

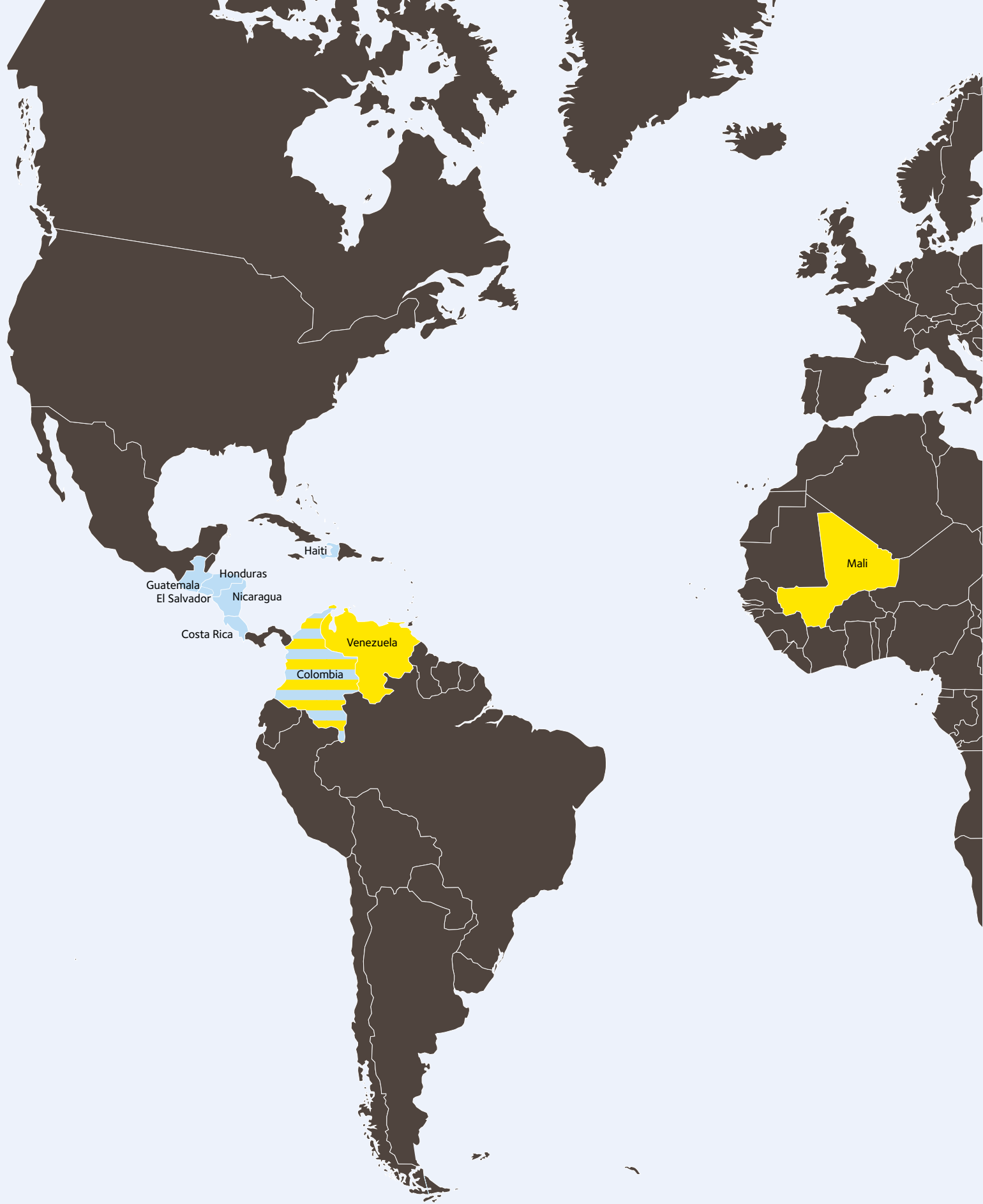
Act Church of Sweden

Annual Report 2020

Save lives
Change lives
Change the world

svenskakyrkan.se/act

act
Church of Sweden



During 2020, we provided:

- 30 humanitarian actions in 17 countries
- Long-term development cooperation in 26 countries



FOR EVERYONE'S RIGHT TO A DIGNIFIED LIFE

Act Church of Sweden is the Church of Sweden's international development and aid actor and one of Sweden's largest fundraising organisations. Together with other churches, organisations and thousands of volunteers around the world, Act Church of Sweden works long-term against poverty, oppression and injustice and acts quickly in the event of disasters. Act stands for acting and putting faith into action – always with people's equal value and rights in focus.

A YEAR THAT LEFT NO ONE UNTOUCHED

We will always associate the year 2020 with the corona pandemic and its effects on people and societies. In our part of the world, we have invested large sums in caring for the sick and helping people to keep their income. In the global south, governments have also invested large sums in healthcare and temporary social safety nets, but in many places the efforts have not included the most vulnerable populations. This was the year when the number of hungry and poor people in the world increased for the first time since surveys started in 1990.

Act Church of Sweden has tried to address the situation in different ways. For example, we have allocated extra funds to the global appeals of the ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation to inform about and combat the spread of Covid-19. The funds have also gone to humanitarian aid for people who have become ill, lost their jobs or could not afford to buy food. We have helped our partners to reorganise parts of their regular work to support people with more urgent needs, such as temporary jobs, food packages and psychosocial support. We have received reports from partners about the "shadow pandemic" and the enormous social effects on women, girls and LGBTQI

people. When communities have been forced into lockdown and people forced into isolation, many vulnerable people have been locked up with violent family members. This is a problem we have raised with decision-makers and informed about via the Swedish media.

We have also supplemented the above-mentioned efforts by trying to influence important policy development issues. During the year, Act Church of Sweden has committed itself to the fact that people's right to social protection, in the form of various types of income support must be at the centre when we now build better and more resilient societies after the pandemic. In the UN context, we, together with our partners, have emphasised the importance of strengthening the rights of women and girls. This is done, for example, by changing the family law legislation that in many countries reduces women and girls to second-class citizens. We have also, together with the ACT Alliance and the World Council of Churches, begun global mobilisation work ahead of the great climate summit in Glasgow in November 2021. The politicians of the world must now make bold decisions on emission reductions and other climate-related issues.

Despite the challenges we face, there is hope. Together we are strong. I see it in our work, where our partners are present locally and provide the necessary support. How it gives people the opportunity to create better lives for themselves, influence decision-makers to reduce injustices and strengthen their rights.

Erik Lysén,
International Director



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon

"Despite the challenges we face,
there is hope. Together we are strong"

Erik Lysén

Photo: Jesper Wahlström/Ikon



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 Who we are
- 10 How we work
- 12 SAVE LIVES
- 18 CHANGE LIVES
- 25 CHANGE THE WORLD
- 31 Fundraising and mobilisation
- 38 Quality and Accountability
- 41 How we are governed
- 42 Financing

SAVE LIVES



Photo: Josefín Casteryd/Ikon

CHANGE LIVES



Photo: Josefín Casteryd/Ikon

CHANGE THE WORLD



Photo: Deborah Rossouw

We all live under the same sky and have the same rights, but the reality looks different. Together we fight for every person's right to a dignified life!

WHO WE ARE

We are the Church of Sweden's international development and aid actor and one of Sweden's largest fundraising organisations. Through effective humanitarian action, long-term development cooperation and global advocacy work with local churches and organisations, we contribute to changing lives – and the world. Human dignity is inviolable, and every person has the right to a dignified life. That is why we work internationally to strengthen human rights around the world.

Act Church of Sweden bases its international work on its identity as a church, as part of a worldwide community. We believe in a God who stands in solidarity with those who are oppressed or living in vulnerable situations. We want to strengthen people's own ability and opportunity to change. In a world where religion has a great influence on people's lives, our identity as a church and development and aid actor offers unique opportunities to influence.

In many countries, people have greater confidence in religious leaders than in politicians and government officials. Therefore, religious representatives have a great responsibility to work against structures that keep people in oppression and poverty.

As a church, we have the opportunity and responsibility to work together with other religious actors with norms, values and beliefs that contribute positively to the development of people and societies.

actalliance



**World Council
of Churches**



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

CHANGE THROUGH GLOBAL ACTORS

The Church of Sweden is a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). It provides great opportunities to influence churches' common theological reflection and to work for peace and human rights as well as with climate and environmental issues. The networks are powerful voices in the UN system and other important forums. LWF conducts humanitarian work in several different refugee camps around the world.

Act Church of Sweden is also a member of the ACT Alliance, one of the largest global faith-based alliances for humanitarian work, development cooperation and advocacy. The ACT Alliance, which stands for Action by Churches Together, has a local presence in more than 120 countries and can work effectively both for long-term development and in crisis situations.



Montage photo: Lijstfilm, Magnus Aronsson och Anneli Ekström

Our faith leads us to action, and we act for every person's right to a dignified life. Together with people all over the world, we work for change and achieve results. Every day.

CHANGE THROUGH LOCAL ACTORS

Change will be lasting and sustainable if it is owned by the local communities where it takes place. That is why our work is carried out through and together with local organisations and churches. The corona pandemic has not only led to a marked increase in

humanitarian needs, but has also highlighted the importance of local capacity and local ownership, when large parts of the world have locked down several times. We work with people who are present before, during and after a crisis or disaster.

