

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents Concern Worldwide's approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR) in Afghanistan. Concern first started working in Afghanistan in 1998. Today it operates in Badakshan and Takhar provinces in the northeast as well as in the capital of Kabul, performing both short emergency activities that save lives and alleviate suffering as well as longer-term development programmes that address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.

DRR is a key element to Concern's programming in Afghanistan. Many of its interventions are specifically designed to reduce the risks to manmade and natural hazards while others do so as a secondary benefit. Concern takes a community based approach to DRR, and communities are vital actors in all stages of the programme cycle, from design, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. A community perspective helps ensure that interventions are appropriate and build on already existing structures and practices. Some key activities with DRR focus include water, hygiene, and sanitation, livelihoods, watershed management, and emergency response. The organisation has made concerted efforts to improve its engineering over the past few years and consistently produces high quality, contextually specific structures as a result.

Concern's approach to DRR works well for the wider risk context of Afghanistan as well as the specific provinces where the organisation operates. In Afghanistan, state structures are weak, and individuals often rely on families and communities for support and governance that in other countries would typically be provided by the state. Concern's community focus builds on these structures and attempts to connect them with formal government structures. Second, the areas where Concern works are particularly rife with natural hazards. Concern actively engages in these risk contexts and has attempted to reduce some of their underlying causes, for example by reversing land degradation through land management and other NRM activities. Finally, although many of its activities today focus on longer-term development, Concern has maintained its ability for fast response and has prepositioned stocks and emergency funds in place for when emergencies arise. Furthermore its emergency response activities address risk and vulnerability and often lay the foundation for longer term development work; an example of linking relief, rehabilitation, and development through DRR. Such emergency capacities are necessary in the country, since risk will never be fully eliminated. While risk is a central component of programmes, Concern's approach could be improved by consistently using a comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessment approach using some of the tools found in Concern guides like Concern's 2005 *Approaches to DRR* paper or its 2012 *Risk Analysis Guidelines*.

Ultimately, Afghanistan is still a conflict environment with high levels of insecurity. Concern has adapted to this environment through a proactive security management approach. Unfortunately, there are widespread fears the security will deteriorate over coming years when NATO troops withdraw and government handover is complete. In the future, Concern may have to

further modify its programmes in response to this changing environment, developing shorter-term programmes even more centred on customary governance structures. It might also want to consider utilising recently developed UNEP Afghanistan conflict resource guidelines and increase its involvement in conflict programming in other ways through, for example, conflict sensitivity or peacebuilding.

Along with increased conflict engagement, this report provides a number of additional recommendations for how Concern can build on its weaknesses and capitalise on its strengths. Recommendations aside, it is important to be clear that Concern has a very strong DRR approach and that there are many positive lessons that might be learned from the organisation's activities.

Concern's DRR activities in Afghanistan can be summarized within the Hyogo Framework for Action:

Action area	Concern's contribution to HFA per action area
1 <i>prioritize DRR in governance at all levels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens government services by working with CDCs and other government structures • Builds on and formalises customary institutional structures • Increasing involvement in national level advocacy initiatives will help lead to a better DRR policy at various levels
2 <i>identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses multiple forms of knowledge when assessing risks and constructing interventions • Takes a multi-hazard, multi-scale risk reduction perspective that includes PIPs and extensive risk • Is developing comprehensive community based risk maps
3 <i>use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety at all levels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses risk and brings stakeholders together through participatory risk assessment processes, which also improves overall awareness • Uses innovative hazard mapping techniques to produce geo-referenced technical hazard maps • Facilitates bottom-up innovation through farmer field schools
4 <i>reduce underlying risk factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds assets of local communities to improve resilience to shocks and avoid negative coping strategies • Reduces magnitude of hydro-meteorological shocks through activities like watershed management • Reduces AWD risk through water point improvements and building on existing WASH norms • Addresses the root causes of disasters by focusing on the social factors of risk with the creations of women's groups and conflict resolution facilitation
5 <i>strengthen preparedness at all levels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in PEER process for organisational preparedness • Has strategic stocks and funds prepositioned for fast response • Is training communities so that they can respond in event of emergencies • Engages with district disaster management forums and coordination mechanisms to contribute to better preparedness at provincial and district levels