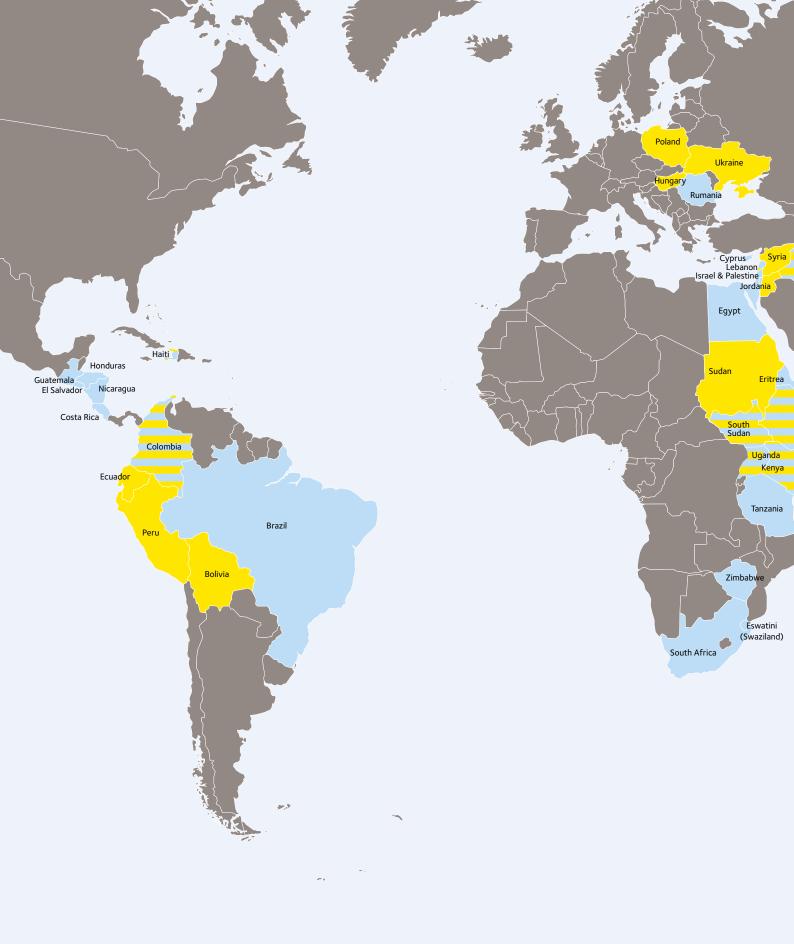
# Act Church of Sweden

## Annual Report 2022

Save lives Change lives Change the world

svenskakyrkan.se/act/en





#### During 2022, Act Church of Sweden has implemented:

- Humanitarian actions in 22 countries\*
- Long-term development work in 27 countries\*

\*Data compiled in December 2022



<mark>Ayanmar</mark> (Burma)

Philippine

Afghanistan

8

Ethiopia

Somalia

Pakistar

India

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 responds 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.

## HUMANISIM CARRIES THE WORK OF ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN

The other day, I received an email from one of those companies that sells ads on social media. The title of the email was 'Don't be ashamed that you are a humanist Erik'. I have learned to ignore these headlines, an eternal influx into my inbox.

But the words stuck this time. In a sense, they become a story about what we do in Act Church of Sweden, together with courageous partners around the world. This annual report is a story about humanists who stand up for human dignity, the integrity of Creation and a community-oriented church in a troubled time. It makes me proud. Humanists are indeed needed in our time. Both in our partner countries and in Sweden. In our context, humanism is grounded in both the mission's call to reach out to people with the joyful message of love, and in our Christian belief that all people are created in God's image, with infinite value.

Many people in the world are currently very vulnerable. Poverty and hunger are on the rise because of the coronavirus pandemic and the increase in food and fuel prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The number of refugees in the world is increasing every year, and the migration flows in Latin America and Africa show that people are fleeing to the EU and the USA with the hope of escaping poverty and oppression. But many of them do not enter our part of the world because of the restrictions we have introduced in migration policy at the EU level. It is true that it is complex, that there are many aspects of the issue that must be elucidated, but it is difficult to combine a restrictive refugee policy with a pronounced desire to reduce aid, when the needs are so great in the world.

But regardless of Sweden's and the EU countries' changing aid policies, the humanists in our churches and partner organisations continue to organise people for a more sustainable and fair development, for lasting peace and for women and girls to have the same place in church and society as men and boys. The annual report testifies to the results of this broad, humanistic effort. People's lives are saved in disasters; agricultural land and other natural areas are adapted to a changing, warm climate; women are taking up decision- making positions and men begin to question the masculine, patriarchal norms they were raised with. Human dignity and democratic institutions are defended everywhere.

Together with other members of the ACT Alliance, Act Church of Sweden's efforts include hundreds of thousands of people who are given a chance to survive and prepare for a better future. We also get to participate in training lay people and leaders for service in their churches, which is important for the churches' development and contribution to their communities. A recent report from the United Nations development agency, UNDP, shows that education, not least theological education, is one of the best tools to help religious communities, congregations and mosques resist simple, populist messages from authoritarian religious and political leaders.

We must always keep humanism alive. Its flame is needed at a time when many fear what the future will hold. Read Act Church of Sweden's annual report and be inspired by all the humanists who, instead of being afraid, commit themselves both to their neighbour and to our wounded planet. Your gifts keep the flame of humanism alive.



**Erik Lysén,** Director, Act Church of Sweden

"The Annual Report is a story about humanists that stand up for human dignity, the integrity of Creation and a community-oriented church in a troubled time."

Erik Lysén



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#### SAVE LIVES



### CHANGE THE WORLD



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikor

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

Act Church of Sweden is a faith-based aid and development actor and an integrated part of the Church of Sweden. Engagement in the congregations is a prerequisite for our work and reflects participation in a global movement and a worldwide church that we both influence and are influenced by. The work is mainly financed by funds raised from private donors, congregations and institutional donors.

