

20 YEARS OF BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE  
concordis

# Annual Review 2024

## We are peacebuilders.

Concordis staff support those who live where conflict is fought and felt.

We only go where we are invited. We work in the gaps, where there is no other peacebuilding support.

We have twenty years of experience - our expertise lies in building trust with all conflict parties, and bringing them together to have those difficult conversations.

We work hand in hand with communities, helping them find workable solutions that address the root causes of conflict and contribute to lasting peace and economic development.

We are committed to finding sustainable solutions that benefit all those involved: women and youth, as well as men; local administrative authorities, community leaders, and civil society; those who choose to take up arms and those who don't.

We engage for the long term to build trusting relationships, and leaving a legacy that enables future conflict to be managed peacefully within the community.

We work to our values of humility, impartiality and inclusivity.

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# Greetings from all of us at Concordis

This 2024 Annual Review celebrates Concordis' twentieth year: created as a charity in 2004, formed out of The Relationship Foundation and drawing on its decades of peacebuilding experience. Concordis stands on the shoulders of giants.

In this review, you will find a timeline of the major events in our history, and all the institutional knowledge and skill we hold because of those events. Every one of those skills contributes to the work we do today. And it continues to be work of tremendous impact. To meet a need. To see change.

This year we have been running three programmes: in South Darfur, the Central African Republic and Abyei and its environs.

We only go where we are invited, only into the gaps where there is no other provision, and only within our capacity to be useful. Which means what we offer is what that community needs, with long-term commitments to resolving deep-seated issues in challenging situations. Twenty years of this work has built a substantive skill in bringing together people from all sides of a conflict, facilitating difficult conversations, and helping them find a shared vision for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

There are two things that never cease to amaze me in this work. The first is the relentless courage and initiative of the staff team, as they problem-solve in hostile, complicated places. The way they deal with heat, floods and armed groups, whilst simultaneously holding space to build deep relationships and earn delicate trust, is incredible. You can read more about what they do in this review.

The second incredible thing is how often we see the very best of humanity in the worst of situations. Amongst the horrors of all we witness in Sudan, we also witness such kindness to strangers, such energy for the resolution of conflict, and such commitment to the common good. As we build infrastructure to help a community whose food security is threatened by armed groups in Central African Republic, there are children laughing and playing. We get to work alongside brave peacebuilders and local leaders who love their people and act to bring change to their communities. There are stories about those people in this review too.

To mark our twentieth year, we have launched a Friends of Concordis scheme. We want to convene a group of thoughtful, informed, regular givers who will walk closely with us. To acknowledge their value to us – not just financial but intellectual and emotional too – and give others the opportunity to join in giving that support. This source of income enables us to be nimble, flexible and spontaneous, and to respond proactively to the unexpected dramas that happen in conflict zones. If you would you like to become a Friend, see page 29 for more details.

We remain so grateful to our institutional donors, who meet the major overheads of each project. They walk closely with us through the unfolding of each endeavour, and we literally could not achieve the impact we do without them.

As an aside, I feel much more comfortable asking people to join our Friends scheme knowing that most of my salary, and those of the directors, are met by government grants.

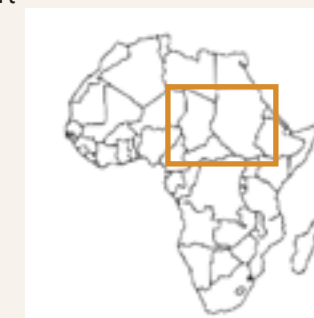
Concordis' work exists within an increasingly complex and challenging geo-political context and, in the pages that follow, we reflect on these also.

Thank you for your ongoing interest and support of Concordis, in whatever form it takes.

With my very best wishes,

Peter Marsden

CEO & Programme Director  
 Concordis International



# The history of Concordis: building the skillset

This year Concordis celebrated its twentieth birthday. Concordis is what it is today because of the peacebuilding and mediation skills of those who formed it, and those who have developed its work over twenty years.

## 1987-1994: Mediation to end apartheid in South Africa

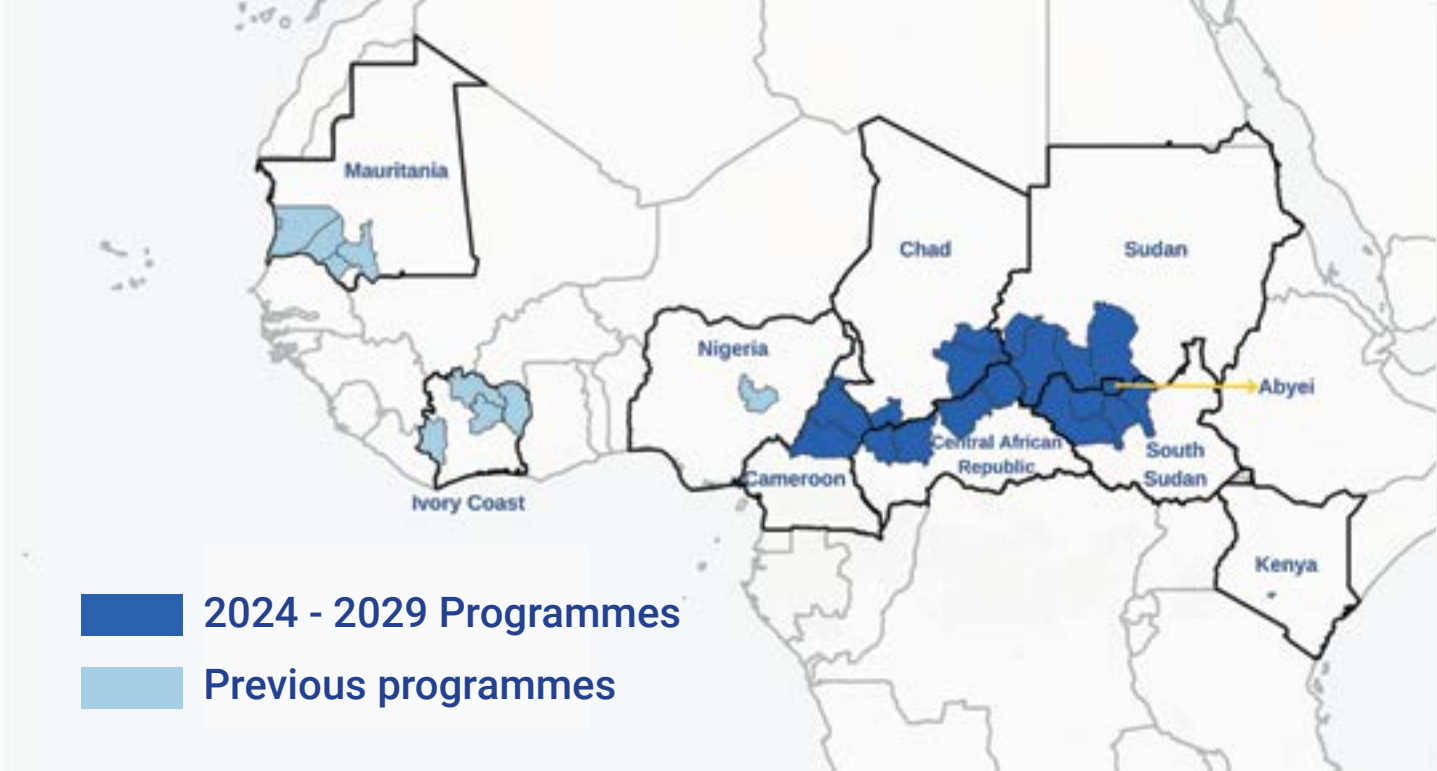
Concordis' roots are in the Newick Park Initiative (NPI), which was created in 1986 to facilitate confidential dialogue between leading members of the African National Congress (ANC) and the white establishment in South Africa. They aimed to contribute to a peaceful end to apartheid, the release of Nelson Mandela and elections in 1994.

**Gave Concordis skills in...** Mediating with huge impact, building trust to enable vital lines of communication across highly contested political and racial divides.

## 1994-1999: Rebuilding Rwanda after the genocide

NPI helped to mobilise research and innovation, which rapidly increased yields on very small plots of land, underpinning the economic revival of the country. Their work to devise alternative judicial processes helped bring to justice those accused of having participated in the killings, whilst helping to restore relationships within communities.

**Gave Concordis skills in...** In-depth research into the root causes of conflict. Developing solutions with the affected communities. Building judicial systems to underpin restoration, alongside agricultural solutions to yield peace dividends.



## 1999-2005: The partition of Sudan and South Sudan

NPI and then Concordis facilitated talks between Sudanese and Southern Sudanese diaspora groups in the UK, helping them negotiate terms that could lead to a peaceful end to the Sudanese Civil War. Talks focused on how, practically, this new international border would function, including distribution of oil revenues from Abyei, use of Nile waters, and provision for the movement of people, goods and livestock across the new border.

**Gave Concordis skills in...** Long-term commitment to people and to a locality. Mediation over contested territory in times of war. Putting in place systems for the smooth functioning of the borderlands.



## Concordis is founded as a peacebuilding charity in 2004

## 2005-present: Sudan, South Sudan and Abyei

The borderlands of Sudan and South Sudan were the frontline of the Sudanese civil war and continues to be a place of great turmoil and land conflict between national governments and local communities. The work continues.