OUR MISSION

For the sake of life and us together in the worldwide Church, God sends us, in our words and actions, to share the gospel, defend human dignity, safeguard the Creation, and live in faith, hope and love.

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

God creates, liberates and allows for reconciliation, not only between man and God but also between people. The Church is the community of hope. Therefore, in the belief in the God of life, we would like to move from discontent to courage for life.

PEOPLE'S VALUE AND RIGHTS

A person is created in the image of God and the human value is sacred. Every person has the right to a life of dignity and to fundamental rights as expressed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We oppose all forms of oppression or inequality.

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

All of creation and humanity's long-term survival are threatened by human influence on our planet. Therefore, we want to promote sustainable development, where we take responsibility for our lifestyle and impact on nature, climate and environment. The struggle for peace, equality, justice and sustainability go together.

WE SUPPORT
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN

17

COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

WITH
5

THEMATIC AREAS

HOW WE WORK

As part of a global movement, we contribute to change. We do this by supporting local actors. We also do this by influencing decision-makers in national, regional and global networks to create the conditions for human rights to be realised.

Human rights as a starting point

All people are entitled to a life of dignity. Regardless of religious affiliation, sexuality or where we were born, we are entitled to all human rights and freedoms. Discrimination is unacceptable. Human rights are the starting point for all our work.

Empowerment, participation and equality

Achieving justice, equality and sustainable societies requires participation of people living in vulnerability. All people are rights holders. Gender justice and equality are strongly linked to power and the opportunity to participate and are basic prerequisites for human rights and a sustainable society. That is why we work, in particular, against gender-discriminatory structures and traditions, biblical interpretations and norms that make women and girls as well as their living conditions invisible.

Religion as an enabler

As a church, we have a special opportunity to protect every person's right to a dignified life. We work with religious leaders who advocate and work for norms, values and beliefs that contribute positively to the development of people and societies. We also use dialogue to challenge religious representatives who do not do that.

Democratic space and organisation

When people come together and organise themselves, they have greater opportunities to express their interests with a common voice and stand up for their rights. Increasing the organisation and strengthening civil society organisations are more important than ever, as the democratic space is shrinking due to the corona pandemic and emergency laws in many countries. We conduct development cooperation in five thematic areas:

- Gender justice and gender equality
- Fair and sustainable livelihoods
- Just peace
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights – SRHR
- Theology and development

Humanitarian work

To save lives and alleviate suffering Act Church of Sweden contributes with humanitarian support in both rapid-onset and protracted crises. In a disaster, Act Church of Sweden's work is based on the individual's and the local community's own needs, resources and conditions. Participation and ownership are central to regain control and a sense of normalcy and hope. People themselves need to be able to rebuild their lives in order to rise stronger together and be better equipped for the future. Also during a crisis, it is important to think long-term.

HOW WE CREATE SUSTAINABLE CHANGE TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNERS

Faith is an important factor for both individuals and society in our theory of how the world can change for the better, the theory of change. Religious actors thus also have great influence.

Our work takes place in close cooperation with churches, organisations and networks. Together, we mobilise to achieve change.

We want to make use of the power of churches and other religious actors to contribute to positive change. Our work is based on a number of principles for fair and sustainable development. They shape our way of working and how we cooperate with partners at local, national, regional and global level.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

and international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian work, in accordance with humanitarian principles, is necessary to safeguard human rights in humanitarian crisis situations.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights form the basis for human development and collaboration.

DEMOCRATIC SPACE AND ORGANISATION

Provides increased empowerment and conditions for demanding accountability.

Civil society is important as an agent of change, a voice and a guarding and driving force.

EMPOWERMENT AND COMMITMENT

All people are protagonists in their own lives as well as their surroundings development.

FAITH AND RELIGIOUS ACTORS

Faith and religion influence values, decisions and behaviour in everyday life and in society.

ACCOUNTABILITY IS NECESSARY

To uphold the human rights.

The state, and sometimes religious actors and companies, are responsible for protecting and respecting human rights.

SAVE LIVES

Never before have so many people in the world depended on humanitarian aid and never before has the number increased as dramatically as in 2020. The effects of the Corona pandemic have exacerbated an already difficult situation for the most vulnerable. People who live on the margins, refugees and migrants, or those living in hunger and poverty have the least ability to cope with crisis. In 2020, Act Church of Sweden implemented 30 humanitarian actions in 17 countries.

Here are some examples of how many have been reached by our humanitarian action in 2020. Behind every figure is a human being!

ZIMBABWE 16 276 PEOPLE

Zimbabwe is repeatedly affected by climate change. During 2020, draught was a major problem, among others. The drought severely hampered people's ability to support themselves, small-scale agriculture became more difficult, and access to water decreased. Our efforts included access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. Wells were built and renovated; and packages of washbasins, soap, water purification tablets and hygiene items were distributed.

Access to tools and methods for conducting climate-smart agriculture were also important parts of the support. Knowledge of which crops are resistant to drought, techniques for how to cultivate the soil while maintaining nutrient levels and access to seeds and tools, increase people's resistance to future periods of drought.

BEIRUT 4661 PEOPLE

The devastation and loss to the people of Lebanon became enormous after the explosion in August 2020. The disaster also occurred in the middle of the pandemic, and in a difficult political and economic situation with high unemployment and a large number of refugees in the country. In an emergency phase, Act Church of Sweden was quickly in place with emergency aid; now a long-term reconstruction work awaits with a focus on people's social and psychological needs.

PHILIPPINES 38 080 PEOPLE

In November 2020, the storm Goni swept across the Philippines, causing enormous damage and flooding. Houses were buried under mud, and power lines were torn off. About one million people were evacuated to temporary centres and many became homeless, amid an ongoing pandemic. In 2020, Act Church of Sweden provided support to almost 40,000 people through partners on site. The support included food, clean water, hygiene items and shelter for the people. Humanitarian aid also continues to rebuild the lives of those affected.

80 MILLION

PEOPLE ARE DISPLACED AROUND THE WORLD



THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION HAS INCREASED BY 40% IN 2020, ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY DUE TO THE PANDEMIC*

*Source: FN

IRAQ 21 412 PEOPLE

People continue to flee from Syria into Iraq. Millions of Iraqis are also fleeing their own country, and the humanitarian crisis is a fact. The corona pandemic has seriously worsened people's lives. Nearly half of the hundreds of thousands of people fleeing Iraq are children. Here, the efforts in 2020 were mainly about psychosocial support for children, young people and adults as well as education.

SYRIA 17 381 PEOPLE

More than six million people are displaced within Syria's borders, of which 75% are women and children. The need for protection, food and shelter is enormous. Act Church of Sweden works together with local organisations to meet the most urgent needs in the region. In 2020, Act Church of Sweden continued to make further efforts, among other things, to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and to increase the mental well-being of children and families who have been forced into isolation and quarantine due to the pandemic, as well as education.

SOUTH SUDAN 41 400 PEOPLE

At the same time as the pandemic broke out in the spring of 2020, more than half a million people in South Sudan were affected by devastating floods as a result of climate change. About half of them lost their homes and livelihoods when houses, livestock and crops disappeared into the water. Act Church of Sweden, together with local partners, supported humanitarian action as well as more long-term efforts to build a sustainable and peaceful future in South Sudan.



Photo: Magnus Aranson/Ikon

As part of the
ACT-ALLIANCE
Act Church of Sweden can
ACT QUICKLY
and effectively during disasters

CONTINUED FOCUS ON PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT DURING 2020

During 2020, we were able to conduct humanitarian work together with partners despite challenges caused by Covid-19 due to lockdowns and restricted access.

In addition to the pandemic, other disasters affected those already afflicted. We supported efforts in Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Beirut and the Tigray crisis, among others – both in Sudan and in Ethiopia. Through our annual support to the ACT Alliance's Rapid Response Fund (RRF), several local organisations were able to receive support in various emergencies. Within the ACT Alliance, a global Covid-19 appeal was also established, where organisations within the alliance could apply for funding for efforts to support people affected by the pandemic.

In our humanitarian work, we support ongoing humanitarian crises in Colombia, Iraq, Jordan and Syria, among others. For many years now, we have also been working in more protracted humanitarian

crises in East Africa, Uganda, South Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. The psychosocial support, with a focus on the group's and the individual's own capacity and ability, is an important part of the efforts we carry out. In our efforts to strengthen local psychosocial support, we have been a driving force within the ACT Alliance to increase knowledge and awareness of this way of conducting humanitarian work. Among other things, we have conducted university-accredited training of partners within the alliance and offered expert support in the implementation. It is a systematic approach to make humanitarian actors realise the importance of participation, ownership, empowerment and the healing power that comes from involving the people affected by a crisis or disaster so that they can rise stronger.



Photo: Gustaf Helsing

Else Berglund,
Humanitarian Director

HOW WE WORK IN DISASTERS

When various forms of disasters or crises affect people, our first priority is to save lives and alleviate suffering. In the emergency phase, it is a matter of securing access to food, water and shelter and from the onset involving the people affected. In a humanitarian crisis, it is not only the physical and material needs that need to be met, psychosocial support is also needed. And even in a disaster, it is important to think long-term and take build on the power of affected individuals and groups in order for the support to be effective and sustainable.