Act Church of Sweden's work is based on theology and human rights. It is conducted on the basis of accepted principles for an effective development cooperation and humanitarian work. Some of them are the humanitarian principles, gender- integrated human rights-based approach and the Global Goals for sustainable development, which the UN Member States agreed on in Agenda 2030.

Together with churches, civil society organisations and thousands of volunteers around the world, we work long-term against poverty, oppression and injustice and respond quickly in the event of humanitarian disasters. We are part of a worldwide community and are driven by a belief in a God who takes a stand for those who are excluded or who live in poverty.

The strong ecumenical identity is expressed, among other things, through membership in the World Council of Churches, WCC; the Lutheran World Federation, LWF; and Action by Churches Together, the ACT Alliance.

It is part of our mission to make visible and act against power structures that prevent people from living a full life whether the structures are in society, within the Church, or within development aid. It also means holding ourselves accountable for the commitments we make and being the change we want to see in the world.

## actalliance





#### **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 the 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 global 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 130 countries and can work effectively, both for long- term development and in crisis situations.



Our faith leads us to action, and we act for every human being'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

We know that change will be lasting and sustainable if it is owned by the local communities where change takes place. That is why our work is carried out through and together with local organisations and churches around the world. We work with people who are present before, during and after a crisis or disaster. Our overall goal is for people to live in a just, sustainable and democratic community, strengthened by global solidarity, based on human rights. In a society that is characterised by a democratic- and human rights-based order, there is cooperation and accountability between different actors.

### **OUR GOVERNING VALUES**

#### FAITH AS A DRIVING FORCE

Faith gives us, and many of the individuals, sister churches and organisations we work with, inspiration, courage and strength to take a stand for people who live under threat, are silenced or live in poverty, and for what promotes life and hope for the future.

#### **EMPOWERMENT AND COMMITMENT**

We believe in people's inherent ability and capacity to act. People's own perspectives, living conditions and long-term development come into focus through meaningful participation. We support i ncreased autonomy and participation for groups and individuals who live in vulnerability. This means that privileged groups and individuals need to share the power they have.

#### **INTEGRITY OF CREATION**

God's creation is constantly renewed, and all life lives in mutual dependence. We want to work for sustainable development where no one is left out and people take responsibility for their lifestyle and impact on nature, climate and the environment.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

In order for human rights to be protected, respected and met, states and other actors, including religious actors, need to be held politically and legally accountable for their actions. People's ability to demand accountability is a necessary part of human rights-based work and in a democratic society.

#### **ECUMENICAL APPROACH**

Ecumenical cooperation with other churches is part of our identity. Ecumenism can be understood as the common housekeeping in relation to humanity's major issues such as peace, justice and the integrity of creation. Together we share faith, mission and experience and contribute with different abilities and resources. The ecumenical approach guides all our programmes.

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Based on situations where lives are threatened and people are silenced, we take a stand for what promotes life and hope for the future. To make it visible, both analysis of the surrounding world and intersectional analysis of power are required, which interact with the theological reflection. Every human being is created in the image of God, with the right to a life of dignity and to human rights as expressed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights conventions. Everyone, without distinction of any kind, is entitled to all human rights. Discrimination is unacceptable and no one should be left out.

#### DEMOCRATIC SPACE AND ORGANISATION

When people come together and organise, they have greater opportunities to promote their interests and demand their rights with a common voice. Increased organisation and strengthening of organisations in civil society is therefore always a goal of our work.



## WHAT WE WANT

Act Church of Sweden's activities focus on the resilience of local communities and the special conditions needed to achieve justice, sustainability and democracy. In our work, we have a particular focus on gender justice and equality.

#### Our contribution to a human rights-based order

These are Act Church of Sweden's priority target areas. They are based on the human rights-based order that we want to promote. We see the key role of civil society and the need to work methodically to achieve fair, sustainable and democratic local communities, strengthened by global solidarity and based on human rights.

- Development within planetary boundaries.
- People's right not to be discriminated against on the basis of gender in church and society is realised.
- People's right to freedom of religion and belief in church and society is realised.
- People's right to bodily and sexual integrity in church and society is realised.
- People's sexual and reproductive health and rights are realised.
- People's right to inclusive participation and security is realised.
- People's right to a sustainable livelihood is realised.

## WHAT WE DO

Act Church of Sweden's regional and country programmes are developed according to the local context and needs. People – the rights holders – are always in focus. Act Church of Sweden contributes to change through four strategic ways of working.

#### Mobilisation

People have a drive for engagement and for global solidarity. We contribute to the development of fair, sustainable and democratic local communities by mobilising resources and commitment for international development assistance of good quality and with rights holders at the center.

#### Capacity Development

Local actors have the power to act for human rights and human dignity in their contexts. We contribute to processes where people, organisations and society as a whole release, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time by being in dialogue and learning together with partners and rights holders. The work with capacity development includes strengthening local, organisational and thematic capacity as well as theological education and reflection.

#### Collaboration

Our ecumenical approach is based on the desire to collaborate for and participate in shaping the conditions for sustainable development together. We promote collaboration and coordination locally, regionally and globally by contributing to platforms for exchange and dialogue.

#### Advocacy Work

The possibilities for the fulfillment of human rights and the 2030 Agenda are affected by the decisions and frameworks of local, regional and global decision-makers. We contribute to change by conducting qualitative and long-term policy dialogue and opinion formation to influence political processes, attitudes and social norms.

#### ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S FIVE FOCUS AREAS

- Livelihoods and climate justice
- Gender Equality and Health
- Peace and Democracy
- Faith and Learning
- Humanitarian Actions

Read more on our website at: svenskakyrkan.se/act/en

## RELIGIOUS ACTORS HAVE POWER AND INFLUENCE

In large parts of the world, religion has power and influence over people's values and actions as well as society's norms and attitudes. Faith and religious beliefs can be used to guide, liberate and comfort, but unfortunately also to oppress, stigmatise and exploit people's vulnerability. That is why we as a church have a special responsibility to fight for equality and gender justice. Act Church of Sweden works together with churches and local actors to identify and strengthen interpretations of faith and traditions that contribute positively to the development of people and societies, and dare to challenge and question those who do not. To always stand up for human dignity is a matter of course in our Christian faith.



**Demanding accountability** is an important part of Act Church of Sweden's work and takes place, for example, through 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.

### **TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER VOICE**

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, through our membership and cooperation in the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the ACT Alliance. It gives us strength when we act.

Act Church of Sweden is part of several large alliances and networks. In international contexts, we work, among others, together with the Lutheran World Federation and within the World Council of Churches and the ACT Alliance. It provides great opportunities to influence the 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. On behalf of the UN, the LWF is also responsible for several large refugee camps in the world. The ACT Alliance, which stands for Action by Churches Together, has a local presence in more than 130 countries. Through these collaborations, we get a stronger voice of influence and act faster in the event of disasters, as well as more efficiently in the long- term development cooperation. The ACT Alliance has decided to focus on gender justice in the next few years, something that is also in line with the Church of Sweden's strategy.



**Peace work and increased radicalism.** In recent years, there has been a worrying development with increased radicalisation and violent extremism. The current religious context therefore needs to be included in peace and conflict analyses. Strengthening people's security, opportunities and autonomy to demand their human rights is an important part of Act Church of Sweden's work for peace. Peace work is rooted in international law, which includes human rights and international humanitarian law, and contributes to strengthening the tolerance and resilience of individuals and societies.



## SAVE LIVES

The humanitarian needs in the world continued to increase during 2022. Through local partners, Act Church of Sweden is often already present when a disaster occurs and can quickly mobilize resources where they are most needed. During 2022, we have, among other things, contributed to food, water, medicine, psychosocial support and protection for the most vulnerable.

In total, around 103 million people in the world are refugees, 222 million people are affected by hunger and the total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is estimated to be 339 million according to the UN. The increased needs are a consequence of worsening crisis situations due to an increased number of armed conflicts, extreme weather as a result of climate change and other forms of natural disasters. Crises that in the long-term also contribute to increased poverty globally.

Thanks to our cooperation within the ACT Alliance and with local partners, we are often already on the ground when a disaster occurs. In the humanitarian work, we always proceed from the humanitarian principles. This means, among other things, that people's needs determine who receives support, regardless of origin, religion or nationality.

During 2022, Act Church of Sweden carried out humanitarian efforts in 22 countries. We also provided support to 17 smaller disaster efforts via the ACT Rapid Response Fund, including Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Armenia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Brazil and Malawi. When disasters or crises strike, Act Church of Sweden's priority is to save lives and alleviate distress. In the emergency phase, it is about securing people's survival through access to food, water and shelter. At the same time, we want to ensure that the people affected are involved – right from the start. Cooperating with local actors gives us the opportunity to respond quickly in emergencies and at the same time ensure more long-term efforts to strengthen recovery and resilience of people and communities affected by crises.

In a humanitarian crisis, it is not only physical and material needs that need to be met. Psychosocial support, which contribute to strengthening people's empowerment and opportunities to recover after a crisis, are crucial for the interventions to be effective and sustainable. Act Church of Sweden works in accordance with The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) to ensure that the support is rights-based, relevant, and carried out in a responsible, safe and effective manner.

#### SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE FLEEING FROM THE WAR IN UKRAINE

When the war broke out in Ukraine, Act Church of Sweden's partner was one of the first organisations on the ground. Thanks to generous gifts, the distribution of food, hygiene items and other necessities, as well as financial contributions, has reached approximately 270,000 people in Ukraine, Hungary and Poland. The country that has received the most refugees from Ukraine is Poland. In 2022, Act Church of Sweden contributed to the opening of six reception centres in the country. The support at the reception centres meets both the material and psychosocial needs of people who have been forced to leave their homes. There, the refugees can get access to economic support and meaningful activities. Ninetyfive per cent of those who work in the reception centres are themselves from Ukraine.



Water distribution in Ukraine 2022.

#### FOOD AND CLEAN WATER TO THE HORN OF AFRICA





Draught in the Horn of Africa in 2022.

In 2022, the Horn of Africa was hit by the worst drought in 40 years, with over 36 million people being affected. Animals and livestock were also severely affected. Act Church of Sweden carried out emergency operations in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia above all. The efforts are about ensuring access to food and clean water for both -people and animals. Access to social safety nets, disaster risk reduction measures as well as education and psychosocial support are also included. Local expertise on the ground assesses what is most needed, which has included distributing food packages and restoring damaged wells and water sources. About 57,000 people have received food packages and clean water.



Flooding in Pakistan 2022

### MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE IN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

Pakistan was hit hard by extreme heat, and the parched ground was not able to soak up the huge amounts of water that came in subsequent rains. Melting glaciers also added to the amount of water and led to a third of the country ending up under water. Many people became homeless, and the risks of contaminated water and waterborne diseases increased. Pakistan is one of the countries in the world most affected by a changing climate, even though the country accounts for a minimal part of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Act Church of Sweden has provided support with money for food, medicines and in building up healthcare in affected areas. People have been trained in rebuilding housing to be more resilient to future floods.

Since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, the situation has been very difficult for organisations working there. Thanks to well-functioning networks, presence through our partners and great commitment from local actors, efforts have nevertheless been carried out.



## **CHANGE LIVES**

Sustainable change takes time to achieve and development is rarely linear. The global economic crisis in the wake of the corona pandemic and the war in Ukraine, together with the ongoing climate emergency, has created ever greater strains on societies and individuals. Extreme weather and natural disasters have contributed to further negative effects on food production. The geopolitical tensions have meant that more money is being spent on rearmament. Many years of hard work and progress for human rights and equality have been set back significantly. The world is facing enormous challenges – but also the opportunity to change to a fair and sustainable development.