**Concordis' skillset:** built over the twenty years working with communities here :

Developing markets for exchange of goods and services between groups on different sides of the conflict, building resilient livelihoods, resilience to future conflict, and economic incentives to peaceful collaboration, all through trade, not aid.

Including marginalised groups: Finding creative ways to ensure the inclusion of groups often marginalised from decision making or formal peace processes, bringing in meaningful participation by women as well as men, young as well as old, those who take up arms as well as those who choose not to, national governments as well as civil society.

Working with customary and state legal systems to establish and train quasi-judicial bodies that are acceptable to all sides.



## 2009: Israel and Palestine

Arguably the most polarised and divisive conflict in the world. Concordis brought together people from different perspectives to produce a single booklet that explained clearly and dispassionately the range of different perspectives on the conflict.

**Concordis' skillset:** Bringing together people who continue to disagree passionately, but now at least understand one another's point of view, and can help others do the same.

## 2007-11: Kenya

Following devastating electoral violence in 2007, Concordis was invited to bring together people from different groups, with different interests to work collaboratively on practical policy recommendations.

**Concordis' skillset:** Engaging with highly contested and complex legal and economic issues like land reform, land banking, informal settlements and political violence, and find policy recommendations that are acceptable to people from all sides of the conflict.

## 2012-2016: Ivory Coast

Concordis was invited to support the national Commission for Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation, and then The Convention of Ivorian Civil Society Organisations, to rebuild social cohesion after serious electoral violence.

**Concordis' skillset:** Providing technical assistance and support so that national organisations can lead their own peacebuilding processes.

## 2013-2023 Mauritania

Ten years work with communities locked in land conflict. Created shared systems for governance of contested spaces, and a significant increase in women's land ownership, which released women to develop livelihoods and economic stability for their families.

**Concordis' skillset:** Conflict transformation and profound attitudinal change, both between protagonists and between men and women. Legacy skills left with the community for solving future issues without need for further international support.



## 2014-present: Abyei

The contested territory between Sudan and South Sudan is a volatile place, having been at the front line of the war and now a critical border-crossing for people and livestock. Concordis devoted two years to community dialogue to create the conditions needed for the first successful peace conference in 2016. This conference led to the foundation of the Amiet market, now a crucial trading hub with over 3,000 shops and restaurants, and the foundation of our work ever since.

**Concordis' skillset:** Creating the conditions for positive peace through long-term, trusting relationships built with each group. Addressing intercommunal tensions through inclusive, constructive dialogue to address blockages to peaceful co-existence. Using trade to build peace.

## 2015-present: Central African Republic

The borderlands of northern CAR, into Cameroon, Chad and Darfur, are important routes for seasonal cattle movements, and have witnessed numerous armed conflicts, slave raiding, coup d'états and cycles of inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence. Concordis has developed a recognised expertise in managing conflict around these migrations and other borderland issues affecting these communities.

**Concordis' skillset:** Transforming cattle movements from being a key driver of conflict to being a source of trade and livelihoods. Negotiating cross-border agreements between Prefects from both sides of the international border, to agree shared security protocols and revenue collection that is accountable to the populations. Putting in place extensive networks of local peacebuilders to provide an early warning of conflict and to respond quickly, preventing violence from escalating.

## 2021-present: Darfur, Sudan

Darfur is a vital trading hub for a huge region but has witnessed catastrophic violence: in 2003 and since April 2023. Despite disruptions caused by this war, our Sudanese teams have continued to work amongst grassroots conflicts affecting communities:

**Concordis' skillset:** Effective and impactful peacebuilding work, managing intercommunity conflicts peacefully, in a war zone.



# The present day: the impact of the war in Sudan

**War broke out in Sudan on 15th April 2023. This has received little media attention, with the news dominated by Ukraine and Gaza, despite Sudan achieving the unwelcome position of being the most acute humanitarian situation in the world.**

But this article isn't to dwell on the misery of war, or to castigate the world for its lack of attention. What's even less reported but highly noteworthy is the brave determination of Sudanese peacemakers working tirelessly to stop the war, or at least to keep the worst excesses of war out of their neighbourhoods.

The causes of the war are complex. On one reading, it's about two generals waging a destructive contest for power and control of Sudan's enormous wealth and resources. But there are deeper forces at work; it's an increasingly global war, and it's a war that's exploiting ethnic and political cleavages, rooted in longstanding grievances from Sudan's turbulent history.

So, whilst diplomatic efforts have sought to cajole the protagonists into signing a peace agreement, Concordis is working to address drivers of conflict that motivate young men to fight. More interestingly, we're looking to generate meaningful incentives for young men not to fight.

In 2023, the harvest in South Darfur failed. War broke out during the planting season – few people will plant crops in the uncertainty of war.

And then the systems needed to manage herder/farmer conflict dynamics broke down during the war. The crops that had been planted were destroyed, either by cattle or conflict.

In 2024, the many communities of South Darfur realised that this needed to change. Both armies are using hunger and aid as weapons of war. No aid is coming across those international borders. Famine is creeping steadily across Sudan. If the people of South Darfur are to feed their families, they need to get crops in the ground, then protect those crops to harvest.

So, they invited the Concordis team, in old Toyota Landcruisers and working alongside local peacebuilders, to make that possible, managing conflict in the course of a war, to enable people to feed themselves.

Divide and conquer has been a tactic of despots and populists through the ages, convincing people that their suffering is the fault of some 'other' group of people. And, of course, that rhetoric is often used to disguise the failures of governance that are the true causes of economic failure.

Arguably the most disturbing aspect of this war is not the human suffering, horrific though that is, but the way the war

and its accompanying rhetoric is embedding destabilisation for the future. Not only is civilian infrastructure being destroyed, so is any sense of national unity in Sudan.

Those with memories of Darfur's genocide 20 years ago know exactly where that leads.

Perhaps that is why so many people in South Darfur have come to realise that this is not the time to try to press into generations-old conflicts – this is the time for pragmatic solutions to ensure crops are harvested and cattle have access to safe pasturage.

Now is the time to build resilience to genocide.

## The war in numbers:

**30,000 and 150,000 people killed.** The lack of precision over these numbers illustrates perfectly the fog of war.

**8-10 million** internally displaced people (UNHCR)

**2 million** Sudanese refugees - **700,000** in Chad, **200,000** in South Sudan and **30,000** in CAR, **1.2 million** in Egypt. (UNHCR)

**60%** of asylum seekers in the 'Jungle' in Calais are now Sudanese (MSF).

These figures are important. When people are displaced from their land, they're not growing food. Hunger is being used as a weapon of war and the blocking of aid has been weaponised by both sides. Troubles further north and east have reduced global food supplies and increased costs.

It is a simple message we bring:

**Do not send your son to war; send him to the fields.**

In the worst of situations, the very best of humanity appears.



**Concordis' impact in South Darfur this year:**

**220 local peacebuilders** from across the **16 regions** and the spectrum of ethnic groups across South Darfur were trained and supported, forming Concordis' Advisory Group. They work as volunteers, motivated by their overwhelming desire to protect and feed their clans.

**13 peace conferences** brokered peace agreements that addressed intercommunity conflict over land and access to water. They enabled communities to plant crops, move cattle and conduct livelihoods peacefully. These conferences also enabled markets and trading routes to remain open, permitting food and essential goods to get into Sudan through trade, not aid.

**33 deadly conflicts arising were mediated** by local peacebuilders trained by the Concordis team. These broke cycles of violence, prevented reprisal attacks and enabled people to access markets and water points safely.



## Ahmedai Mohammed, Peacebuilding Manager for Concordis in South Darfur: a peacebuilder in a war zone.

When the conflict began in Sudan on April 15th, 2023, Ahmedai was living with his family in Kass, 80 km west of Nyala, the state capital where Concordis is based.

"For about three months, we stayed in Kass amidst lethal aerial bombardments, killings, and lootings." Ahmedai explains. Until one night, a shell hit his neighbour's house, killing five members of the family; then Ahmedai knew they needed to leave.

"If I had taken my valuable items with me, they would be robbed, and if I left them in the house, they would be looted. So, I decided to wrap and bury my Concordis laptop, projector, television sets and other valuables underground. One rainy night, I hired donkey carts and took the family out of Kass." he says. When Ahmedai returned home, everything in the house had been looted, except for the items he buried in the ground.

They would eventually find a safer place in Nyala. "From time to time, military jets bombard Nyala, and civilians lost their lives. Presently, no one can guess the security situation, which is still very worrying," says Ahmedai.

At the community level, Ahmedai has seen how the political nature of the war has brought division. In the rural areas of Kass, these already fragile communities are also drawn into conflicts between farmers and herders. This is why Ahmedai sees Concordis' presence in the rural areas of South Darfur as so vital. "Amid the life-threatening situation, what motivates me the most not to flee Sudan for the neighbouring countries is how our communities yearn for peace," Ahmedai says.

Ahmedai and his team have successfully held peace conferences and organised town hall meetings to bring communities together. They have formed Advisory Groups with members of diverse communities, who listen to concerns and resolve disputes.