Support for the person as a whole

People affected by disasters need to feel dignified and hopeful. Participation and ownership are central for to regain control and a sense of normalcy and hope People themselves need to be able to contribute

to a better life in order to to rise stronger together and be better equipped for the future. To support this, we need to build on their own sense of agency, capacity and ability.

In humanitarian work, we depart from the humanitarian needs in line with the humanitarian principles. The needs determine who receives support, regardless of people's origin, religion or nationality.

THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

HUMANITY

Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found.

NEUTRALITY

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

IMPARTIALITY

Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.

INDEPENDENCE

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold in relation to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

YOUNG AMBASSADORS IN SYRIA CHANGE LIVES

In a crisis or disaster situation, psychosocial support is extremely important. It is based on people's own ability to support each other and rise stronger. When it works best, it makes people see themselves as actors with a sense of agency, which creates meaning, hope and contributes to faster recovery.

The war in Syria has been going on for ten years and has led to a humanitarian crisis of enormous proportions. In north-eastern Syria, where Act Church of Sweden supports humanitarian action, there are currently 500,000 internally displaced people, and 1.4 million people are in need of support. Here, we work, among other things, with training young ambassadors in emergency psychological support.

The ambassadors are young people with good leadership qualities who want to make a difference. Although they themselves have lost almost everything, they find strength in being able to help others. They are given a meaningful task in everyday life, at the same time as they get an opportunity to get to know each other

and build social cohesion. The young people are trained in emergency psychological support and risk management. The method means that these young people complement the programme's other initiatives. They are given tools to support other children and young people, engage with newcomers, create security and trust, and provide support when needed. All newcomers receive support in the first stage through an individual assessment by an educated adult. The safety of young people is never put at risk.

Forty-five per cent of the refugees in the area are children who live in great vulnerability. Act Church of Sweden also works with child-safe places in the area, so-called "Child Friendly Spaces".

"CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES"

are places that function as a preschool/daycare, where children can play under safe and orderly conditions. Child-safe places are safe places where children can play, heal and learn strategies for dealing with trauma.



EMERGENCY FUNDS FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY COVID-19

Together with churches and faith-based actors around the world, Act Church of Sweden works to ensure that vital support efforts quickly reach the people who are most in need. One prerequisite is to continue funding various initiatives quickly and without delay. During 2020, we contributed, among other things, with extra funds to the ACT Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation's global appeals to inform about and combat the spread of Covid-19.

Lutheran World Federation's Emergency fund

In 2020, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) established an emergency fund, where the member churches could apply for funding for Covid-19 related initiatives. Many churches have taken great responsibility during the corona pandemic, and several of them have been in situations where the needs were great even before the pandemic. Act Church of Sweden contributed just over SEK 700,000 to the Lutheran World Federation's Emergency Fund.

ACT Alliance's Emergency Fund

As a member of the ACT Alliance, Act Church of Sweden has the opportunity to act quickly through the local partners that exist within the alliance worldwide, and who are in place before, during and after a disaster occurs. In 2020, we were able to contribute an extra SEK 10 million to the ACT Alliance's Emergency Fund, Rapid Response Fund (RRF), earmarked funds for efforts during the pandemic. The funds went, among other things, to humanitarian action for people who became ill, lost their jobs, or were unable to buy food due to the consequences of the pandemic:

Through the ACT Alliance's Emergency Fund for actions during the pandemic, we have, among other things, contributed to:

- **Bangladesh:** Food packages and hygiene kits for 5,000 households, where day labourers lost their income due to lockdown.
- **Egypt:** Hygiene packages and food for 3,000 households, dissemination of accurate information on Covid-19 and infection control in collaboration with religious leaders.
- **Haiti:** Food supplies for 420 families who lost their income during the pandemic, dissemination of information about Covid-19, and measures to reduce and protect against infection.
- **Honduras:** Cash support for 1,650 families who had lost their income, information on preventive measures to prevent the spread of infection, and protective equipment for 40 employees at 10 different health centres to protect against infection.
- **Ghana:** Food supply for 1,500 households, hand washing stations in 10 areas, protective equipment for three health centres



Photo: Christian Aid



Photo: Christian Aid

LOCAL ACTORS' EFFORTS DURING HUMANITARIAN CRISES

In the Local2Global Protection (L2GP) initiative, which Act Church of Sweden co-founded and launched just over ten years ago, new methods for locally led efforts in humanitarian crises have been developed, together with civil society actors in humanitarian crises around the world. In projects with our partners in Haiti, the Middle East and Sudan, so-called “survivor and community led responses” (sclr) have been tested to allow local communities to lead humanitarian efforts themselves. The results show that the method is fast, efficient, cost-saving and at the same time strengthens local community structures.

The work of developing methods for local communities to lead humanitarian efforts has attracted attention in international humanitarian contexts. Meetings have also been held with major humanitarian donors such as ECHO, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, Sida and Danish Danida.

During the end of 2020, L2GP's meetings with ECHO led to sclr, as a method, being included in the preparatory work for a new ECHO guideline for group-based cash benefits. The fact that the initiative is perceived as leading, in terms of local actors' leadership in humanitarian crises, was also manifested when Ruhr University Bochum in the autumn of 2020 commissioned L2GP to lead a course in their advanced humanitarian education.

Mai Jarrar works as a coordinator for one of our partner organisations in East Jerusalem, which together with, among others, Act Church of Sweden, runs the Local to Global Protection (L2GP) programme in Palestine. Giving people the opportunity to identify, initiate and lead activities themselves has proven to be extremely important.

Through the programme, people are encouraged to together form a type of civic

council, so-called Protection groups, with a focus on community development in their own locality. They receive training in advocacy work, learn to write project applications, apply for grants and do accounting. At the same time, they discuss and list the needs in society, vote on a priority order and write an action plan.

– When we give people power and the opportunity to change their situation themselves, we see that they do it so much better than any other organisation or external actor could.



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon

"It is important to believe in the inherent capacity of each individual. When aid organisations trust people and use them, the power to act shows itself."

Mai Jarrar,
Coordinator for programme Local to Global Protection in East Jerusalem



CHANGE LIVES

The global economic crisis in the wake of the corona pandemic has created increasing strains on societies and individuals, and many years of struggle for human rights and equality have taken great strides backwards. The world is facing enormous challenges – but also opportunities!

In our long-term development cooperation, we work with 17 different country programmes, within five thematic areas, to create more sustainable, inclusive and peaceful societies and tackle the root causes of injustice and poverty. Supporting long-term, effective and strong, civil society organisations that can create change in their societies is a central part of our strategy. Gender justice is a theme that permeates all programmes, but our long-term

development cooperation is also about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), just peace, fair and sustainable livelihoods and corporate responsibility, religious freedom and the church's role in societal development. Several different thematic components are often included in one and the same effort. In this section, you can read about some of our life-changing efforts.

GENDER JUSTICE AND GENDER EQUALITY

That all people, regardless of gender, should have the same rights and opportunities is the focus of the work at ACT Alliance and Act Church of Sweden. Gender equality and the rights of girls and women are crucial to fighting poverty and achieving democratic and sustainable societies.

In 2020, in the wake of Covid-19, we have seen a global decline in the work for gender equality and the rights of women and LGBTIQ people. Economic stress linked to patriarchal structures

and increased isolation have, among other things, contributed to an avalanche-sized increase in gender-related violence at a global level. In addition to addressing the direct consequences of gender-related violence, Act Church of Sweden works together with partners to counteract deeper causes, such as negative views of women and inequality. Discriminatory structures exacerbate poverty, hunger, health and negatively affect economic growth. That is why it is particularly important to continue the fight for gender justice and equality at all levels.

EQUALITY – A QUESTION FOR EVERYONE

An important part of the work to achieve equal and sustainable societies is to work with men. In 2020, Act Church of Sweden continued its collaboration with the organisation Rozan in Pakistan, which conducts work related to gender, focusing on changing norms around male roles. Rozan educates the police force on gender issues and addresses women and informs about gender equality and rights issues. University students have also shown great interest and participated in educations where campaigns for gender justice have been planned, implemented and evaluated. The fact that men organise for gender justice gives positive results and is important in the creation of positive masculinities.

In Central America, too, it has been a success factor to include men in the work to achieve gender justice and reduce gender-based violence. Among the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC), Act Church of Sweden supports a centre that works to ensure that more people, not least men, are included in the work to reduce widespread violence. The activities include courses and discussion groups, where women and men discuss destructive gender roles and what can be done to counteract violence in society. One of the main aims is to increase knowledge that gender equality is crucial to achieving more sustainable societies.

– Men are part of the problem and can therefore be part of the solution, says Larry Madrigal who is one of the zealots behind CBC.

