens of countries over the past 50 years and built countless latrines in their schools and health centers. The hours saved and the illnesses prevented make it one of the most effective things we do.

When drought or displacement prevent access to clean water supplies, we do what it takes to connect communities, including trucking water to temporary tanks and installing pumps in camps.

We work hand-in-hand with communities to help them assess the longstanding challenges they face, change behaviors, and ensure water and sanitation infrastructure will be maintained for the long term. We foster a sense of ownership, build sustainable maintenance practices, and create transparent financial management systems that benefit the community.

Read more about our work in water, sanitation, and hygiene: concernusa.org/water
Our Programs

One example of our approach can be seen in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Concern has been the lead partner in a consortium that has already achieved some extraordinary results. Over the course of six years, our teams have worked closely with 600 of the country’s most isolated communities to help them achieve sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene solutions. This program has reached over 650,000 people in one of the world’s poorest and most dysfunctional countries.

“It’s not just about building toilets and hoping people use them. There has been a collective change of behavior – because they understand how it can make life better for everyone.”
— Anthony Vandy, WASH Program Manager

Half a century of experience has taught us that providing wells, pumps, and latrines is simply not the solution. Without community training and ownership, the infrastructure will fail and people will revert to old ways. To avoid this, Concern takes a tailored community engagement and system-strengthening approach to local water systems to ensure that they are sustainable.

In countries like Sierra Leone and Afghanistan, we have built and facilitated secure and private latrine blocks and installed rainwater harvesting, tanks, pumps, and safe, hygienic school facilities to enable girls of menstruating age to continue their education and pursue their dreams.

For as long as she could remember, Joelle walked 6 miles every day to fetch water from the River Congo. It was hard work and the water often made her children sick. Now there’s a community-managed water point just yards from her home. Joelle enthusiastically embraced the drive for a collective change in behavior and has become a role model for neighbors and strangers alike. “We are not wasting time fetching dirty water and my children are not missing school through illness.”

Our Impact

Concern operates water, sanitation, and hygiene programs in 18 countries

In Syria, we reached 360,000 displaced people with water systems and latrines

Supports UN Sustainable Development Goals including Clean Water and Sanitation

Concern Worldwide is a global community of humanitarian professionals, individual donors, corporate partners, and supporters, who share a common vision of a world where no one lives in poverty, fear, or oppression. We believe everyone has the right to a decent standard of living, should have access to the opportunities and choices essential to a long, healthy, and creative life, and be treated with dignity and respect.