Ahmedai says without being physically present in these communities, he cannot build peace. However, taking care of a family and peacebuilding in a setting full of risk is not simple. His hope is that God will grant them protection and guidance. For now, Ahmedai wants to continue to cultivate peace and put smiles on people's faces!



# Peacebuilding in the Sudanese war



Community workshop in South Darfur



Advisory Group training in Darfur



Sudanese refugees arriving in Abyei.

## In South Darfur

Advisory Group member Ibrahim intervened to prevent violence between Misseriya and Khuzam groups. He first got help from the RSF commander to separate the parties. He then enabled the parties to negotiate blood compensation and exchange oaths to avoid retaliation. His efforts were instrumental in de-escalating the situation and restoring peace.

## In Kas, South Darfur

In the Mershing Market, a security guard belonging to the Ereigat (Arab) tribe was violently attacked and had his gun stolen. Other Ereigat men caused the market to be closed down and tensions escalated.

Advisory Group members Mobarak Ali and Saide Yagoud intervened promptly to mediate the situation. This resulted in the reopening of the market, compensation for the guard and establishment of a community-led oversight committee. This will be key to the long-term sustainability of the agreement, as it will monitor market activities and prevent future incidents.

## In Central African Republic (CAR)

On receiving information from a village chief, Concordis gave the UNHCR and the National Refugee Commission in Ndélé, Bamingui-Bangoran, recommendations concerning Sudanese herders unable to return to Sudan due to the war. The team also reported to other humanitarian NGOs that they were in a very difficult physical state, with women having to give birth in the bush.

This resulted in 500 Sudanese herder families being recognised as refugees, giving them the benefit of international protection, free movement and access to services, until the situation normalises in Sudan. 500 herder families now benefit from international protection. Mobile clinics were deployed to support the pregnant women.

## In Abyei

The people of Abyei continue to deal with the ongoing impact of the war in Sudan, which has created significant internal displacement and the estimated influx of over 10,000 refugees and returnees fleeing the conflict. Local market prices are rising and fuel shortages more common.

Concordis provided logistical support to help the Abyei Peace Committee to transport over 200 stranded refugees and returnees arriving in the Abyei box to Amiet market for needs assessment and processing. A UNISFA-led evaluation of the Peace Committee in March 2024 highlighted the particular strain placed upon the Committee by the war in Sudan and its associated unrest.

# Endorsing Concordis

Timea Szarkova, Country Manager for Concordis in CAR, attended the National Conference of Transhumance in Bangui in May 2024. The President of CAR chaired the conference, accompanied by senior government ministers, heads of FACA (CAR's armed forces) and the UN peacekeeping mission MINUSCA.

**“Concordis International is our primary partner and the principle expert in managing peaceful seasonal cattle migration in CAR.”**

The Head of MINUSCA

**“I would count your work in Sudan in the top one or two of the public peace processes I have encountered. Your level of sophistication about the process, and your ability to frame the issues in such a productive way, are truly outstanding.”**

Melanie Greenberg, Expert on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding, and Managing Director, Peacebuilding, at Humanity United.

**“Concordis International is an organization that has always stood by those in need. This is truly to be welcomed and I congratulate you for this unfailing commitment.”**

Mahamat Hamza Khalil Adam, Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)

## Funding the impact

Concordis has grant funding from major public donors, which cover most, but not all, of our programme costs. Grants do not cover the unexpected things that inevitably happen in conflict zones. Or the gaps between funding cycles. Or the incredible opportunities to make a difference that our staff could do at little cost but with huge impact, if they just had some extra cash. Grant funding doesn't let us respond to future invitations to work.

This is why we need what is known as unrestricted giving - money not restricted to a particular programme, but available for use as we need it.

Could you support Concordis in this way? Use the QR code to make a donation now. If you know someone who would like to know about our work, please give them this Annual Review and spread the word.

We really rely on our supporters for these unrestricted donations. And we can't overemphasise how encouraging these are for the whole team. Thank you if you are one of those who help fund our work.

**Click the link to give money to Concordis.**

<https://concordis.international/support-us-now>



Photo: Timea Szarkova (far right) with the President (centre) and Cabinet of CAR, and head of MINUSCA.



# Working alongside local peacebuilders

## Advisory groups, mediation training and early warning systems

One of Concordis' values is that of humility: we learn all we can about a situation and then accept that people who live at the heart of the conflict will always know far more than we do.






Consequently, if we're to be effective in managing and mitigating conflict, it's crucial to work alongside those who are most affected by it.

We ask communities to nominate individuals to partner with us, to receive training in peacebuilding, and become members of our Advisory Group – an inclusive group of trusted women and men, young and old, from different ethnic and livelihood groups in the region.

The Advisory Group members do not work **for** us; rather, we work **alongside** them, leveraging their insights and influence to address the root causes of conflict. Their role is indispensable because they help tailor our work to meet complex local needs, and they keep us accountable to the communities who sent them.



### The Advisory Group Members:

- Advise us on conflict dynamics, keeping us up to date with the latest developments;
-  Help us design and implement all programme activities, ensuring they're owned by the communities and are relevant to the local contexts;
-  Generate early warnings of tensions arising. These may be referred to the security services, or they may be mediated by Advisory Group members themselves;
-  Form a network of community mediators who can be deployed to respond to conflicts arising, before they escalate;
-  Act as a conduit to ensure important information reaches rural communities, including recommendations from peace conferences, warnings of shocks or forecasts of extreme weather events;
-  Ensure ownership and accountability of the programme to communities we seek to serve.

| Our impact this year in numbers:  | Darfur | CAR     | Abyei | Total   |
|---|--------|---------|-------|---------|
| Concordis national staff, employed due to their knowledge of the cultures, language and context                                       | 13     | 65      | 14    | 92      |
| Local peacebuilders in Concordis' networks, trained coached and supported in their work.  | 327    | 432     | 90    | 849     |
| People from across local civil society, whom we've trained in mediation, non-violent communication and conflict prevention this year. | 175    | 3,086   | 191   | 3,452   |
| Conflicts resolved with our help by these local peacebuilders.  | 33     | 706     | *     | 739     |
| Peace conferences held this year on the advice of these local peacebuilders.  | 13     | 21      | 9     | 43      |
| People engaged in Peace Conferences or Townhalls  | 2,000  | -       | 4,759 | 6,759   |
| People spoken to in consultations in the past 18 months (no consultations this year in Abyei)   | 3,722  | 4,318   | -     | 8,040   |
| People reached in radio broadcasts (estimated)  | -      | 216,000 | -     | 216,000 |
| Infrastructure projects build, and sustainability and confidence-building measures delivered  | -      | 29      | -     | 29      |

\* Impact in Abyei is measured in attitude change, not conflicts resolved.



# Local Peacebuilding

Concordis works with local peacebuilders who are trusted by their communities to resolve conflict. This year, our Advisory Groups and Peace Committees have been both active and effective in their local communities.

## In South Darfur:

Advisory Groups members managed conflict around a range of drivers, including land conflict, cattle rustling, disputes over natural resources (water and grazing), inter-community violence including killings, and displacement issues.

In April 2024, a man from the Fur tribe was killed in Komba village in South Darfur. In a reprisal attack, the village was burned, destroying the homes of 380 families. Community members contacted the Concordis Advisory Group. Supported by the Concordis team, one of the newly trained mediators set out for the village to convene a Peace Conference.

He listened to the concerns of the displaced families, identifying the root causes of the conflict, which included land disputes and incidents of theft and extortion. Using his training, he facilitated open discussions between the conflicting parties, encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding. He brought them to a place where they could agree to repatriate the displaced families and pay the relevant blood compensation, called 'Diya', to compensate for the life that was lost. The affected tribes promised to work together to reconstruct the village and then to set up a Peaceful Coexistence Committee to mediate future disputes.

The resolution of this situation has had a profound effect: it not only stabilized the immediate situation but also laid the groundwork for sustainable peace and cooperation in Komba.

**The Prince of Kass, member of the South Darfur Advisory Group:** "We thank Concordis International for the workshops it conducted. It was a successful workshop that changed the community there. Thank God, people responded. The Advisory Group's role in protecting the agricultural season has been essential to the village and us for a year due to the circumstances of the war. We are lucky, and we thank



Concordis for the great effort in South Darfur. We hope for more training and community engagement workshops because they raise awareness for peaceful coexistence."

## In Abyei:

In 2023, Concordis hosted three Peace Conferences in Abyei that were to be transformational.

Thousands of cattle are driven through the territory every year in search of pasture, but sometimes that pasture already contains cattle, or is farmland that still contains crops. This often brings conflict between those who move and those who are settled. Fights break out; cattle from either side are rustled. Historically, the migration season is always very tense and often exceedingly violent.

**The 2024 cattle migration season, amazingly and despite the ongoing war in Sudan, passed off without serious incident.** Because of the Concordis Peace Conferences.

A Peace Conference doesn't just happen; it takes months of preparation and works best in the context of ongoing relationship. It is a week-long meeting to plan timings and routes of the seasonal cattle migration, and to establish clear accountability for any violence or cattle thefts that should occur. Leaders of all the different groups involved come together to negotiate the issues, and we ensure that women and young people from all sides also have their say.