Democratic space and organisation

India is one of the countries that is the worst affected by the pandemic. The poorest, and most vulnerable, especially young women have suffered the most from lockdowns and lost earnings. In eastern India, we work with partners to support women in organising themselves in self-help groups, in anti-violence associations and in various trade unions – something that has proved increasingly crucial during the pandemic. We also offer vocational training for women so that they can support themselves through, for example, small businesses, sewing



Photo: Carlos Zaparoli/Jkon

Pedro Ochoa is one of the participants in Bartolomé de las Casas, gender education in Guatemala. When asked what gender justice means to him, he answers: 'For me, it is about the need to change the entire social system, where women have always had limited space, while men have had many privileges. We men need to give up our privileges and learn to live more peacefully and much less violently'.

and crafts. Thanks to the fact that our partners were already in place in many vulnerable areas, we were able to quickly reach out with food packages and hygiene items to individuals in need of emergency assistance in seven different Indian cities. So-called "Monitoring Groups" were also formed to identify and offer help to the most vulnerable.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), with a focus on women and girls, is a controversial and sensitive issue in many parts of the world, and at the same time absolutely crucial for creating equal and sustainable societies. Act Church of Sweden supports local organisations and churches around the world that work to make visible and raise the rights of women, girls and young people to sexual and reproductive health.

In Tanzania, we collaborate with the Lutheran Church (ELCT), which offers contraceptive counselling, care, support and information to young people at several

of its care facilities. In 2020, involuntary teenage pregnancies and maternal mortality increased markedly, a global trend due to lockdowns and other restrictions. ELCT works closely with schools to reach out with sexual education and discusses issues related to gender justice and gender equality. When the schools closed in 2020, ELCT was able to quickly change its work to reach girls and boys at home, instead of in schools.

An important key to creating long-term change is to work preventively with youth-friendly care.

SRHR

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is about people's physical integrity. It is a cornerstone for achieving good health, well-being and gender justice. It is crucial for the human rights of individuals to be realised.

5 WAYS WE MADE A VITAL DIFFERENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

In 2020, Act Church of Sweden worked together with partners to mitigate the effects of the pandemic for those living in the greatest vulnerability. Here are some examples of how:

Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance



#1 WITH MOBILE TELEPHONES

Long periods of quarantine, unemployment and insecurity led to increased domestic violence in many communities during 2020. At the same time, the opportunities to seek help decreased. In many parts of the world, our partners switched to disseminating information via the Internet and mobile phones about how victims could seek help. Among other things, our partners in Colombia created an app to help abused women contact friends and relatives for help. In Lebanon, during the lockdown, our partners ran a campaign in which the telephone number for help lines was hung on banners outside the windows. In India, groups were formed that disseminated information via mobile videos and reached out to identify those in greatest need of support, tasks which they then reported on to authorities and local organisations.

#2 WITH SAFE HOUSING

When the opportunities for livelihood disappear, the risk of girls and women getting married against their will also increases. During the corona pandemic, the incidence of child and forced marriage increased. Miriam in South Sudan, 16, was betrothed to an elderly man who was going to give cows and goats to her family in exchange.

When Miriam refused, she was beaten. To escape the violence and the marriage, she fled home in the middle of the night and got in touch with our partner organisation, who gave her clothes, food, support and help to find a safer place to live. Together, they also reported Miriam's parents to the authorities in South Sudan. Also in South Africa and Costa Rica, our partners have offered safe housing to women who have been subjected to domestic violence.



Photo: RDRS/Ikan



#3 WITH SEXUAL EDUCATION AND MATERNAL CARE

The Lutheran Church in Tanzania saw a dramatic increase in teenage pregnancies and maternal mortality at its clinics in connection with the pandemic. The fear of being infected by the virus in a clinic, or of calling a youth clinic with a family member in the same room during quarantine, were some of the reasons why many did not dare to seek care or counselling in time. Several countries, churches and international organisations do not want to support efforts related to sexual health and maternity care as it is a taboo subject. Act Church of Sweden's support for the work with sexual and reproductive health and rights was therefore extra important in 2020 for many of our partners who work with this. Outreach activities, such as the Mentor Mother projects that we support in South Africa, Eswatini and Egypt, among others, have also meant that vulnerable women have received care and support in time – also during 2020.



#4 WITH FOOD

Due to patriarchal and harmful norms that say women and girls have a lower value than men and boys, women and girls are at greater risk of becoming malnourished in a crisis or disaster. Due to quarantine, closed borders and loss of income, many families had to go hungry in 2020. Many of our partners and volunteers distributed food packages to those most in need. In India, Iraq, the Philippines and Haiti, among others, our partners changed their efforts to reduce hunger among families. In this way, the risk of girls and women becoming completely deprived when access to food and livelihoods was scarce decreased.



#5 WITH VOLUNTEERS

In many places, different types of travel bans and restrictions in movement became especially noticeable in 2020. For people who lived in restrictive conditions even before the pandemic, such as refugees in camps or people far out in the countryside, 2020 posed extreme challenges. Therefore, the collaboration with local organisations, which are already part of the local community, has been extra important during the pandemic. In many refugee camps, Act Church of Sweden has worked for several years to train and strengthen volunteers, something that came to be crucial when no outsiders were allowed to enter the camps during the pandemic. In Zaatar, Jordan, for example, the refugees organised themselves to spread information about the virus. In Myanmar, women started sewing groups to sew protective clothing and make protective masks.

LOCAL WORK— A SUCCESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

If there is one thing that 2020 has shown us, it is how various global and local challenges affect and reinforce each other during a global crisis situation, and that the answer to the challenges can largely be found in local work backed by global solidarity and advocacy. Our conviction that it is a strength to work through local partners, not least churches and faith-based organisations, which are present before, during and after disasters, has been confirmed.

– I'm Rahmeh. My job is to protect children from dangers in war and when fleeing. When I see a child smile or laugh, I am filled with a joy that is greater than anything else. I miss my family but focus on improving the lives of others.

Rahmeh Abo Aysheh is 29 years old. She works for Act Church of Sweden's partner in Iraq, and her job is to reach those who live in the greatest vulnerability, often women and children. Rahmeh herself was forced to flee the war in Syria in 2013.

In Daratu, Iraq, where the Church of Sweden's humanitarian programme and Rahmeh's workplace are located, live people from Syria and Iraq who have all fled fighting. Isolation and poverty have increased during the pandemic, as has vulnerability of women and children. Rahmeh works to involve the local community in contributing to positive common change.

– Children here are at great risk. Women and children are exposed to all sorts of gender-based violence and risk being lured into horrific working conditions and child labour. I want to prevent that, says Rahmeh.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Peaceful and sustainable societies are built from below and must start from and include the people who live and work there. In our network, there are many brave women and men who live and work in different contexts; some are in environments that are associated with great risks when standing up for justice and their fellow human beings. But they all have one thing in common: They stand courageous

THANKS TO OUR EXISTING NETWORKS, HELP WAS AVAILABLE!

Egypt has been hit hard by Covid-19, and almost half of the population live below the poverty line. Here, Act Church of Sweden cooperates with the Coptic Orthodox Church to provide support to residents in rural areas and in vulnerable local communities.

All efforts are based on local needs, and the field workers who lead the work are recruited from the local area. They, in turn, engage local actors and citizens and plan the work together with them.

During the pandemic, the needs of these communities have increased dramatically, and the local capacity for organisation and problem solving has come to the fore. Thanks to the structures that were already in place, it has been possible to provide help!

It has been possible to distribute food, hygiene items and medicine to those who have been most exposed or forced to isolate themselves. Local leaders have also received guidance on crisis management and how they can provide psychosocial support to families affected by unemployment and sudden poverty. They have also received training in how the spread of infection can be stopped and received help to convey important knowledge in their immediate areas.



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon

THROUGH OUR PARTNERS, WE ARE ALWAYS WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE

The corona pandemic affected all work in 2020. Some partner organisations had more to do, for example, in their work for women's rights, against violence in close relationships or – as our partner in the Philippines – against the sexual exploitation of children online.

Others took it upon themselves to respond to the effects of the pandemic with emergency measures, such as handing out food packages or hygiene items. In addition, others lost revenue and were forced to lay off staff when important activities were forced to close due to restrictions or closures of entire communities.

In Tanzania, schools were closed from April to May 2020, and the Lutheran Church, which runs both schools and hospitals, reported that many girls never returned when schools reopened. Maternal mortality increased markedly due to lack of information and the fact that young mothers did not dare to go to the hospital for fear of becoming infected with Covid-19.

Despite the pandemic, Act Church of Sweden's programmes continued in 2020, albeit with some changes. We and many of our partners switched to digital meetings and training. One example is Haiti, where training in survivor and community-led response (sclr) and Community-Based Psychosocial Support (CBPS) was conducted digitally.

Our focus, working with local partners and local communities, proved particularly important during the pandemic. Through our partners, we are always at the place where the people are. We will continue to focus on collaborations with our local partners also in the future.



Photo: Josefín Casteryd/Ikon

Lennart Hernander,
Director of International Programmes,
Act Church of Sweden



We want to change the world by influencing those in power locally, regionally and globally to make decisions that respect human dignity and protect human rights.

CHANGE THE WORLD

In 2020, our focus on policy dialogue and advocacy work has increased. Issues that Act Church of Sweden has long worked on – sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender justice, Finance for Development and social protection – ended up at the top of the international development policy agenda. Likewise, the issue of the situation of women and girls in the shadow of Covid-19. The importance of including gender-integrated strategies in Covid-19 efforts to address and combat economic injustice, inadequate health care systems, and sexual and gender-based violence was one of our key issues.

