

“Urban Slums in Freefall” says Concern Worldwide

Agency sees 62 percent increase in admissions to Nairobi nutrition centres for treatment of severely malnourished children.

Concern Worldwide, Ireland’s leading humanitarian organisation, has launched an emergency programme to reach 20,000 of the most vulnerable people in the slums of Korogocho and Viwandani in Nairobi, Kenya.

The worst drought in 60 years - combined with dramatic spikes in food prices - has triggered a catastrophic food crisis across the Horn of Africa, leaving 3.5 million Kenyans in need of immediate food assistance.

Yet, despite two-thirds of the population living far below the poverty line in sprawling urban slums, Concern says the needs of the urban poor have so far received little attention.

“We are seeing urban slums in freefall,” says Angela O’Neill, Concern’s Regional Director. “The world has heard how rural, pastoralist communities in the north of Kenya have been devastated, with massive deaths of livestock and alarming rates of malnutrition making headlines around the world, but the poor living in Nairobi’s slums are also facing a critical life-threatening emergency situation.”

Over the past five months, the price of basic staple foods has increased by 200% in urban areas, and there is less food available in the markets. The urban poor have been forced to buy less and eat fewer meals, and families are resorting to desperate measures to get by. Food is quickly becoming an unaffordable luxury. Children are suffering most, and in Concern-supported nutrition centres there has been a 62 percent increase in admissions for treatment of severely malnourished children.

Ms O’Neill added: “Because the urban poor are always close to the brink, it is hard to document the point at which they spiral into an actual emergency. There is no recognised ‘benchmark’ that signals the need for a major humanitarian intervention. And so, despite all the warning signs in plain view the situation in the slums remains largely invisible. We need to act now if we are to save lives.”

Concern’s nutrition programme will support the Kenyan Ministry of Health to screen and treat children under five for malnutrition. Concern will also work with 3,500 of the most vulnerable families and transfer monthly instalments of Kes 2,500 (€18.50) through mobile phone technology, providing immediate resources to meet their basic survival needs.

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Note for Editors:

Concern Worldwide is an international non-governmental humanitarian organisation dedicated to the reduction of suffering and working towards the ultimate elimination of extreme poverty in the world's poorest countries.

Concern is certified by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP).
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