A central part of Act Church of Sweden's strategy is to support local civil society organisations, so that they can contribute to change in their communities and manage risks to prevent conflict and climate crises from developing into large-scale disasters.

Crises and extreme weather events affect people in different ways and local communities have different conditions to deal with the effects. Local people and organisations are always the first responders. They are also the ones with the best local knowledge and the ones that remain afterwards. Act Church of Sweden works to build strong partnerships with local actors to support locally led efforts. This strengthens local capacity and cohesion and contributes to increased resilience of local communities.

Women often play a key role in relief efforts. Women and children often also make up the majority among refugees and other crisisaffected populations, but their efforts are all too rarely noticed. This means that they are often excluded from decision- making, where their knowledge can contribute to more effective crisis management. Act Church of Sweden works to ensure that women can participate on equal terms, especially regarding risk management. An important part of Act Church of Sweden's work for genderintegrated and human rights-based justice, sustainability and democracy is to promote local ownership. Methods to increase people's engagement and genuine participation are important. In our regional programmes, we contribute with capacity-building efforts based on the different and special conditions of local communities, with support for collaboration and access to financial conditions to implement desired projects to improve their situation.

In other words, we want to shift the power over the actions to the people who are affected by them.

During 2022, Act Church of Sweden implemented long-term development work in 27 countries.



## SEXUAL EDUCATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA EMPOWERS YOUNG WOMEN

Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries in Latin America for women to live in. In 2021 alone, 318 Honduran women were murdered. Discrimination against women is extensive, and women's sexual and reproductive rights are severely restricted. In 2022, Act Church of Sweden has continued the long-term development cooperation in Central America with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and sex education to empower young women over their own bodies. Act Church of Sweden works to strengthen the rights of women and girls in Honduras, above all through education. Religious arguments are often used to limit women's rights and to legitimise male dominance. Ana Ruth García Cárcamo, who works at Act Church of Sweden's local partner in Honduras, says that it is important to work based on faith and religious beliefs because 95 per cent of the Honduran population see themselves as believers.

– In our work, we use, among other things, biblical texts and theological stories that promote women's rights. This distinguishes us from other feminist organisations, says Ana Ruth. In Honduras, it is forbidden by law to talk about sexual rights. But by working with teachers, Act Church of Sweden's partners can influence the religious schools and educate the girls who go there. The girls are not used to talk about their bodies and often do not know how babies are conceived. The brave work strengthens women's power over their own bodies.

### "Act Church of Sweden works together with partners and religious leaders to build trust, community and achieve sustainable peace in Ethiopia."

#### INTER-RELIGIOUS COLLABORATION FOR PEACE IN ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, Act Church of Sweden works together with partners and religious leaders to build trust, community and achieve sustainable peace. During 2020–2022, Act Church of Sweden supported 33 peace committees with approximately 500 participants in total. The peace project has given people a platform to rebuild peace and trust after violent attacks erupted between ethnic groups and against Christians and Muslims. Violence erupted in 2020 in the West Arsi area of the Oromia region following the assassination of singer Hachalu Hundessa, who was a political voice of the Oromo ethnic group.

One of the cornerstones of the peace programme has been to increase understanding of the other's religion, and various theological aspects have been the starting point in the reconciliation work. Imam Sherik Ustaz Kamil and Orthodox priest Abba Tibebu were involved in a project funded by Act Church of Sweden. They decided to work together for a society that lives in peace, understanding and with respect for each other and each other's religions.



### SUSTAINABLE RESILIENCE AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP IN INDIA

The corona pandemic hit India hard. At the same time, the threat from climate change has also become increasingly visible. For example, the number of floods, cyclones, droughts and heat waves are increasing, leading to loss of life and major damage to houses, roads and sewers, among other things.

Minu Samaddar works to support and guide people in their socio-economic development and for greater equality. Until today, Minu has contributed to the formation of 42 self-help groups with a total of 504 members. In order to deal with the hunger problem, Act Church of Sweden works together with local actors to help people find livelihood opportunities. Many also receive support in learning about basic personal finances such as how a bank works, savings accounts, credit and loan options as well as rules for interest. Women are especially encouraged to work together in groups and take joint responsibility for



the economy so as not to end up alone in a vulnerable situation. By building resilience and local ownership, extra vulnerable groups and communities can rise stronger.

### SEXUAL EDUCATION IS A KEY ISSUE FOR GOOD HEALTH IN TANZANIA



In Tanzania, sexual education is not included in school education. Together with partners, Act Church of Sweden runs large national projects to spread knowledge and strengthen young people's sexual and reproductive health and empowerment. Act Church of Sweden supports, among other things, the project Vunja Ukimya, which means "breaking the silence". During 2022, the project taught 8,094 students in 65 schools sexual education. In connection with the observance of International Menstruation Day, 815 girls at ten schools were educated about menstruation. With better knowledge and work to break the menstrual taboo, more girls can avoid missing school and more girls and women can avoid health problems due to lack of hygiene items. Through the project eighty-four teenage mothers participated in trainings about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender-related violence and entrepreneurship. Eightyseven religious leaders have also received special training within SRHR.

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### TOGETHER WITH LOCAL PARTNERS, WE MEET DIFFICULT GLOBAL CHALLENGES

2022 was the year when the war found its way into Europe, with Russia's aggressions against Ukraine. Several million people have since had to flee Ukraine to find a safer existence in neighboring countries or in other countries in Europe. Act Church of Sweden responded rapidly with vital support in the form of, among other things, food and clean water, but also education and psychosocial support. We have also supported local churches on the ground in the region to be able to receive and support displaced people.