They do this for Concordis because we have taken the time to invest in local peacebuilders and earn the trust of community leaders - having worked in Abyei for over a decade - and they see how effective these discussions can be.



## In Central African Republic (CAR):

**The Paramount chief of the GOULA ethnic group**, after the workshop in Tiringoulou, Vakaga, in November 2023, to prevent resumption of the war between Runga and Goula groups: *"Words truly fail me to express my joy and my feelings regarding this friendly and fraternal meeting between actors who were believed to be irreconcilable. It's a life lesson that we can learn from this activity. Both parties, face to face and without any pressure or interference, discussed their problems amicably. Even if tensions sometimes rose, wisdom and mutual respect quickly took over to bring everyone back in the direction of dialogue and peaceful settlement. This is a great first in the commune of Ouandja. I also see that the concerns of our women and girls have been taken into account. I am fully satisfied with this workshop and my thanks go to the facilitators and to CONCORDIS who spared no effort to assist us, yesterday in training and today in the promotion of peace and the strengthening of cohesion social."*

A wonderful cooperation was achieved by the women in the Bamingui-Bangaram Advisory Group during the 2023-2024 cattle migration season. Herders arrived en masse while

farmers were still harvesting. A delegation of women from the community approached the Advisory Group members, and thanks to dialogue they facilitated, the herders' wives helped the farmers harvest quickly to prevent crop destruction by the cattle. This fostered goodwill and prevented the usual conflicts from flaring.



## Pascaline Magendo, Concordis Hub Manager in CAR: building relationships that support peace.

In the humanitarian sector, the Hub Manager role usually focuses on office management, but with Concordis, I get to serve communities on the ground as well. Among my daily tasks are meetings with Advisory Groups, guiding community dialogues for conflict prevention, and advocating with authorities. **Meeting someone in distress, listening, advising, and guiding them is worth so much.**

Previously, I worked on land, demining, armed conflicts, and issues around parks, oil, and cattle migration in the DRC. My motivation comes from the trust the community places in us, despite the challenging context, and the results our interventions achieve. That brings me immense joy. For example, a woman who previously had to walk 15 km to buy salt can now find it just 1 km away after we built a market in her area.

Managing cattle migration is one of the government's key objectives in CAR now, to make it peaceful and profitable. We organise information sessions for herders about legal taxes, or we inform them about the necessary migration documents to travel safely in their host countries. We also aid the construction of livestock parks to protect animals from theft and to ensure a steady meat supply to the community. In collaboration with FACA soldiers and the police, we are also given the space to raise awareness during military meetings to combat illegal barriers and unauthorised taxes imposed on herders.

**My connection with women in the community as an African woman is such an asset.** We speak in our own "women's language," eat together, and share resolved issues and strategies, which encourages them to engage further in peacebuilding. In the bush of Konkaya, in the sub-prefecture of Kouï, during a vaccination campaign, herder women accompanied me to show the safest and shortest route to the vaccination park, as I was alone with my motorbike. According to them, no woman from the community had ever ventured into that bush to greet them. My visit, 15 km deep into the bush, signalled a deep respect for their work.

Inaccessibility and security are the major challenges I face in my work. Additionally, this is the first time I have worked in a community with such financial challenges: people often say, "MONNAIE EDDA PE", meaning "money is not here".

What encourages me the most is seeing the smiles that the activities bring to the community, as well as finding people committed to success and who no longer just greet each other, but eat together, talk together, and move freely.

This gives a glimpse of complete stabilisation in CAR the future!





# Working to bring change to the borderlands of the Central African Republic (CAR)

## Seeking for the root causes of conflict: consultations in CAR

When we are invited to work in a new place, our first task is always to find what is really going on. After a couple of years, we like to check back with the local population to be sure what we are doing is meeting their needs and creating change. This also lets us measure the impact of our work over time and against a baseline.

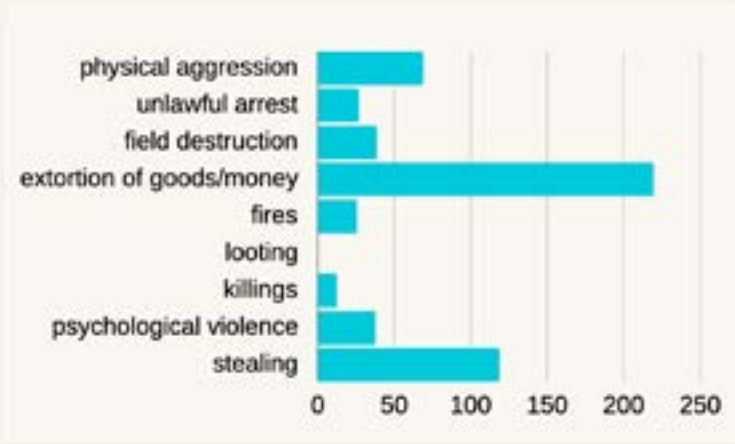
We do this by asking a lot of people a lot of questions about their perceptions of conflict and safety in the place where they live. In CAR this year, we have spent three months in consultation with people who live along the border with Chad, and those who pass through the area in search of grazing for their livestock. We surveyed communities in the border prefectures of Bamingui-Bangoran, Ouham-Pendé, and Vakaga (see map).

People Consulted **4,318** Women **45%**  Men **55%** 

### Our findings:

- Cattle migration is crucial to the Central African Republic's economy and social structure, providing many benefits – it is generally a public good, and should be managed as such. But it causes conflict too and nomadic cattle herders are the first victims.
- It is the varied livelihoods of the different groups of people that cause conflicts over natural resources, including between foreigners moving through with cattle, settled populations and semi-nomads.
- Destruction of fields and crops is the main grievance of settled populations, most of whom make their living from agriculture. Since their livelihoods are at risk, they consider this a major security issue. Conflicts generally form around accusations, the sums to be paid for damages and the violence or aggressive responses of the parties faced with these claims.
- Natural resources like water and grazing are being shared by all the groups, but they are becoming scarcer because of climate challenges. This is leading to conflicts.
- Effective conflict management mechanisms in some places manage to prevent violence, but do not always fully resolve disputes to everyone's satisfaction.
- A higher proportion of semi-nomadic people have been victims of violence, but the settled population feel more insecure. An increasing number of cattle herder groups are arming the young men who travel with the cows, which makes settled population also feel the need to arm.
- There is a significant risk that social cohesion and the bonds of trust between population groups will deteriorate if this situation continues.

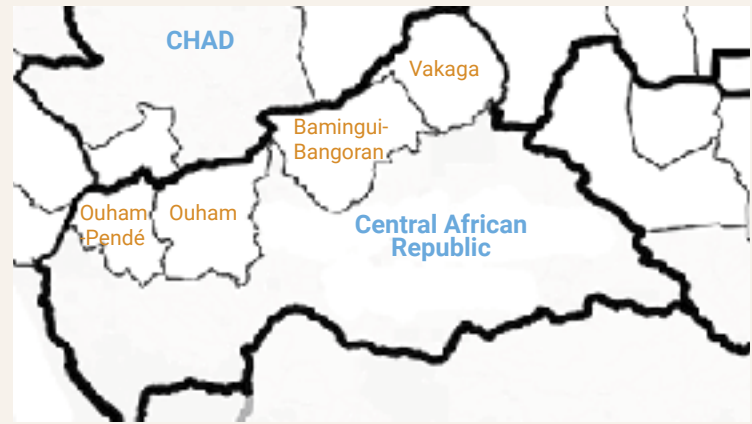
### What sort of violence have you experienced?



### Concordis brings change by:

- Helping the local and regional government create a plan to govern cattle migration: working with farmers and herders to set up and signpost cattle movement corridors; controlling the carrying of weapons by all parties; taxing incoming herders. Vaccination programmes at border points help supervise incoming herds.
- Encouraging trade and social interaction. Trade is an essential and non-conflictual social interaction between settled, semi-nomadic and herder populations. This helps repair those broken bonds of trust.
- Providing effective mediation by neutral, impartial people to maintain cohesion between the different groups. Ineffective management of incidents of destruction of fields, harvesting or theft of livestock generates conflict – effective management does the reverse.
- Get the right people into positions of influence – through establishing Advisory Groups of natural peacebuilders who already have the trust of their community.

# Changing Incentives: that which drives conflict can also be used to drive the peace



## Borderlands in conflict zones present complex, unique challenges

The borderlands, the wide strip of land where countries meet, are often mythologised as a being a lawless, ungoverned space, with frontier towns filled with adventure and danger. Especially when those international borders are unmarked and highly porous, criss-crossed by nomadic herders and traders, smugglers and armed groups, with complicated histories of local and international armed conflict.

Many of the threats, which can generate violence in the borderlands, also present opportunities to bring peace and prosperity for the people who live and work there.



Peacebuilding is about changing attitudes and behaviours by creating incentives to make better choices. But it's also a question of economics:

How can we increase the cost and decrease the benefit of what might be termed 'bad' or maladaptive behaviours?

How can we decrease the cost and increase the benefit of 'good' behaviours, which promote a more sustainable peace?

All our work in the borderlands aims to **address a root cause of conflict, generate social cohesion** through shared and collective endeavours, which have **mutual economic benefits**. These can be seen as 'Peace Dividends' that generate practical and financial incentives to keep the peace, and to encourage others to do likewise.