INFLUENCE THROUGH DIALOGUE

Act Church of Sweden calls the work of influencing political decisions, attitudes and norms policy dialogue, because we want to emphasise the importance of dialogue as a method and approach. The advocacy work is an important part of the work we carry out together with our partner organisations. This could be, for example, strengthening women's participation in peace negotiations, using UN mechanisms to defend religious freedom and equal citizenship, or defending democratic space so that local civil society actors can continue to make their voices heard, including in regional and global policy forums. In Act Church of Sweden's

global policy dialogue programme, advocacy work takes place both in Sweden and globally through the ecumenical alliances with a presence in Geneva, New York and Brussels.

Creating opinion is an important part of the work to put pressure on decision-makers to act but also to influence attitudes in the church and in society. The advocacy work takes place in collaboration with alliances and networks and is based on studies, analyses and research. We also work to get those involved in the Church of Sweden, not least young people, to actively participate in opinion formation on the important global justice issues.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES IN CRISIS

The global pandemic, and the measures to limit the spread of infection, have triggered a social, health and economic crisis, the consequences of which are difficult to foresee. At the same time, the crisis has highlighted the importance of social protection – such as health insurance, unemployment insurance, access to health care and emergency income support. This applies in Sweden as well as other parts of the world. With the report "Social protection for all – key in the Covid crisis", Act Church of Sweden showed how social protection strengthens the ability of individuals and entire societies to handle crises and therefore must be a crucial part of the covid response.

In 2020, Act Church of Sweden also continued the long-term work for social protection as a means of combating poverty and strengthening people's autonomy and human rights. The report "Hit and Miss" summarised the evidence for why broad and inclusive social programmes are better than "poverty-oriented" when the goal is to reach as many of those living in the greatest vulnerability as possible. Another report highlighted the importance of general protection for the emergence of stable social contracts.

RELIGIOUS ACTORS HAVE POWER AND INFLUENCE

Churches and religious actors play a significant role in society in many regions and are important actors in the work to achieve the development goals. As a religious actor, we have a unique network in societies where religious leaders have great trust and influence over people's lives, which is crucial in the work to, for example, create peace and achieve gender justice.

Together, we can change abusive norms and discriminatory family law.

In the dialogue with decisionmakers, Act Church of Sweden contributes both with in-depth knowledge, and by showing how to achieve concrete results with the help of alliances with progressive religious actors. Theological education and reflection are also an important part of our work.

Photo: Kristoffer Morén/Kyrkans tidning



– I am proud that the Lutheran Church is showing the way to a society that stands for dignity for all, despite backward-looking voices in society and government, says lawyer Scarlet Bishara, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

SCARLET BISHARA WORKS FOR AN EQUAL FAMILY LEGISLATION

In several of our partner countries, there is special family legislation for churches and other religious communities that regulates the legal age for marriage, the forms of divorce and who may inherit and own. What these laws have in common is that they discriminate against women and girls.

But for a few years now, the Lutheran Church has had the most equal family legislation in the Middle East. This is largely thanks to the passionate lawyer Scarlet Bishara's opinion building and support from Act Church of Sweden.

Long-term development work takes time, but gives results! Today, Scarlet works to make more women knowledgeable about their legal rights and inspires women who belong to other religious communities to influence their respective laws. Thus, her work becomes a work for freedom for women and girls who are discriminated against in various national family laws around the world.

"We must tell it like it is. Around the world, women's rights are being pushed back. This pushback is deep, pervasive and relentless."

UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres, during the opening of the Women's Commission in 2019.

BACKLASH FOR GENDER EQUALITY

The growing global opposition to gender issues, women's and LGBTQI rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) has strongly influenced the advocacy work in 2020. As religion is often used as an argument to discriminate, Act Church of Sweden's work with religious actors is extra important.

Our focus on family law and reforms of discriminatory family law is particularly relevant, as this affects women's and girls' rights, not least with regard to the possibility of economic autonomy.

TOGETHER WE ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

Today's global challenges can only be solved if we build alliances and networks to challenge unjust structures and persuade those in power to take responsibility. Act Church of Sweden is part of the worldwide church, among other things through our membership and cooperation in the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and the ACT Alliance. It gives us enormous strength when we act.

Act Church of Sweden is part of several large alliances and networks. In international contexts, we work together with the Lutheran World Federation and within the World Council of Churches and the ACT Alliance, which is one of the world's largest faith-based aid alliances. The Lutheran World Federation has 148 member

churches in 99 countries. The World Council of Churches is an ecumenical collaboration between 350 churches that have half a billion members. Within ACT Alliance, approximately 135 faith-based organisations working in 120 countries around the world collaborate. Through these collaborations, we get a stronger voice,

but we can also act more quickly in the event of disasters, as well as more effectively in long-term development cooperation.

In the next few years, ACT Alliance has decided to focus in particular on gender rights, which is also in line with Act Church of Sweden's strategy.

Demanding accountability is also an important part of Act Church of Sweden's work and takes place, for example, through its own and partner policy dialogue at various levels in society. It is part of our mission to make visible and act against power structures that prevent people from living a dignified life where their human rights are respected.



IMPORTANT TO STAND UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

During the corona pandemic, human rights violations increased, as did the threat to those fighting for justice. In 2020, human rights activists in Colombia were praised for the ninth year in a row. With life at stake, they stand up for human rights. Recognising their work is important for peace in the country – not least given that threats and violence against human rights defenders in Colombia increased during the pandemic. The prize is awarded by Diakonia and Act Church of Sweden.

In Colombia, Act Church of Sweden works for a just and lasting peace, among other things, together with the Lutheran World Federation. We support those affected by the violence, but we are also fighting the root causes of the armed conflict. It is about

giving support to groups and people who try to influence those in power to take responsibility and inform people about what is happening.

– In Colombia, there is no death penalty, but being a human rights defender is like being sentenced to death. Defending your rights is the most dangerous thing you can do in this country, said Leyner Palacios when he received the award as this year's human rights defender.

To continue to pay attention to the situation of human rights defenders, demand protection and highlight the importance of their work are of utmost importance for a peaceful way forward.

"People have nowhere else to go than to the Church. We must be a free zone"



Photo: Magdalena Vogt/Ikon

THE CHURCH STANDS UP FOR THOSE WITH A LESSER VOICE

"If you stand up for justice and peace, you will end up in the line of fire. But we cannot give up! We must continue. The Church must stand up for those with a lesser voice. People have nowhere else to go. We must be a free zone."

Ramil Aguilar is a priest in Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI). The Church is characterised by a strong social commitment to vulnerable groups and fights vigorously against systematic injustices in the Philippines. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, there have been alarming reports from organisations and churches in the Philippines about executions, arrests and abuses, not least against children. People's freedoms and rights were severely curtailed, and the lockdowns led to increased unemployment and poverty.

– People have nowhere else to go but to

the Church. We must be a free zone, says Ramil Aguilar.

Ramil and his colleagues have handed out thousands of food rations during the pandemic, and several times the Christian churches have organised rallies against police brutality and indiscriminate violence.

– Because of our commitment to human rights, we are often called "terrorists" and "villains", Ramil explains. Such slogans have also been scrawled on the outside of our church walls. Fully armed police regularly visit our services to intimidate, and

they also guard our bishops and leaders. If you stand up for justice and peace, you will end up in the line of fire. But we cannot give up! We must continue.

– The IFI Church is part of a network of Christian churches that together reach about 12 million people. But they must be given resources and the opportunity to work. Act Church of Sweden has a strategic and financial collaboration with Christian churches and with three local children's rights organisations that work with the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a basis.

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY WORK IN SWEDEN 2020

- Act Church of Sweden has submitted a long series of debate articles in 2020 and taken the initial steps to draw attention to the indirect effects of the Covid pandemic on vulnerable people in Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America. Our partners' testimony of how violence against women has increased in the wake of the pandemic, the so-called shadow pandemic, has been highlighted several times.
- During the year, Act Church of Sweden participated in a number of meetings at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida and, among other things, provided views on developing a new Swedish strategy for humanitarian aid through Sida. Above all, we have pursued a stronger link between long-term development cooperation, peace-building and humanitarian action, that local actors' contributions to humanitarian work should be prioritised in the strategy, and that sexual and reproductive health should be integrated into humanitarian action. Happily, much of our contribution is reflected in the adopted strategy.
- During the year, Act Church of Sweden contributed material to both the Social Democrats' and the Centre Party's ongoing work to revise its policy on international development. A proposal for an approach with focus on the development aid included in the January Agreement has also been presented.
- Both Almedalen and Bokmässan were cancelled due to the pandemic, but Act Church of Sweden co-arranged several public webinars during the year under the heading Restart the world – where various aspects of the consequences of and recovery after Covid-19 were discussed.
- At the beginning of the year, a round table meeting was arranged on the role of religious actors in a shrinking democratic space where politicians and other Swedish decision-makers were given the opportunity to share experiences from Act Church of Sweden partner organisations in Tanzania, Colombia, Lebanon and India.
- Act Church of Sweden contributed to two international reports on the intersection between, on the one hand, freedom of religion and belief, and on the other hand, equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This is an important area, partly because the right to religious freedom is sometimes used incorrectly to set religious values in conflict with certain rights, especially for women and LGBTQ people.
- Act Church of Sweden contributed to the discussion on how aid can be used to mobilise private investment in development, so-called mixed financing, by, among other things, publishing a report and participating in consultations on international guidelines in the field.
- Act Church of Sweden helped to draw attention to the sharply deteriorating debt situation that many countries have found themselves in due to the Covid crisis, by supporting several international appeals. Act Church of Sweden was also involved in arranging a Nordic hearing on the issue, in which Swedish members of parliament and the Foreign Ministry's political leadership participated.
- By contributing to the Swedish Mission Council's report Claiming Space for Faith, Act Church of Sweden has contributed to drawing attention to the fact that freedom of religion and belief is absolutely crucial for democracy.
- Act Church of Sweden has participated in the Take Action campaign, through which a number of organisations, trade unions and companies have demanded that the government introduce legislation that ensures that companies respect human rights in all their activities.