2022 was also the year when humanitarian disasters in other parts of the world occurred one after another. The drought in the Horn of Africa was the most severe in many years, and in Pakistan, the heat reached record levels, which paradoxically led to heavy flooding. As the climate gets warmer, natural disasters escalate, which in turn leads to famine and hunger, and people losing their homes and livelihoods. Act Church of Sweden's work for climate justice is more important than ever, especially as climate change is hitting already vulnerable people in the world.

In addition to all this, we also see an increasing repressive policy and a high degree of use of force in many of the countries where we operate. Respect for human rights is weakening, and many people live in conflict or are displaced by conflict. Climate change and the lack of democracy have continued to be some of the most important problems in our programme countries.

Act Church of Sweden supports several locally led efforts in our programme regions, together with local partners. One of the methods we apply, Survivor and Community Led Responses, (sclr), means that Act Church of Sweden supports villages, local communities and other local actors to plan, prioritise and implement initiatives that benefit and develop their own society. We have seen fantastic results



from this. Among other things, the role of women has been strengthened, which has contributed positively to the entire local community. The inhabitants become actors rather than passive recipients of aid guided by the priorities of international organisations. In the Middle East, for example, Act Church of Sweden has several ongoing initiatives within the framework of this method, including in Palestine and Lebanon.

Another gratifying work is the peace project described from Ethiopia. Here, as a church, we have an important role in the interaction between religious actors to build trust, understanding and respect for the other. We also see examples of this in Tanzania, where we collaborate with religious leaders in the work with education in sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The great need for humanitarian support, the lack of respect for human rights, continued conflicts and an escalating climate crisis make the work of our partners even more important. So, with the support of Act Church of Sweden, we can together contribute to a more just and sustainable future! Karin Axelsson Zaar, Head of section for Partner Collaboration, Act Church of Sweden



## **CHANGE THE WORLD**

In 2022, Act Church of Sweden's advocacy work was affected by the war in Ukraine and its consequences in various parts of the world, but also by the parliamentary elections. The decision to have a fund to compensate countries and people suffering loss and damage from climate change was the only success at an otherwise gloomy climate summit in Egypt. Act Church of Sweden continued to work for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), equal family rights, social security for all, and peace and democratic development in Myanmar, Guatemala and Colombia, among others.

There is talk today of a decolonisation of aid. Many organisations in the south point out that aid is still characterised by unequal relations where the donors dictate the terms. It is therefore important to transfer power to local organisations and to people living in poverty. Act Church of Sweden develop new and more equal cooperative relationships, we push the issue within the ACT alliance, and we participate in the international discussion about developing new and more equal and reciprocal forms of international solidarity and cooperation "beyond aid".

We want to change the world by influencing those in power locally, regionally and globally to make decisions that respect people's dignity and protect human rights. "The Swedish society came together to mobilise for Sweden to continue to show solidarity with vulnerable people in the world."

#### **OPINION-FORMING CAMPAIGNS FOR AID**

In 2022, a couple of parties in Sweden's Parliament went to the polls promising cuts in Sweden's international aid. After the war in Ukraine broke out, the government, at the time, also froze the payments of more than nine billion SEK from the year's aid budget, in order to finance an expected reception of refugees from Ukraine.

Together with the organisations PMU, the Swedish Mission Council and Diakonia, Act Church of Sweden initiated an opinion- forming campaign to all parties in the Parliament to strengthen Sweden's commitment to provide international aid. A number of church leaders were mobilised in the work, which went under the heading "One hundredth for the world", that is, Sweden should continue to contribute one hundredth of our country's common resources (one per cent of gross national income, GNI) to international aid.

In parallel, Act Church of Sweden, together with other organisations in the Concord network, started the campaign Save aid. The Swedish society came together to mobilise for Sweden to continue to show solidarity with vulnerable people in the world and demanded, before the election, a promise from politicians to give at least one per cent of the GNI in aid to people living in poverty and oppression.



Ad from the campaign "Save Aid" that Act Church of Sweden was a part of before the election in 2022.

## THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH MOBILIZES FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

After the corona pandemic, the world has opened up to participation in the global influence arenas again. The World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the ACT Alliance bring their members together in ecumenical delegations, allowing local organisations and churches to access the negotiation rooms and make their voices heard. The ecumenical organisations have consultative status before the UN, which also gives Act Church of Sweden access to negotiations and decision-makers, both before, during and after the UN meetings.

Two of the areas that Act Church of Sweden prioritises in its advoacy work, in Sweden and globally, are climate justice and gender equality, and often in combination. Act Church of Sweden actively participates in the UN's climate negotiations. We do this through ecumenical delegations, where young people, church leaders, experts and committed people negotiate, protest, celebrate worship and make clear demands for compliance with international commitments.

In 2022, Act Church of Sweden was represented at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt by, among others, Bishop Andreas Holmberg from the Stockholm diocese. Hopes for the summit were low, and the results mostly disappointing. Global ambitions are insufficient, emissions are increasing and global warming continues. The commitments to finance the adaptation of countries and people to climate change are not fulfilled. At the meeting in Egypt, there was great frustration that if the global warming is not stopped, then in the end it will not be possible to adapt to it. At COP27, lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry were more prominent than ever before and gender equality ambitions went backwards.

In the global ecumenical delegation, the demand was raised that people and communities who suffer losses and damages in connection with climate crises should have the right to financial support. The requirement contributed to the historically important decision to establish a common financing mechanism for losses and damages. At a side event, Act Church of Sweden launched a new document on the role work, and also presented the document to the Swedish chief negotiator. It was encouraging to see how the ecumenical movement succeeds in bringing together technical expertise, environmental activists, youth representatives,



During COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Act Church of Sweden through Bishop Andreas Holmberg, Diocese of Stockholm, handed over a new publication to Sweden's chief negotiator for climate issues, Mattias Frumerie. The writing is about how social security needs to be one of the tools for climate justice.

local organisations and senior church leaders. The collective voice of religious representatives, people affected by climate change and an impatient and knowledgeable youth movement opens the door for dialogues with decision-makers. It also arouses the interest and curiosity of other interested parties. We have something to say. It gives hope. The only thing we cannot do is to be silent. We have the courage not to give up.