### Building social cohesion

This year, Concordis has run 43 workshops/peace conferences in the borderland areas to bring together conflicting parties and help them to listen to each other.

**The FACA (Forces Armées Centrafricaines) commander in Paoua** "This workshop allowed me to understand how much the Peulh herders suffer from injustice at the checkpoints, under the hands of FACA, and I will ensure that immediate measures will be taken to stop this practice that has been lasting too long already."

**The Prefect of Lim Pendé** "This workshop gave an opportunity to understand the context and the actual stakes of the seasonal cattle migration in our area, which enables us to take the right decision in this matter."

**Ibrahim Oumar, cattle herder in Vakaga:** "I am happy to be in front of my fellow farmers and the authorities to discuss what divides us and what unites us. Most of our mutual concerns were resolved during this workshop. I thank Concordis who provided the means to mobilise us and bring us closer together through dialogue and consultation."

**Sultan Mayor of Ndelé:** "We need these kinds of initiatives to allow us to talk to each other with the aim of strengthening the bonds of fraternity and trust between us direct actors. I think that measures will be taken at the municipal level to resolve a certain number of things related to cattle migration for lasting peace in the sub-prefecture of Ndelé and its surroundings. I support the dialogue initiative and I am committed to following up on the commitments of this dialogue to make cattle migration a peaceful and beneficial activity for all."

# Changing Incentives in the borderlands

| The challenge  | Concordis creates peace incentives  | The outcome  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>All communities agree that badly managed, unnegotiated cattle movements create conflict between nomadic herders and settled farmers.</p> <p>It can lead to crop destruction, cattle rustling and cycles of reprisal attacks and intercommunity violence.</p> <p>Livestock farming contributes 15% to the GDP of the CAR, so it's key to get this right.</p> | <p>Talking to each community and facilitating migration conferences to plan and negotiate the timing and routes of cattle movement.</p> <p>Hosting these conferences regularly enables communities to hold one another to account for the promises they made, and allows for prompt settling of compensation claims, preventing these from festering into grievances.</p> | <p>All communities benefit from being able to pursue their livelihoods peacefully, without loss and damage, without the cost of self-protection (using armed guards), and without violence.</p>  |
| <p>Different people, with different ethnicities and livelihood backgrounds, are forced to meet at the borderlands, and can find themselves in conflict over land use.</p>  | <p>Creating opportunities for this mix of different peoples to generate sustainable livelihoods for all groups. We enable intercommunity trade in services and goods like meat, milk and vegetables which is mutually beneficial. Cattle can be hired for ploughing and to fertilise fields whilst grazing on crop residues.</p>  | <p>Much of this draws on traditional patterns of land use: land and other natural resources are shared, rather than being the exclusive preserve of one person or clan.</p> <p>Trade leads to tangible benefits, including wealth generation, availability of different products, and more diverse livelihoods, including hospitality, taxi services, vehicle maintenance and trade in goods from other countries.</p> |
| <p>Markets fail for many reasons, including when they lack goods for trade, when they become unsafe and when people are unwilling or unable to access them.</p>  | <p>In the course of our peace processes, creating shared institutions that manage market governance, security and access to justice in a way that is accepted by all groups of market users.</p>  | <p>Peace committees, community courts and chambers of commerce work with traditional leaders to generate collective ownership of markets, and ensure conflicts are dealt with quickly and fairly, before they escalate.</p> <p>This helps turn markets into safe spaces for people to come and trade.</p>  |
| <p>The borderlands are far from the capital, geographically and often politically. People often perceive themselves to be marginalised or forgotten, missing out on political patronage and the provision of security and other services, provided from the capital.</p>   | <p>Facilitating workshops with representatives from decentralised governments and those they seek to govern, helping local authorities become more accountable to local populations in their governance, revenue collection and service provision.</p>  | <p>Within inclusive peacebuilding programmes, people who once felt marginalised have their voices heard and their needs acted upon.</p>  |
| <p>There is a need to share water and other natural resources, and these can be contested.</p>   | <p>Negotiating relatively modest investments in water points and other shared infrastructure, either commissioned by us directly or from other international organisations, to provide separate water supplies for animals and humans.</p>  | <p>Incentives are provided for people to work together, when provided as part of a wider peacebuilding programme.</p>  |

| The challenge   | Concordis creates peace incentives  | The outcome   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>There are complicated histories in the borderlands, where people meet who have been exposed to local and international conflict.</p> <p>Often the land has been contested, has been subject to territorial disputes, and the populations have literally been at war with one another within living memory.</p>   | <p>Facilitating cross-border peace conferences; at the actual border, with authorities from both nations present together, looking for ways to manage legal and clandestine cross border movements. Shared security protocols negotiated in our cross-border conferences have de-escalated dangerous incidents, when misunderstandings led to the build-up of armed forces on both sides of the border.</p> | <p>The authorities and security services have pragmatic reasons for working collaboratively across international borders in managing trade, cattle movement and security.</p> <p>Cross border agreements have shared agreements on collection and distribution of tax revenues, with accountability mechanisms built in to ensure those paying tax see some benefit of the revenue collected.</p> |
| <p>Poorly regulated cattle migration can lead to failure to vaccinate livestock. When animals become sick, this is severely detrimental to herders' livelihoods.</p> <p>It also generates fear that sickly beasts will infect those of the settled population or bring disease into environmentally sensitive national parks.</p>   | <p>Our vaccination programmes, which treated nearly 250,000 animals in the past year.</p>   | <p>Generated incentives for herders to engage in peace processes, to follow agreed migration routes and pay tax to the authorities.</p> <p>Young people employed building infrastructure needed for vaccinations, improving their earning capacity and connections with other groups.</p>   |
| <div style="background-color: #f9f9f9; padding: 10px;"> <p><b>5 cattle parks in Bamingui-Bangoran and 1 in Ouham Pendé</b></p> <p><b>174,984 cattle vaccinated</b></p> <p><b>64,354 sheep and goats vaccinated</b></p> <p><b>247,773 animals vaccinated</b></p> <p><b>27,55 chickens vaccinated</b></p> <p><b>14,467 people benefited from this campaign, including 3,251 Sudanese herders in Bamingui-Bangoran</b></p> <p><b>209,982 sick animals treated</b></p> </div> |   |   |
| <p>The presence of large and valuable herds of livestock generates incentives for cattle rustling.</p> <p>This risk of cattle rustling generates incentives for herders to carry weapons and engage the services of armed groups for protection.</p>  | <p>Bringing together herders, cattle farmers, the security services, the butchers and local markets, to put in place checks on the provenance of cattle sent to slaughter or used to pay a bride price.</p>   | <p>Stolen cattle fetch a much lower price at market because butchers are unwilling to touch it, and it becomes culturally unacceptable or even insulting to offer stolen cattle to prospective in-laws.</p> <p>Honestly purchased cows are now worth more; rustled cattle are worth less.</p>   |
| <p>Poor governance and oversight leads to opportunities for soldiers and other public officials to generate illegal revenue through protection rackets and at check-points.</p>   | <p>At the request of communities, using our networks to blow the whistle on corrupt practices, and seeing those concerned brought to justice.</p>   | <p>CAR army commanders see the benefit of a disciplined brigade and having the acceptance of the population.</p>  |

# Impact on young adults of Concordis' work

Many protagonists at the front line of armed conflict are young men. In a sense, that can make them the primary agents of violence, but also the conflict's principal victims. A key question for Concordis, therefore, is this; how do we help young people make the move from perpetrator to peacemaker?

In the conflict affected zones of central Africa, there can be huge pressure on young adults, particularly young men, to join armed groups. Sometimes they are incited or coerced to join, but often it's their family or wider community who push them to take up arms to defend the village or livelihoods.

'Armed groups' in this context captures a wide range of structures. At its lowest, these are more like neighbourhood patrols, deterring criminality as much by providing eyes and ears on the street as through force. They can be self-defence groups, protecting homes, cattle and fields from bandits and cattle rustlers. But young people can also be encouraged to deliver reprisal attacks, putting them at the front line of generational land disputes and intercommunity conflict.

Youth who've been in armed groups tell us of a cycle of alienation – they felt compelled take up arms but then are demonised because of the destructive behaviours that can follow. Ostracisation leads to disillusionment which, in turn, leads to vulnerability to recruitment into even more undesirable groups of bandits, cattle rustlers or worse.

These cycles of violence can be hard to break.

**But what if the bravery, energy and enthusiasm of the youth could be harnessed in pursuit of building a positive peace for future generations?**

This year, we have been working alongside young adults to help them to resist the pressure to join armed groups and, more than this, to become agents of change in their own right.



In **CAR**, we trained 2,827 young adults this year, giving them skills in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. 42% were young women. That is a culturally significant achievement as it is often hard to reach the young women, but as peacebuilders in conflict between herder and farmer groups, they have so much to contribute.

In **Abyei**, we trained 28 youth from Misseriya and Ngok Dinka groups with skills needed to join the Peace Committee, plus another 32 Peace Ambassadors, of whom 9 were under 35 years of age. When their communities came under pressure to militarise, with war in the north, intercommunity conflict in the south, a huge influx of refugees, plus flooding in Abyei, these youth spontaneously came together to negotiate how to keep Abyei safe. They did this on their own, without any further support from either Concordis or their elders.