Photo: Gustaf Helsing/Ikon



A VOICE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The world is facing enormous challenges. The pandemic is not only a health crisis but also a social, economic and humanitarian crisis affecting the most vulnerable. The year 2020 showed us how interconnected and unequal the world is, and the important role of development aid in meeting the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The year 2020 was supposed to be a year for women's rights and a follow up to the Beijing Conference. But the super year for gender equality was postponed, like many other meetings within, among others, the UN system.

But we didn't cancel. We changed!

New digital arenas emerged in 2020, and we saw new opportunities to influence in areas that Act Church of Sweden has worked with in the long-term. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, humanitarian issues, gender equality, development assistance funding and social protection ended up high on the development policy agenda. Based on our unique breadth and anchorage, we became an important dialogue partner to, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sida on these matters.

A record-breaking transition to a digital way of working created new opportunities for dialogue and advocacy work. Many actors and decision-makers became more accessible, and the digital form of meetings meant that more people could participate, and more voices could be heard. But not all people have access to, for example, internet connection and other tools that are prerequisites for active participation.

Act Church of Sweden wants to continue to be a prophetic voice for human dignity and human rights. We have a committed movement, competence and a network to be just that. As the democratic space diminishes in many countries, faith-based organisations are an important voice that can stand up for democracy, a fair distribution of resources and for everyone's right to a dignified life.



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon

Eva Ekelund,
Policy Director

EXAMPLES OF INTERVENTIONS GLOBALLY 2020

- For the ninth year in a row, Act Church of Sweden and Diaconia, with the support of the Swedish government, awarded the National Prize in Defence of Human Rights in Colombia. For peace in the country, it is important to recognise the work of human rights defenders – not least given that threats and violence against them have increased during the pandemic.
- Together with UN Women (UN Gender Equality Unit) and both religious and secular gender equality and women's rights organisations, Act Church of Sweden launched the international campaign for equal family law, The Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law, in the spring.
- Together with ACT EU, Act Church of Sweden has, in two reports, examined the EU's international climate support. Larger investments are called for, especially for climate adaptation in the most affected poor countries, as such support today is decreasing instead of increasing.
- Together with other organisations active in Myanmar, Act Church of Sweden has conducted a dialogue with the international democracy institute, IDEA. The organisations have done this due to IDEA uncritically contributing to a mobile app ahead of the elections in Myanmar in November. The app contained derogatory words and discriminatory statements about candidates from Rohingya.
- For the fifth time, an advocacy training was co-arranged on how to use the Women's Commission's national reviews and other UN processes, to drive women's rights forward. The course is aimed at faith-based organisations. When the course was conducted digitally for the first time now, 80 people from all over the world participated.

FUNDRAISING AND MOBILISATION

– together we make a difference!

Despite the corona pandemic and restrictions, the local involvement in 2020 in Sweden was large. The past year was proof that we can change, and that people provide support in the most fantastic ways in times of crises. The congregations have always been, and are, the basis of our international work.

In 2020, collections and gifts accounted for 32% of total revenues. These gifts are a prerequisite for our partners to be able to conduct their work. The fact that people share their resources is a clear signal of a strong commitment. For many, giving is a concrete way to put their faith into action. For Act Church of Sweden, a strong self-financing and broad popular support also creates opportunities to receive support from major financiers.

To increase commitment to international issues, the congregations organise sewing groups, fundraisers, study circles and

other activities. Great emphasis is placed on the annual fundraising campaigns: the Christmas fundraiser and the Lent campaign. In addition to all parishes, Act Church of Sweden has more than 100,000 individual donors who donate regularly.

In 2020, private donations increased, as did grants from dioceses and congregations. At the same time, collections and revenues from fundraising activities decreased due to restrictions linked to the pandemic. Many activities were converted to digital formats, while some were cancelled.

CONTROL OF OUR FUNDRAISING WORK

Act Church of Sweden:

- has a 90-account and is controlled by the Swedish Fundraising Control. The 90-account is a clear guarantee that you as a donor contribute to a serious and responsible organisation.
- is a member of Giva Sverige (the Swedish Fundraising Association). Giva Sweden works for safe giving, and an ethical and professional fundraiser, which includes quality assurance: through a qualified quality support that all members report on, competence development and advocacy work.
- Act Church of Sweden is on the Donor Guide's green list. The donor guide assesses fundraising organisations from a donor perspective.

130 000 INDIVIDUAL DONORS DURING 2020*

*During 2019, the number was 113 000

SEK 154,5 MILLION

FUNDS RAISED 2020

Photo: Deborah Rossouw/Ikon

THE LENT CAMPAIGN 2020 "STAND COURAGEOUS"

The 2020 Lent campaign drew attention to the right of all people to live a life free from violence and highlighted our partners' persistent fight for human rights. The campaign raised:

SEK 24,4 MILLION

(SEK 30,6 million 2019)

Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT

CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN 2020 "BREAK A TRADITION"

The 2020 Christmas collection focused on the oppression and violence that many girls are exposed to, just because they are girls. Traditions that deprive girls and women of the right to their bodies and their lives must be broken. The campaign raised:

SEK 36,5 MILLION

(SEK 42,6 million 2019)



2020 – A DIFFERENT KIND OF YEAR

In 2020, our work was dominated by Covid-19, something that affected us at all levels. Not least the work of fundraising and commitment.

We did not cancel. We adjusted!

The corona restrictions made it difficult for many of the fundraising activities that parishes usually organise in connection with our fundraising campaigns. But thanks to a fantastic commitment and great ingenuity, many regular fundraising activities were replaced by creative initiatives. Many of the activities were converted to digital formats; concerts via Facebook, live services and walk around quizzes via mobiles were just a few examples.

ALLA UNDER



During our campaigns,
thousands of volunteers
got involved to promote
our international work

TOGETHER WE ARE A FORCE OF CHANGE TO COUNT ON

In 2020, Act Church of Sweden had 3,411 representatives, interested parties and coordinators registered and 67 Agera volunteers in seven local groups. Together, we make a difference!

In 2020, we trained 30 new Agera volunteers and organised digital study circles and continuing education on the themes of gender justice and climate justice.

We also held network meetings and digital training for coordinators as well as webinars with our international partners and seconded employees.

DIGITAL EFFORTS WITH #KAFFEMEDHOPP

To spread hope and provide support to people affected by the corona pandemic, we started #Kaffemedhopp in 2020. The idea is simple and involves inviting friends to a digital coffee and at the same time donating any amount, a way to make the coffee extra good.

#kaffemedhopp resulted in new donors, mainly via swish. By broadening our target groups and gaining an increased outreach – we reach out and can get more people to contribute to our vital work.

HOW DOES ONE STAY AT HOME WITHOUT A HOME? Summer campaign 2020

During the summer of 2020, a digital fundraising campaign was initiated, focusing on the people who were hit particularly hard by the consequences of the pandemic.

The campaign was also a complement to other fundraising campaigns, which, due to the current situation, did not reach the results we could have expected under normal circumstances.

TOTAL RESULTS: SEK 35,7 MILLION

Photo: Deborah Rossouw/Ikon

DIGITAL MEETINGS BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP AND AGERA VOLUNTEERS IN SWEDEN



Covid-19, future dreams and what it is like to be a young adult – these were some of the issues that were discussed the first time young people from Sweden and Kakuma in Kenya met digitally. In the autumn of 2020, a pilot project was started in the form of a digital exchange between young people in Sweden and Kakuma in Kenya, where Act Church of Sweden's partner Lutheran World

Federation (LWF) works. The purpose of these meetings is to create a platform for meetings and get to know young people from a different context, but also to inspire and motivate each other to think bigger than their own context, dream big and develop into active citizens who want to create positive change.

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

'Children of the World' is Radiohjälpen's largest fundraiser and is carried out by Swedish Television and Swedish Radio P4 in collaboration with 13 Swedish organisations. Act Church of Sweden participates in Children of the World to take a stand for children's rights, together with other actors.

In 2020, SEK 73.5 million was raised for Children of the World, gifts that are needed more than ever to secure children's right to health, school and security. Just over SEK 8 million went to Act Church of Sweden's projects in Myanmar, Somalia and Ethiopia. Many of the Church of Sweden's congregations contributed to the collection by organising creative and corona-adapted activities such as harvest parties, lotteries, bread sales and choir performances.

Marathon runner and Act Church of Sweden's ambassador Håkan Jonsson ran through Halland for Children of the World. Lotta Schelin, Erik Lysén, Bishop Susanne Rappman, and several employees from various parishes also participated in the first leg.



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon



She claimed the right to her own choices.