Eva Ekelund, Deputy director, Act Church of Sweden

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## **EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY WORK IN SWEDEN 2022**

- Act Church of Sweden drew attention to the effects of the sharp cuts in aid that the government decided on in April, to finance a large expected reception of refugees from Ukraine. Through letters, attendance, debate articles and other opinion building, as well as testimonies from partner organisations, we contributed to the issue receiving a lot of attention in the media and to a total of 4.2 billion being returned to aid.
- Shortly after the parliamentary elections, we published our aid policy priorities for aid and development policy during the new mandate period: A policy for the world.
- The importance of Sweden's continued support for the peace process in Colombia was highlighted through a series of meetings between Swedish decisionmakers, including then Foreign Minister Ann Linde, and human rights defenders and peace actors from Colombia. The meetings were held in connection with the 2021 recipient of the national human rights award visiting Sweden in June, when Colombian church leaders in October participated in the farewell ceremony for Archbishop Antje Jackelén and in a Parliament seminar on Colombia's truth commission. The Parliament seminar was arranged together with other organisations in the so-called Colombia group, and the national award for human rights is awarded annually, jointly by Act Church of Sweden, Diakonia and the Swedish Embassy in Colombia.
- Act Church of Sweden arranged a meeting between the foreign affairs committee and senior lawyers in Guatemala who are fighting corruption in the country at great personal risk. We also arranged a seminar with the lawyers together with the international democracy institute IDEA. We continued dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy in Guatemala about a repressive bill "for the protection of life and family" that was passed in March by the Guatemalan Congress. The proposal later fell when the president vetoed it.
- The situation for the civilian population and civil society in Myanmar is extremely difficult after the military coup in February 2021. We drew attention to Sweden's responsibility to support the population in Myanmar through two public seminars in collaboration with the Diocese of Stockholm as well as meetings between partners and decision-makers at Sida, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the parliament. Together with other organisations, we wrote an open letter to Foreign Minister Ann Linde that the EU should introduce new sanctions against Myanmar. This may have contributed to the EU later tightening the sanctions.
- Through dialogue with Sweden's climate negotiator and the Swedish board member of the green climate fund (green climate fund, GCF), Act Church of Sweden presented views on how Sweden's actions can contribute to climate justice and increase women's participation in climate work.

- By publishing two new so-called policy briefs in collaboration with other organisations and presenting them at public seminars, Act Church of Sweden contributed to increasing knowledge about the role social security needs to play in the work for gender equality and for climate justice.
- A round table discussion on the importance of aid and civil society for development and for companies' operations was held with representatives of several Swedish companies. Archbishop Antje Jackelén hosted the meeting, which was attended by companies that import goods from developing countries or have large international operations

## EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY WORK GLOBALLY 2022

- During the year, several important steps were taken in the work for equal family law. In many countries, the lives of women and girls are limited by discriminatory rules and laws relating to the family, including marriage and divorce, inheritance rights, domestic violence or the right to open a bank account. Together with the ACT alliance, among others, Act Church of Sweden organised a round table discussion on gender equality and religious family law in the Middle East and North Africa, in which several of our partner organisations participated. The meeting lays a good foundation for further work.
- Act Church of Sweden participated in the official Swedish delegation to the Women's Commission, the annual UN meeting on gender equality. We contributed to the engagement of the ACT Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches during the meeting, and arranged several side events. One of them was made together with the Swedish government. It was about how freedom of religion and belief can be used as a tool to promote – or oppose – sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and LGBTQ+ rights.
- Through the report Can a leopard change its spots? A critical analysis of the World Bank's "progressive universalism" approach to social protection Act Church of Sweden has contributed to advancing the positions in the international discussion on how support for social security systems should be designed. The World Bank is the completely dominant actor in the field and in the report we presented an in- depth analysis of the World Bank's working methods. Together with

other organisations, we contributed to strengthening writings about rightsbased and universal systems in central policy documents for the World Bank.

- As one of the founding members of the Global Public Investment Network, which was formed in connection with the UN General Assembly in September, Act Church of Sweden participated in the international discussion about how the future forms of international solidarity and cooperation "beyond aid" can become more equal and mutual. We also introduced the initiative for Global Public Investment at a seminar in Almedalen. The underlying principles are that all countries shall contribute to the cooperation, all shall benefit from it and all shall participate.
- During the UN's high-level political forum for the follow-up of Agenda 2030, Act Church of Sweden participated in the official Swedish delegation. The theme for this year's forum was building a better world after the corona pandemic. Act Church of Sweden monitored global goal number five, in particular, on gender equality as well as issues on family law, family norms, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and social security.
- Between November 25 and December 10, Act Church of Sweden participated in the annual global campaign 16 Days of Activism, which draws attention to the fact that gender-related violence against women is a violation of human rights. During the campaign, through a series of posts in social media, we drew attention to the important work of our partners globally to prevent and counteract men's violence against women.

- Act Church of Sweden participated in the official Swedish delegation to the Population Commission, which is the annual UN meeting on population issues including sexual and reproductive health and rights. The theme for the year was sustainable economic development, including social security, which is one of Act Church of Sweden's areas of expertise. We contributed to the engagement of the ACT Alliance during the meeting and spoke more times than any other civil society actor in the interactive dialogues. Act Church of Sweden has contributed to an increased recognition that religious actors have a great influence on norms and rules regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, and that in many countries they are responsible for a large part of health care.
- As the only Swedish civil society actor, and as the only faith-based actor, Act Church of Sweden contributed to a forthcoming UN report on violence and its impact on health. The contribution was based on information collected from a number of different partners in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America and focused on gender-related violence and how it has increased during the corona pandemic. The report is drawn up by the UN's special rapporteur for health.