In **Warrap State, South Sudan**, we have been working to resolve a very violent conflict between Dinka Ngok from Abyei and Dinka Twic from Twic County. In August 2023, the Twic and Ngok Paramount Chiefs (kings) negotiated an unconditional ceasefire at a Concordis Peace Conference, but there was no buy-in from youth contingents on both sides, who continued to engage in acts of violence.

The Amiet Peace Market is the source of their livelihoods – they defend it with all their might, not with violence, but with dialogue. In April 2024, there was a fire in the market (see below), a cruel blow to the livelihoods of many. The traders rallied and together quickly rebuilt their stalls to reopen the market, with the youth at the forefront of this.



This is where Joseph Kuot Akok, Concordis' Twic Consultant Liaison Officer came in. Almost single-handedly, Joseph has led efforts to engage young people from both the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic in peacebuilding. By providing training in leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of good governance, Joseph offered the youth a powerful alternative to violence, as a means to have their voices heard and their concerns met. He has encouraged young people, both armed and unarmed, to embrace peaceful coexistence and to engage in productive activities such as agriculture and trade.

In all our programmes, we work hard to generate positive incentives for peaceful coexistence. When young people's livelihoods depend on intercommunity trade in goods and services, we find them willing and eager to work hard to ensure people and goods can get safely to market.

When the wider community's ability to eat and flourish depends on peaceful trade, then they'll encourage their youth to become peacemakers, rather than pressing them into armed groups.

**It's been exciting, this year, to see how young people themselves can be the drivers of that change.**

## Joseph Kuot Akok, Concordis' Twic Liaison Officer: a passion for peacebuilding.

Joseph joined Concordis in November 2023, bringing with him a deep commitment to his community in Warrap. As a former civil society chairperson for Twic Ngok, Joseph had witnessed the devastation of communal violence and the urgent need for peace. **"Concordis was the first organisation to engage with the communities after the communal violence,"** and working through civil society groups, youth and women resonated with him.

"The primary thing is passion," he says. "Concordis gave me the opportunity to guide, direct, and help the community with what we have." Alongside his team, he organises meetings and consultation sessions with spiritual leaders, chiefs, youth and local administrators. It's a grassroots approach: "We go to the people, sit with them, and talk - where they are". Resources are stretched, but "we find ways to make things happen".

Community engagement is the most exciting aspect of the work. "Many don't understand their roles in bringing peace or justice. Teaching them and helping them take ownership of these responsibilities is what I value most." Through Concordis, Joseph trains youth, women, and chiefs on governance, conflict resolution, and leadership. This work, he says, "is about creating a foundation for a peaceful and sustainable society - by identifying the problem, training and empowering local leaders".

"Working with youth brings significant challenges. "A young person who always has a gun - fighting is their only solution." They carry deep trauma. "Many come from homes with no food or cows, often driving them into cattle raiding" he explains. Adding to the complexity, political interference often fuels instability, with youth being encouraged by leaders to take up arms. Limited education compounds the problem, with many dropping out of school at an early age and struggling to understand their roles in building peace.

To tackle these challenges, Concordis provides psychosocial support, leadership training, and alternative livelihood programmes. "We show them there are vital activities like agriculture and business they can engage in," Joseph says. Community radio is also a critical tool. "Through local FM's [radio stations], we encourage young people to share their stories, which helps with healing and making informed decisions."

Joseph recalls a recent youth training where 26 leaders, including armed youth, were transformed into community action leaders. "We don't leave them just like that," he says. "We train them to empower others and be examples for their communities."

For Joseph, working with Concordis is more than a job. "Concordis feels like an organisation that is part of us. Being in the community, speaking the same language, and understanding how people think and feel allows us to make a difference. Even with limited resources, we are trying to make sure we deliver what the community needs."



# Impact of women in Concordis' work

**It's not news that, all over the world, women can be excluded from positions of power and influence. Peace talks are no exception, with protagonists agreeing to settlements having ignored at least half of the population throughout the negotiation process.**

**The challenge, then, is how best to challenge gender norms whilst being sensitive to conflict dynamics, and how to move beyond gender quotas and into genuinely inclusive and meaningful participation.**

In Concordis' programmes, we try to respond to this challenge across all our work. Our activities are informed by consultations with over 12,000 people across the region during the last few years. We are seeking not only to understand the views of women's views as well as men, but also the nuanced needs and aspirations of rural women, herder women, disabled women, older women and younger women.

This generates clear evidence as to ways that different people may have very different experiences of conflict. There are obvious examples including violence against women, but there are other important differences in women's experiences around livelihoods, access to markets and the people who are trusted to manage conflict.

Without this evidence base, who would have guessed that women in Darfur tend to have more confidence in the military, whether the army or the RSF, than they do of their own traditional leaders? That knowledge changes how we approach our work in Darfur.

At the heart of our work is a network of 849 local peacebuilders - nearly 300 of them are women.

These women are respected as sages and peacemakers in the myriad communities of which they are part. They are also a vital channel of communication and accountability between Concordis' activities and those communities.

## Female peacebuilders in Abyei

The main and most trusted governance institution in the Amiet Market is the Peace Committee, set up through a Concordis peace conference back in 2016. It's been a long time coming, but the authorities have now permitted, and indeed decreed, that four women and four youth should be included in their number.

The Concordis team was asked to prepare them for this role, so we took the liberty of training not eight but twenty-eight people with skills they will need to manage conflict and articulate needs of their wider communities.

Women in Amiet from both the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka

communities told us that the Amiet Community Court, also set up through a Concordis' Peace Conference, was highly trusted but none-the-less poor at dealing with cases of rape, prostitution and crimes committed by children. The all-male judges agreed that that they needed support and invited us to train them.

Subsequent community consultations show a markedly improved perception of court proceedings and access to justice.

We now have a mandate from the Paramount Chiefs of both sides to train female court counsellors, who will support the judges in managing these hard cases more fairly and sensitively. Women's organisations have identified a group of strong women to be trained to fill these roles.

Female voices are also increasingly prominent in issues affecting Abyei's livelihoods and economic outlook. Women constituted 24% of attendees at training and strategy planning sessions for the Amiet market in 2024, whereas no women had previously been invited to these Chamber of Commerce sessions. 25% of the Peace Ambassadors along Abyei's three cattle corridors are now women. The cultural shift these changes indicate is substantial and encouraging.

**In Darfur:**

**112 Female peacebuilders in South Darfur including...**

**61 Women Peace Ambassadors**

**In CAR:**

**151 Female peacebuilders (35% of total 432 trained)**

**1,187 women trained in conflict prevention (42% of total 2,827 trained)**

**783 Women participated in workshops/ peace conferences / townhall meetings**

**In Abyei:**

**30 Women were trained with peacebuilding skills**

**Totals:**

**>2,250 women engaged in peacebuilding in Concordis' programmes across the region**

## Women peacebuilders in the Central African Republic

Often in rural CAR, the women are kept behind the scenes when strangers visit, and this happened when a team arrived to work with the Beboura Fulani in CAR. The team spent time earning the trust of the Fulani men, and eventually they permitted their wives to be trained in peacebuilding. These women are now directly involved in mediating peaceful cattle migrations.

One of these women went on to challenge Chadian herders, who were upsetting the local population as they were carrying arms. She told them that their families and cattle could be assured of protection whilst in her neighbourhood, so they had no need of weapons. Whereupon she took 18 rifles from them and transported the firearms back to Chad, handing them over to the owner of the cattle.

In the Central African Republic, women are becoming increasingly effective members of Advisory Groups. As the Advisory Groups work together effectively, making huge impacts that benefit their communities, they model the possibilities and power of social cohesion, both between different ethnic groups and also between women and men. This presents a strong and convincing challenge to cultural norms, encouraging their peers to become more aware of their potential.

The presence of trained women in advisory groups has been hugely influential during the 2023-2024 cattle migration season in the CAR borderlands. Near Paoua, herders arrived en masse while farmers were harvesting. A delegation of women from the settled community approached the Advisory Group, who immediately set up dialogue with the herders. What happened next was extraordinary: the herders' wives helped the farmers harvest quickly to prevent crop destruction by the cattle, fostering goodwill and preventing conflicts.

Joséphine is the Mayor of Ndim in Lim Pendé. She has been enormously effective as a mediator and leader, volunteering as much for the Concordis Advisory Group as she does for her municipality.

Joséphine reached out to Concordis when the women in her community contacted her about an issue with their cassava drying arrangements. Cassava is a staple crop, and the women's ability to grow it in the forest is key to their subsistence. However, cattle were grazing the cassava crop before it could be harvested and while it was drying out after being cut. The women felt unsafe in the forest where they went to tend their crops because the men who looked after the cattle were often armed.

We helped Joséphine organise the building of cassava drying equipment in the village. The women organised themselves into groups to supervise the building work, but they were not satisfied with the quality of it. Encouraged by Pascaline Magendo, manager of the Concordis Hub in Paoua, to take ownership of the project, the women went to the male builders and asked why the quality of their work was so poor: better construction was the result.