THE SWEDISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS IMPORTANT FIGHT

Between 2006 and 2020, Act Church of Sweden has had a collaboration with the Swedish Football Association, where common values about the equal value of all people have been a starting point. Among other things, the collaboration has been made visible in the campaign "Vital football", where football is highlighted as a strengthening force for refugee children. During the Christmas fundraiser in 2020, the Swedish Football Association manifested its support for all girls' right to a dignified life, in freedom from violence and abuse. The men's national team's head coach Janne Andersson and several players drew attention to the importance of breaking harmful traditions that form the basis for violence against women and girls.

Zečira Mušović, football player, Women's team



WE REACH OUT

ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN WITH MUSIKHJÄLPEN

On December 15, Jessica Lindberg Dik, Act Church of Sweden's regional representative in Jerusalem, visited Musikhjälpen. The theme for Musikhjälpen 2020 was "No person should be left without care". Jessica was interviewed live about the important work being done at Augusta Victoria Hospital; a work that Act Church of Sweden has supported for a long time. Children with cancer from the West Bank and Gaza come to

Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem to be treated as there are no hospitals in Palestinian areas. Augusta Victoria Hospital is vital for thousands of Palestinian children, but special permission is required to cross the border. Because of the restrictions due to the corona pandemic, it has become even more difficult to move across the border.



MEDIA STRENGTHENS IMPORTANT MESSAGE

In 2020, Act Church of Sweden made more appearances in the media than in previous years. Several different magazines published editorial articles about the work done by Act Church of Sweden. The articles about our work are valuable as they reach a very broad target group of people.

For example, Ica Kuriren and Hemmets journal published two longer articles about Act Church of Sweden's and our partners' work for girls' rights in connection with the Christmas collection 2020.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN FOCUS

In 2020, the corona pandemic greatly affected our mobilisation and fundraising activities.

The digital development was accelerated and we developed, among other things, two successful digital fundraising activities; #kaffemedhopp and a collaboration with Tradera for digital auctions. Many activities could be carried out digitally, but not all – for example, collective donation within the framework of fundraising activities and collection in the parishes. At the same time as gifts from collections and fundraising activities declined, private donations increased. The result of the total gifts in 2020 was just over SEK 154 million, approximately SEK 37 million below our target.

Many physical meetings were replaced by digital ones, something that created new arenas and platforms. Among other things, we held webinars with international partners, which created a closer contact between our partners and those involved in Sweden. Prior to the Christmas fundraiser, a webinar was held with partners in India, Tanzania and Palestine with a focus on girls' rights. During the autumn, there was also a digital exchange between ACT volunteers and young people from

the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. A physical meeting would probably have never taken place, but the digital transformation showed the way for new forms of meeting. Webinars are something we will continue to work with and develop in the future to educate people about Act Church of Sweden's international aid and development work.

The long-term investment in communication to increase awareness of and trust in Act Church of Sweden yielded good results. The annual brand survey showed that both knowledge of and confidence in Act Church of Sweden increased in 2020 compared with 2019. We are very happy about this and will continue to work on it through our marketing communication.

The focus going forward is to further develop the digital communication and the digital fundraising and mobilisation activities and to get the best mix of digital and physical meetings. The latter not only to increase fundraising and mobilisation, but also to reduce our travels and thereby reduce our ecological footprint.



Marika Hjelm Siegwald,
Director of Fundraising, Mobilisation
and Market Communication

Photo: Robin Benigh

QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Act Church of Sweden strives for high quality in both our daily work and in our results. It is about getting into grips with the power balances that exist. Therefore, it is especially important that the rights holders, the people affected by the work, are at the centre.

The people we work for must be able to make their own decisions and participate in the work that affects their lives. They must also be able to express their views on our way of working if we do not fulfil our commitments.

We want to work for continuous improvement. Act Church of Sweden is certified according to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), which confirms that accountability is reflected in all international work and that continuous improvement work takes place.

The work with accountability and quality takes place in dialogue with our partners, to both develop good mechanisms for accountability and to strengthen the capacity to ensure openness and scrutiny of both ourselves and our partners. This applies to all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring.

We primarily want to contribute to our partners achieving their goals. This is done through a strengthened partnership with mutual accountability for quality and good systems for planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning.

WE SET GOALS ON DIFFERENT LEVELS:

- **Rights holders**
- **Partner**
- **Duty bearers**
- **Regional and international stakeholders**

OUR COMMITMENTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY ARE:

1. a human rights based approach
2. gender mainstreaming
3. promoting ecological sustainability
4. equal and mutually accountable partnership
5. transparency and participation
6. efficient, results based, and appropriate response and to do no harm
7. handling complaints
8. be a learning organisation
9. staff care and competency
10. the ACT Alliance's code of conduct for Members and the current Swedish requirements under the Swedish Fundraising Council, the Swedish Fundraising Control and the Swedish Public access to information principle.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS?

- We have goal-oriented programmes with rights holders at the centre and do regular follow-up on results.
- In the annual reporting process, we compile collected data and measure current developments. We do this with the help of "progress markers" to report achievements, outcomes and results against the overall goals. We are inspired, among other things, by the method "outcome harvesting" (collection of results) to measure behavioural changes and analyse results and development needs.
- We learn from our results and with the help of result matrices and strategic maps, we continuously adjust our journey towards the goals.
- We apply internal control systems and external auditing of our own and our partners' work.
- We develop and follow-up on capacity building plans with our partners.
- We have a complaints handling system and an anti-corruption policy.

HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS

Act Church of Sweden is committed to constantly improving the quality of our work and our accountability towards partners, target groups, donors, volunteers and the general public. All these groups have the right to comment and complain if Act Church of Sweden does not live up to its commitments.

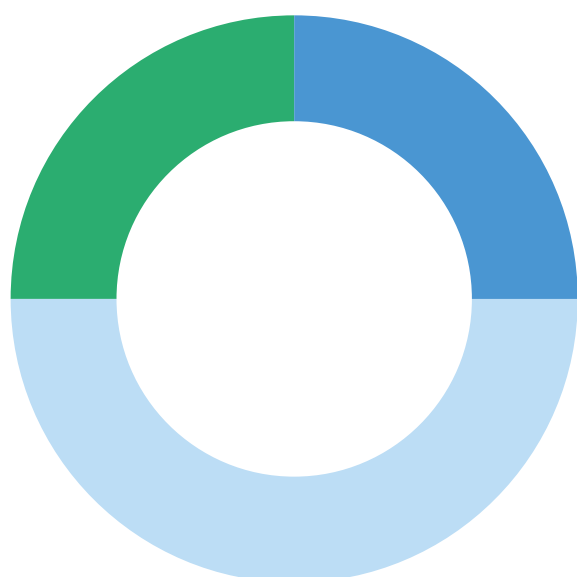
In this way, we can get better follow-up on how the international operations are working and what we need to do, which improves the results of our work. At the same time, it reduces the risk of inefficiency, misuse of power, or illegal use of the resources we manage.

In 2020, our complaints handling system received 25 complaints (compared with 21 the previous year), of which 16 were covered by the system's area of responsibility. A number of cases have been dealt with by or together with partners, in cases where they have a functioning complaints system. We have also worked closely with other members of the ACT Alliance to address reports and complaints. The work with incoming cases leads to learning, which continuously contributes to improving the quality of our activities.

During the second half of 2020, however, few reports were received, which may be due to the pandemic's consequences in the form of lockdowns, and which prompted us to take measures to enable us to catch any shortcomings in our or our partner's activities even in such circumstances.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES 2020

- We have participated in and carried out internal and external competence development of staff and partners.
- We have been active in the ACT Alliance and in sister organisations in Europe, where we have worked with competence development and exchange of experience. We have also participated in a panel in a global seminar on accountability and quality and partnership.
- We were elected to the board of the CHS Alliance. Our representative in ACT's Reference Group on Quality and Accountability has been chairman of the group during the year.
- We have developed a complaints function for the MIRP programme in Uganda.
- We have disseminated information about existing e-courses in complaint handling and code of conduct.
- We have strengthened the team for complaint handling by adding resources for capacity building and anti-corruption expertise.
- We have shown that we are constantly improving through an approved recertification, according to the CHS.



The complaints we have dealt with in 2020 have to do with the following:

- Corruption 25% (cf. 43% for 2019)
- Abuse of power by the management or staff 50% (cf. 24% for 2019)
- Deficiencies in processing at the Church of Sweden 0% (cf. 9% for 2019)
- Sexual harassment and sexual abuse 25% (cf. 24% for 2019)

LESSONS LEARNED AND SUCCESSES DURING 2020

In 2020, despite the corona pandemic, we achieved milestones we can be proud of and that affect our operations in a positive direction. Among other things, we renewed our certification against the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) 2020 – 2024, which is a seal of quality for the entire Act Church of Sweden. We also contributed to the launch and implementation of the ACT Alliance's Gender Equality Programme. In January, the first meeting was held with Act Church of Sweden's International Reference Group (IRG), which consists of representatives from our partners. We carried out a mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan and initiated a revision of it.

During the year, we also worked on renewing the partnership agreement with the EU Office for Humanitarian Aid ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations).

By collaborating with CHS auditor HQAI, we succeeded in achieving a more cost-effective handling of ECHO's audits, something that can also have a positive impact on other organisations seeking agreements with ECHO. Act Church of Sweden was also granted an ECHO application for Colombia and the framework. We also learned a lot from working from home and got to experience the positive, as well as more challenging sides of digitalisation. The digital way of working meant a more continuous dialogue with employees and partners in our programme countries. At the same time, there were some difficulties in following up our quality commitments in relation to partners and rights holders. This is because we could not visit the operations in our programme countries, nor meet physically.