## FUNDRAISING AND ENGAGEMENT

#### -together we make a difference!

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was the single biggest event that affected the fundraising results for Act Church of Sweden in 2022. Congregations, private donors and companies increased their donations greatly. The donations are a measure of an increased willingness to contribute to an urgent situation in the world.

During 2022, a total of SEK 237 million was raised. The Ukraine war created a great willingness to donate among congregations, private donors and companies. Specifically, SEK 30.4 million came in for the efforts in Ukraine and a total of SEK 55.8 million was collected for disaster efforts. The digital donations are increasingly important - in 2022, donations made through Swish tripled compared to 2021 and landed at SEK 23 million. In addition, 57,000 new donors came in via Swish and it is thus the channel where the most new donors come in. Income from parish activities and collections has also increased, partly because physical meetings can again take place in parishes after the corona pandemic. A clear sign that the commitment is strong is the record results from both the Lent campaign and the Christmas campaign.

People sharing their resources is a clear signal of a strong engagement. A strong

internal collection gives Act Church of Sweden both weight and a greater degree of independence when applying for support from institutional financiers. In the parishes, the international engagement is maintained through lectures, study circles and various activities in connection with the annual collection campaigns: the Christmas and the Lent campaigns.

During 2022, private giving increased by almost SEK 24 million. All gift income from parishes and dioceses increased, with the exception of diocesan grants, which in 2021 were record-breaking. Parish collections increased by just over SEK 10 million compared to the previous year and parish activities increased by just over SEK 17 million compared to 2021. Act Church of Sweden has 150,844 private donors. Of those, approximately 26,000 people are regular donors.

#### 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 are contributing to a serious and responsible organisation.
- is a member of Giva Sweden, which works for safe giving, quality assurance, education and competence development as well as interest policy with a focus on ethical, transparent and professional management of non-profit organisations.
- has the Safe Giving label, which is issued to organisations that meet all the requirements of Giva Sweden's quality code, which is proof that the organisation stands for quality and professionalism and that they collect in a safe, ethical and transparent manner.





## SEK 237 MILLION FUNDS RAISED 2022



### CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN 2022 - "BREAK A TRADITION"

The 2022 Christmas campaign raised the fight against harmful traditions, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation. It was a fund-raising record with a whopping SEK 52.9 million collected.

With strong engagement and great creativity on the part of the congregations, money was collected through, for example, Lucia concerts, live broadcasts, porridge lunches, platform coffee, Christmas markets, cake buffets, information tables, sit-in evenings and the sale of priest's cheese, crocheted items and home-baked goods. Gifts that made it possible to continue the work against harmful traditions such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other abuses against girls.

## **SEK 52.9 MILLION**

(SEK 46,4 million 2021)



## THE LENT CAMPAIGN 2022 -"SHARE EQUALLY UNDER THE SAME SKY"

During the Lent Campaign 2022, with the theme "Share equally under the same sky", there was a great engagement by the parishes with resourceful fundraising activities, such as winter baths, quiz, walks and bazaars. A total of SEK 61.6 million was collected, which was a new record for the Lent Campaign. Of the donations that came in during the Lent campaign, SEK 24 million were earmarked for those affected by the war in Ukraine. The result showed that, together with parishes and dioceses, we can make a big difference through all parish activities around the country. It showed that, together, we can promote a sustainable, fair food supply and a more equal democratic world.

## **SEK 61.6 MILLION**

(SEK 24.4 million 2021)

### **TOGETHER WE ARE A FORCE OF CHANGE**

During 2022, Act Church of Sweden together with Swedish Church Youth trained several new Act volunteers. At the end of the year, there were 84 registered volunteers in eleven local groups. Three physical meetings and three digital continuing education sessions were organised. During the year, thematic focus groups were started where the volunteers could get involved in issues close to their heart.



#### CHANGEMAKER OF THE YEAR IN SWEDEN – LULEÅ CATHEDRAL PARISH!

In 2022, the Luleå Cathedral parish was voted Changemaker of the Year in Sweden. The award is given as part of Act Church of Sweden's Make a Difference event, which occurs every two years. Luleå Cathedral parish won because their international engagement is made visible in both the parish instructions and through their collection for all people's right to a dignified life.



The jury's motivation for Luleå Cathedral Parish's finalist placement:

"With a view of the bay, the nominees create good rings on the water through their engagement in Act Church of Sweden. For SEK 10 per parishioner, they have received media attention and aroused willingness to donate even outside their own organisation. Their diligent work and strong anchoring is made visible in both the parish instructions and collection for all people's right to a dignified life".



#### ACT VOLUNTEERS

During 2022, many parishes and dioceses learned more about the work of Act Church of Sweden through visits from the Act volunteers. The Act volunteers also participated during Act Church of Sweden's event Make a difference 2022, by leading several workshops and participating in panel discussions.

The Act volunteers contributed to the 16 Days of Activism campaign, which is a global campaign to raise awareness of gender-based violence, ensure prevention measures and end gender-based violence and discrimination in all areas. This was done by talking about the campaign, spreading information and statistics, and calling for action on Twitter and other social media.

#### MARATHON ON MOUNT EVEREST

Act Church of Sweden's ambassador, 72-yearold doctor Håkan Jonsson, ran a marathon on the world's highest mountain at the end of May to raise money for Act Church of Sweden's activities. After two weeks of hiking, the start was at an altitude of approximately 5,500 metres. It was a tough marathon, but Håkan fought his way to the finish line and showed that even when it's difficult, we can keep fighting.



## ALL CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION -CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

The Children of the World is Radiohjälpen's largest fundraiser and is carried out by Swedish Television and Swedish Radio P4 in collaboration with 14 Swedish organisations. Act Church of Sweden had two projects in 2022 that received support from the Children of the World. One of the projects works for the inclusion of children with disabilities in refugee camps in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. The second



is a project in Myanmar where Act Church of Sweden works to ensure that children who are displaced get an education.