# Peacebuilding and ecology

In the northeast of the Central African Republic (CAR) is a protected National Park the size of Rwanda and Burundi put together. It's a burgeoning ecosystem of huge trees, verdant undergrowth, birds, animals and abundance. It's a home for many endangered species and a vital water catchment area for Lake Chad, hundreds of miles to the west.



There are humans in this ecosystem too. Some have lived here for centuries, in harmony with the forest, only taking what they need through subsistence farming, fishing and hunting for meat. A second group have been driven here more recently, displaced by drought, floods or war. As refugees, they need to find ways to feed their families.

Herders are the third group, moving their cattle into and through this Park, in search of water and grazing, and also to evade cattle rustlers who would steal their livestock. When the National Park was created, no provision was made for them. It didn't need to – in those days Chadian nomadic herders didn't push this far south. But climate change and conflict, changing demographics and overgrazing, have compelled them into the Park in search of dry season pastures.

A fourth group of people in the Park are conservationists, employed by a New York-based, not-for-profit with a long lease from the CAR government to protect and manage the National Park. They care passionately about this fragile ecosystem and, rightly, they want to protect it.

Whereas subsistence farming and hunting should be sustainable, the conservationists see commercial hunting for national and global markets, including the lucrative trade in the meat of endangered species, as a threat. Likewise, small-scale cattle movements should be sustainable, but widespread burning to clear the brush and promote grass for pasture is destructive.

Added to this heady mix is the fact that the National Park contains diamonds and gold, attracting a fifth group: artisanal miners and commercial prospectors.

Depending on which way you look at it, the combined human impact on the Park is either essential activity to feed families or ecologically horrendous.



At present each group protects their interests by calling on armed men, be they eco-guards, armed groups or self-defence brigades.

At Concordis, we know about this National Park in CAR because we are there too. The sixth group: peacebuilders. We are there at the invitation of all the other groups, because the one thing they can all agree on is that the current situation is dangerously violent and can't continue.

This is where ecology and peacebuilding meet – helping to manage the competing and overlapping relationships between herders and farmers, refugees and settled populations, miners and ecologists in the environment they seek to protect.

Each group come with strong positions: "Protecting this Park is essential to the wider ecology of the Sahel." "Our ancestors were here first." "The law says you can't hunt in the protected Park." "You can't eat the law." "We need grazing and water, or our cattle will die."

Each group also tends to have a clear idea of what the other groups need. There can be a tendency amongst international organisations to assume they know what people might want in rural Africa, without having taken the time to discuss this with them. Some in the settled populations have been offered an alternative source of livelihood, without discussion as to whether that's an attractive or feasible alternative to hunting, farming or diamond mining.

It's a very interesting exercise to work with each group separately, helping them move beyond their own position statements, and to reflect on what they really need at a much deeper level.

What do the settled population actually need? What's really important to herders? And why are people behaving in a way that is making life difficult for one of the other groups?

There are indeed legal measures in place to protect the fragile ecosystem of the Park. But it's worth spending time with experienced ecologists to understand what the Park actually needs, what the protective measures are intended to achieve, and what level of human interaction the Park can sustain.

- Is it essential to have large tracts of land, untouched by human hand? Or do we need bridges or corridors of land, through which animals can move?
- Are all cattle movements harmful, or is there a volume of livestock that becomes destructive? How do we measure that?
- Are there certain species or places that require a higher level of protection?
- What resources could be unlocked to address the needs of other Park users?

Once this deeper tableau of positions, needs and interests emerges, the challenging conversations between people from each group must happen, in a way that they can each present what they really need, rather than being at loggerheads over competing position statements. This will be a process not an event, with the aim of finding a shared understanding about how these needs and interests might overlap.

The solutions that emerge will have been negotiated between all parties, not imposed from New York or London.

Since these solutions were negotiated and agreed upon, then people can be held to account for the decisions they've made.

Whilst these dialogues are ongoing, it is essential to lower the emotional temperature of the relationships between different Park users. Alongside ongoing work with Advisory Group members, managing tensions between herders and farmers, we'll also train the park rangers and managers, giving them tools they can use to de-escalate conflict and manage situations arising before they develop.



Piece by piece, the aim is to unlock arrangements that move beyond competing position statements, and identify and address a shared set of needs. This will generate a changed set of incentives to promote peaceful and sustainable use of the Park's fragile ecosystem:

- Unlocking and diversifying livelihoods through intercommunity trade.
- Working with Park managers to generate new employment opportunities, and offering education and veterinary services.
- Promoting good governance through accountable taxation and provision of services through the local authority.

All of this will require joined up approaches to these complex challenges, bringing together ecologists, climate scientists and veterinarians, as well as development experts, humanitarians and peacebuilders. And that will be the next dialogue for us to facilitate.



An important part of managing the ecosystem of the National Park is to understand and measure climate in the Park. Concordis enabled members of the Advisory Group to be trained to monitor rainfall, wind and river flows, feeding this data into the National Meteorological Office.

The National Weather Service then passes weather forecasts and early warnings of floods, droughts and other extreme weather events to the Advisory Group members, for dissemination across their networks of herders and farmers.

Advisory Group members receive a small fee for this service, which helps them become more sustainable. Their observational data can be fed into global meteorological monitoring systems which, in turn, inform the forecasts available for dissemination.

# Peacebuilding with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals



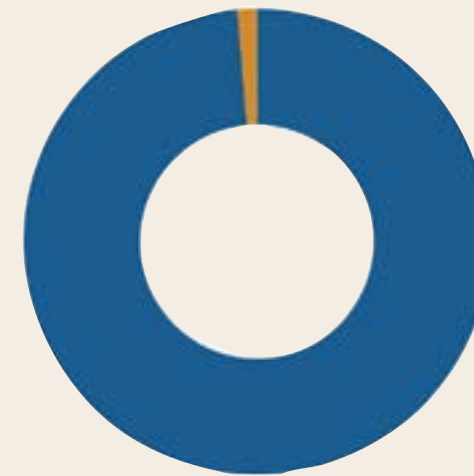
The United Nations has adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The table below shows how Concordis helps work towards six of those goals.

| Goal   | UN Target  | Concordis' Actions  | Read more about this                                |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | Significantly <b>reduce</b> all forms of <b>violence</b> and <b>related death rates</b> everywhere.  | Grassroots peacebuilding resolves local conflicts by enabling communities to address them and create change.  | Working alongside local peacebuilders, page 12      |
| <b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION                         | Improve <b>education, awareness-raising</b> and <b>human and institutional capacity</b> on <b>climate change</b> mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.                 | Helping communities work together to create sustainable, resilient solutions to climate change challenges in their locality.                                    | Peacebuilding and ecology, page 24                  |
| <b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES                   | By 2030, empower and promote the <b>social, economic and political inclusion</b> of all.   | Ensuring consultations are inclusive and workshops amplify the voices of people who are marginalised or disempowered by conflict, poverty or weak governments.  | seeking to address root causes of conflict, page 16 |
| <b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH         | By 2030, achieve <b>full and productive employment</b> and decent work for all.  | Promoting peace dividends like increased trade to bring people together and foster mutual economic interdependence, created jobs and support household incomes. | Changing Incentives, page 17                        |
| <b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY                         | Ensure <b>women's full and effective participation</b> and <b>equal opportunities</b> for leadership at <b>all levels</b> of decision-making in <b>political, economic and public life</b> . | Inclusive programmes that promote women as peacebuilders and in decision-making and provide independent and alternative livelihoods for women.                  | Impact on women, page 22                            |
| <b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION                       | Ensure that <b>all learners</b> acquire the <b>knowledge and skills</b> needed to <b>promote sustainable development</b> through promotion of a <b>culture of peace and non-violence</b> .   | Training community peacebuilders and mediators, equipping them with skills to work with all communities, creates conditions for schools to remain open.         | Impact on young adults, page 20                     |

## Annual Financial Data

Total expenditure

**£2,722,124**



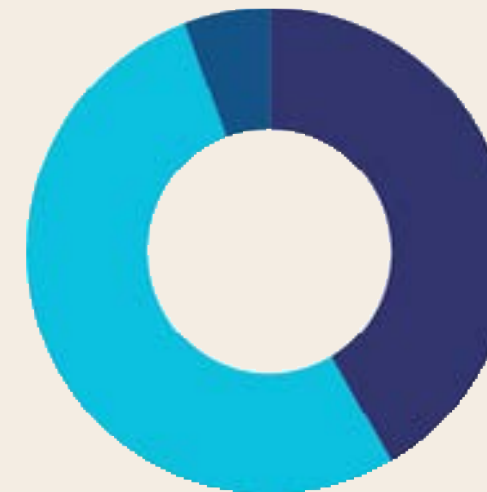
Charitable activities 98.7%  
£2,685,398

Cost of raising funds 1.3%  
£36,726

Concordis is growing because of invitations to work in new places and the funding which comes to support those new initiatives: we have seen a 42% increase in expenditure on the 2022-23 financial year. Our team has increased by 15%, which is testament to the amazing hard work and commitment shown by our staff.

We spend a tiny amount on fundraising - 1.3% - which means that a donation to Concordis is almost entirely a donation to peacebuilding.