Photo: Magnus Aronson /kon

Coleen Heemskerk,
International Director of Strategic Planning



Photo: Magnus Aronson /kon

The International Council 2018–2022

From left: Signe Wolf, Linda Larsson, Madelaine Erlandsson, Anders Åkerlund, Anki Erdmann, Åsa Ingårda, Kerstin Pihl, Lars Risberg, Celina Falk, Åke Bonnier, Mona Eriksson, Lisa Tegby, Agneta Brendt, Lars G Linder, Jan Olov Sundström and Erik Lysén. Missig are Karin Johannesson and Veronica Pålsson.



International Council's reference group.

The people in the group are (without order): Addisu Alamirew, Andrés Felipe Pacheco, Anabella Sibrián, Dahlia Al Mokdad, Edmund Yakani, Faith Lugazia, Isobel Frye, Kenneth Mtata, Gloria Mafule, Fidon Mwombeki, Ranjita Borgoary, Victoria Jean-Luis. Also in the picture: Eva Ekelund, Erik Lysén, Carolina Grelsson, Annika Lindé, Carin Gardbring, Lars-Ove Ljungberg, Lars G Linder and Jan-Olov Sundström.

HOW WE ARE GOVERNED

The Church of Sweden is a national church, open to everyone living in Sweden regardless of nationality. The Church of Sweden is governed by elected church politicians. The Church Board is the Church of Sweden's highest decision-making body when the Church Synod is not convened.

The Church Board and the International Council

The Church Board appoints the International Council, which coordinates and develops Act Church of Sweden. The council consists of 16 people (eight regular and eight deputies) of which 4 representatives are elected during the annual Conference of diocese volunteers for international commitment in the Church of Sweden. All members have full decision-making rights and are thus a unique example of how volunteerism takes place in formal bodies.

International reference group

The Church Board's International Council has associated with an international reference group. The reference group is composed

of representatives from partners to strengthen the analysis and anchor long-term goals and strategies. In January 2020, the international reference group visited Uppsala for its first meeting with the International Council.

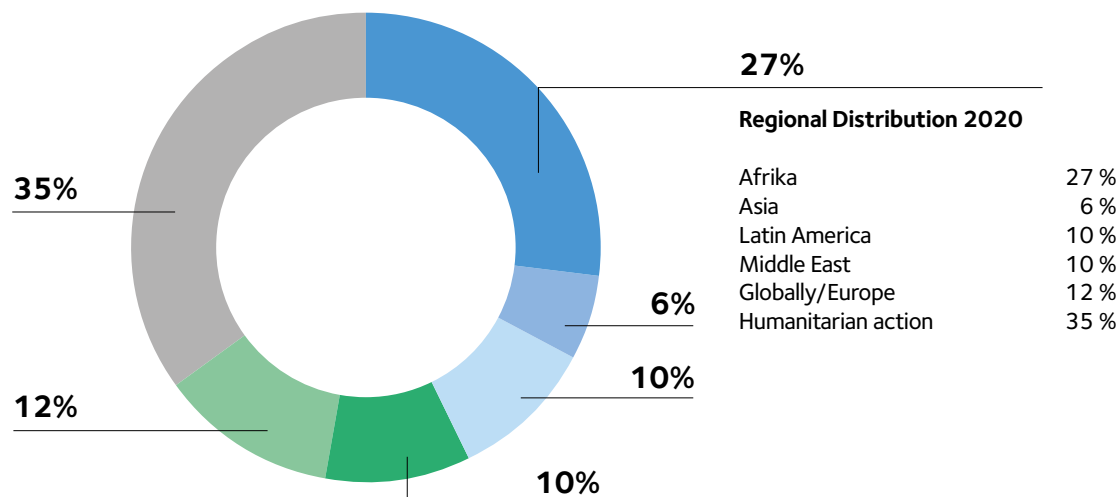
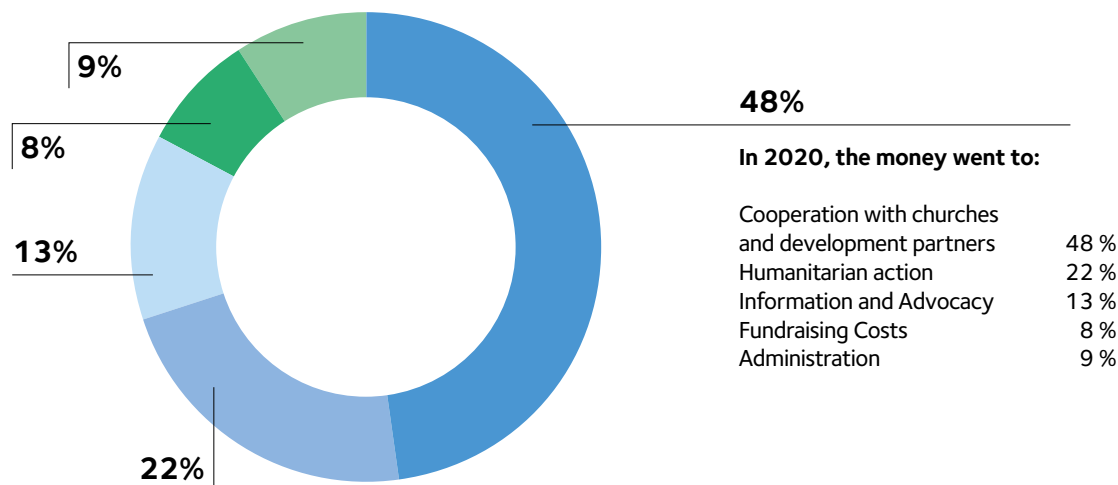
Employees

Act Church of Sweden employs circa 120 employees and ten regional representatives. Our work is coordinated and administered by the Church of Sweden's national level, whose office – the Central Church Office – is located in Uppsala. That is also where the international department and its management team are based.

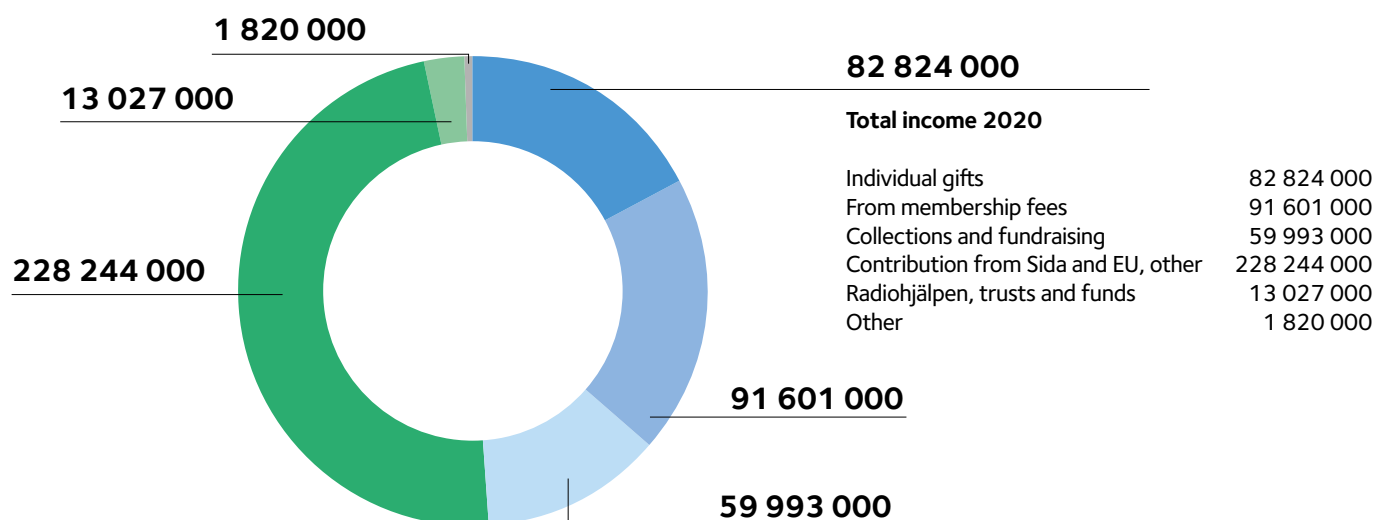
*Due to the corona pandemic, several of our regional representatives have worked with Sweden as a base during parts of 2020.

FINANCING

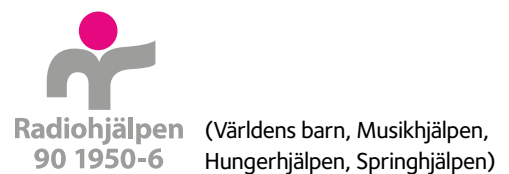
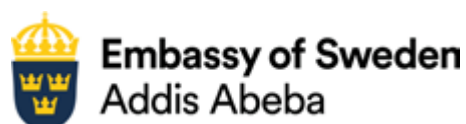
Act Church of Sweden's total operating costs for 2020 were SEK 398 976 000.



Act Church of Sweden's total income for 2020 was SEK 477 509 000.



EXTERNAL FINANCERS



Cover picture: Jesper Wahlström/Ikon

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