### Expenditure by category

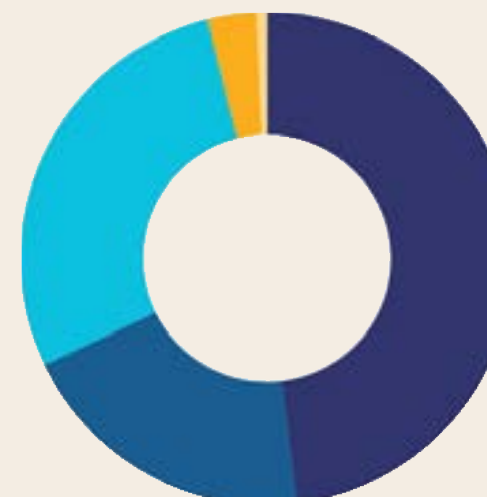


**Direct Programme Costs 52.7%:** this covers the fundamentals of supporting peacebuilding processes in country; running workshops and peace conferences, infrastructure support to break cycles of violence, the livestock vaccination campaign, fuel for the trucks etc.

**Programme Staff Costs 41.6%:** peacebuilding can only be done by investing time in building relationships, therefore we invest all we can in providing project-focussed staff who work in affected communities on a daily basis. People are our greatest asset.

**Support Costs 5.7%:** these are also very low because we don't have a head office to run. Support costs cover governance, financial management, IT, human resources, and staff time to run the central functions of the charity.

### Expenditure by programme:



Central African Republic 48.1%

Abyei 19.8%

Darfur 28.2%

Project development, awareness raising, advocacy & fundraising 3.2%

Research 0.7%

The data summarises the 2023/2024 annual accounts, audited by Sayer Vincent LLP. A full breakdown of financial activity can be found in the annual accounts, available on request.

# Thank You

## Programme Funding

In the 2023-24 year, we continued successful funding partnerships with:



We are so grateful to everyone who gives money, time and resources to Concordis. We hope the stories in this annual review have shown just what your money has achieved.

Thank you to everyone who has given an unrestricted gift to Concordis in this financial year. This means your money has been used where it is needed most. There are many of you, and you know who you are. We really, really appreciate your support.

Thank you to those who provide services and practical support: Georgian House Hotel, Clifford Chance, Resolex and the International Dispute Resolution Centre team.

**Every £1 invested in peacebuilding saves £16 in costs due to conflict (Institute for Economics and Peace). Your support is worth so much.**

**Click the link to give money to Concordis.**

<https://concordis.international/support-us-now>

### Leave Concordis a gift in your will

It's very easy to support Concordis with a legacy gift:

We have partnered with FreeWill, and by using their online tool, you can write a legal will in around 20 minutes - for free. Find out more about how to start the process, call us on 00 44 7736 042431, or send an email to [office@concordis.international](mailto:office@concordis.international).

# A new way to support Concordis

## Would you like to support our work?

### Become a Friend of Concordis.

We are relational peacebuilders. We work by building trusting relationships with those we are invited to help, from all sides of a conflict situation.

Equally, we are keen to feel we are also in trusting relationships with those who support us financially.

That's why we have Friends of Concordis.

All you do to be a Friend is give us a regular gift; the amount and regularity is your choice.

It's a way that people who give us money walk with us, knowing the stories and the people who do this incredibly courageous work.

The support of our Friends is essential to Concordis; you are a tremendous source of encouragement as well as practical help.

By becoming a Friend, you will underpin our work. Your contribution will fund vital peacebuilding work, including:

- The crises that create unexpected expenditure: there are a lot of unforeseen challenges working in war zones. Things are often unpredictable. Sometimes our staff need ready funds faster than donors can release them. Friends' funds are ready for those moments.
- Exploring new invitations: we can send staff to visit a community who are requesting our help, before we have to fund a programme there. And when we're there, we might be able to help quickly and effectively, using Friends' funds.
- Enabling us to transition from one funding cycle to the next, so staff can stay in the field and relationships are not compromised. If we have to move in and out of a conflict zone along with donor funding cycles, it challenges the trust we build up, because we promise to remain in support for the long term. Friends' funds ensure continuity.
- Supporting local need where it is found, enabling staff to respond quickly to initiatives that will underpin peace. Be that sewing machines to enable women set up businesses, travel expenses for a tribal chief to attend a peace conference, or support for the talent night of a youth peace gathering. Friends' funds enable real needs to be met.

Join us in building peace where conflict is fought and felt: become a Friend of Concordis now.

**Click link to become a friend Concordis.**

<https://concordis.international/friends-of-concordis>



# The Concordis Team

## The Board of Trustees

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## Darfur Team

Acho Gerald Anji (Programme Manager)  
Mona Hassan Mighani (Country Representative Sudan)  
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Habib Salih Mohamadain Adam (Community Liaison Manager)  
Abdulrahman Adam (Programme Officer)  
Khalid Sulieman Adam (Programme Officer)  
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## Programme Interns

Eman Abdelaziz  
Ibrahim Alghadamsi  
Zoe David  
Celestine Khasoha  
Aya Khoury  
Carla Pia Silva  
Stephanie Sarta

## Fundraising & Communications Team

Harry Darkins (Fellow)  
Interns:  
Liliana Almeida  
Melanie Danquah  
Talia Dora  
Shiyona Gijo  
Michela Mansoldo  
Victoria O'Sullivan

## UK Team

Peter Marsden (CEO & Programme Director)  
Sue Rooke (Director of Finance)  
Nicola Ukiah (Programme Development Manager)  
Sally Rogers (Operations Manager)  
Kate Giles (Fundraising & Communications Manager)

## Abyei Team

Jonathan Tossell (Programme Manager)  
Stephen Mou (Project Manager)  
Tabitha Choi (Country Representative South Sudan)  
Mona Hassan Mighani (Country Representative Sudan)  
Yassin Ali Abdalla Adam (North Abyei Liaison Officer)  
Hamadein Adam (Community Mobilisation Officer)  
Piol Samuel Deng (Finance Manager)  
Santino Manut Kon (Northern Bahr el-Ghazal Liaison Officer)  
Mayuol Diing Mayuol Western Bahr el-Ghazal Liaison Officer)  
Joseph Kuot Akok (Twic Liaison Officer)  
Achuil Deng Arop (Project Assistant)  
Mayath Mawien Monytoong (Driver)  
Alor Mabek Alor (Security Guard)  
Achai Ring (Office Cleaner)  
Abuk Deng Duper (Security Guard)



## CAR Team

Timea Szarkova (Country Manager)  
Marie Weiller (Research Manager)

## Bangui

Donald Koe Miabe (Peacebuilding Manager)  
Cece Bienvenu Lamah (Finance & Logistics Manager)  
Aime St Pierre (Finance, HR & Logistics Officer)  
Geofroy Roston Teneguere Kabou (Administrative Assistant)  
Hanna Georgie Paula Malendoma (HR Intern)  
Dieudonne Crispin Gbakoudou Serra (Driver)  
Alain Dekesse (Security Guard)  
Gael Paul Goulama (Security Guard)  
Romaric Ferdinand Ngbengo (Security Guard)  
Fiacre Wenceslas Sylvere Tomara (Security Guard)  
Kpanamna Laurianne (Cleaner)  
Nestorine Banzodi Ougbau (Housemaid)  
Laurianna Allazeret (Housemaid)  
Angele Ganai (Cook)

## Paoua

Pascaline Magendo (Hub Manager)  
Aimable Balekete (Finance & Logistics Officer)  
Jean Oscar Ganaye (Programme Officer)  
Paule Debato (Programme Officer)  
Timothee Yarawondji Yapende (Programme Officer)  
Victor Laoule (Driver)  
Edmond Tonadji (Security Guard)  
Gustave Yamidou (Security Guard)  
Francis Dieu Beni Senekian (Security Guard)  
Calixte Naindoubu (Security Guard)  
Annabelle Guetebe-Deremang (Security Guard)

## Ndelé

Leopold Mboua (Hub Manager)  
Sarelle Mossio (Programme Officer)  
Abdalah Abdel-Salam (Driver)  
Luc Azer Aroun Ermas (Security Guard)  
Jean Pierre Dache (Security Guard)  
Bienvenu Nasma (Security Guard)  
Ousman Abdelhamid (Security Guard)  
Bruno Abdrassoul (Security Guard)  
Syntiche Moussa-Nawe (Housemaid)

## Birao

Pari Mounra (Hub Manager)  
Pamphile Junior (Finance & Logistics Officer)  
Romeo Oriya-Nzaoubaye (Programme Officer)  
Nour Mahamat (Programme Officer)

Designed by Molly Taylor-South  
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**Your donation will help build trust between people affected by conflict, bringing security and lasting peace to all areas where we work.**

To donate online please visit:

**[www.concordis.international/donate](http://www.concordis.international/donate)**

I'd love to support Concordis financially

I enclose a cheque payable to 'Concordis International'

I'm setting up a standing order for monthly donations to Concordis (account no 16569172 sortcode 52-10-46)

I'm happy for gift aid to be recovered on my donation, on future donations, and on all donations for the past four years

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address with postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I'd love to be kept up to date with your work

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to :

**Concordis International  
International Dispute Resolution Centre  
1 Paternoster Lane  
London EC4M 7BQ**

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**concordis**

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