One of the places where we work to enable children with disabilities to go to school is the refugee camps in Dadaab in Kenya. Many have lived there for several generations. All children have the right to education but ensuring that children with disabilities get and can go to school is a big challenge. It becomes extra difficult for children living in refugee camps, where there are rarely resources for help equipment or adapted schooling.

The goal of the project is to ensure that the children have the opportunity to go to school as well as help equipment that can allow them to develop and give them, self-esteem and tools to create a future with income and security as adults. It concerns the children's right to be part of society and to give people who are close to the children, such as parents, teachers, guardians and civil servants, knowledge of children's rights.

## MEDIA STRENGTHENS IMPORTANT MESSAGE

During 2022, Act Church of Sweden's impact and visibility in the media increased by 50 per cent compared to the year before. Through articles, features and debate articles, we show the activities of Act Church of Sweden and raise important issues.

Opinion formation through the media is an important part of the work to get decision makers to act but also to influence attitudes in the church and in society.

During the year, Act Church of Sweden appeared in the media with questions about, among other things, the work in Ukraine and the new government's aid policy. We brought to attention that when aid funds are used to finance the reception of people fleeing Ukraine, other vulnerable

people around the world suffer from reduced support. We have written debate articles before the parliamentary elections, highlighting that Act Church of Sweden wants politicians to adhere to the promise that one per cent of GNI should go to aid.



Nyheter



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon



### **MAKE A DIFFERENCE 2022**

During the weekend of 1–2 October, Uppsala Konsert & Kongress was filled to the brim with vibrant engagement, life-giving praise and inspiring talks, workshops, lectures and panel discussions. Over 800 people from all over the country gathered to be inspired and to inspire each other in their commitment to Act Church of Sweden and to talk about the opportunities and challenges that the organisation and the movement face globally as well as nationally and locally.

Representatives from some of Act Church of Sweden's partner organisations were guests at the event. They audience got to listen to their reflections on how Act Church of Sweden can be part of a modern development aid.

When participants checked in to the event, they were given an outdoor candle and asked to write a prayer for peace and justice on it. During the evening, the candles were then lit and placed in formation outside the event venue. Activists from all over the country united in a common manifestation for peace and justice – an image that spread its light and defiant hope, accompanied by chants with the lyrics: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not won".

"Make a difference", which is a recurring event, is an important part of strengthening the commitment of Act Church of Sweden's people's movement in Sweden.

## **QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Act Church of Sweden strives for high quality in both the daily work and in our results. It is about correcting the power imbalances that exist. We want to transfer power to local organisations and to people living in vulnerability and poverty. That is why it is especially important that the people who are affected by our work are at the centre. Our commitments must be clear and known, and it must be easy to complain if Act Church of Sweden does not live up to our commitments.

The people we work with must be able to make decisions about and participate in the work that affects their lives. They must also be able to put forward views on our way of working if we do not fulfill our commitments. We work for continuous improvement. Act Church of Sweden is certified according to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), which confirms that accountability is reflected in our operations and that continuous improvement takes place. The work with accountability and quality takes place in dialogue with our partners partly to develop good mechanisms for accountability and partly to strengthen the capacity to ensure transparency and review of both ourselves and our partners. This applies to all stages of planning, implementation and follow-up.

Act Church of Sweden wants to contribute to our partners achieving their goals. This happens through a strengthened partnership, with mutual responsibility for quality and good systems for planning, follow-up, evaluation and learning.



#### WE SET GOALS ON DIFFERENT LEVELS:

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

## OUR COMMITMENTS TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY ARE:

- 1. to work in a human rights manner.
- 2. to integrate gender.
- 3. to promote ecological sustainability.
- 4. to work in partnership and reciprocity.
- 5. to work openly, transparently, and promote participation.
- to contribute with effective, results-based, relevant and conflict sensitive support.
- 7. to handle complaints.
- 8. to be a learning organisation.
- 9. to provide support for staff and skills development.
- 10. to follow Act Church of Sweden's Code of Conduct and current Swedish requirements from the industry organisation Giva Sverige and the Swedish Fundraising Control as well as the principle of openness.

#### HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS?

- We have goal-oriented programmes with rights holders in 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 both internal control systems and external auditing through, among other things, audits and evaluations of our own and our partners' work.
- We develop and follow-up on capacity building plans with partners.
- We have a complaints handling system, policies for, among other things, anti-corruption and a code of conduct.

#### HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS 2022

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

In this way, we can quickly become aware of how the work is functioning and what we have to fix. It helps us improve operations and the results of our work. At the same time, it reduces the risk of inefficiency, abuse of power or illegal use of the resources we have been entrusted to manage.

In 2022, our complaints handling system received 22 reports (the same number as the year before). Of those, 17 were within the function's area of responsibility, while the other five cases did not relate to the work of Act Church of Sweden or our partners. Collaborators have dealt with several cases and reported to Act Church of Sweden on how they have handled the complaints. In our new agreements with partners, we have clarified the necessity for partners themselves to have both a code of conduct and their own systems for handling complaints.





The International Council Reference Group. Back row from the left: Andrés Pacheco, Isobel Frye, Faith Lugazia, Anabella Sibrian and Victoria Jean-Louise. Sitting from the left: Gloria Mafole, Addisu Alamirew, Ranjita Borgoary and Fidon Mwombeki. Missing: Dalia Al Mokdad, Edmund Yakani, Jenifer Jag Jivan, Kenneth Mtata and Omar Haramy.

## **HOW WE ARE GOVERNED**

The Church of Sweden is a national church that 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 Curch synod is the highest decisionmaking body of the Church of Sweden. The Church Board appoints an International Council whose task is to be responsible for the international activities of the Church of Sweden. The council must follow the operation's implementation, assess the results of the efforts and conduct follow-ups of the adopted goals.

#### International Department

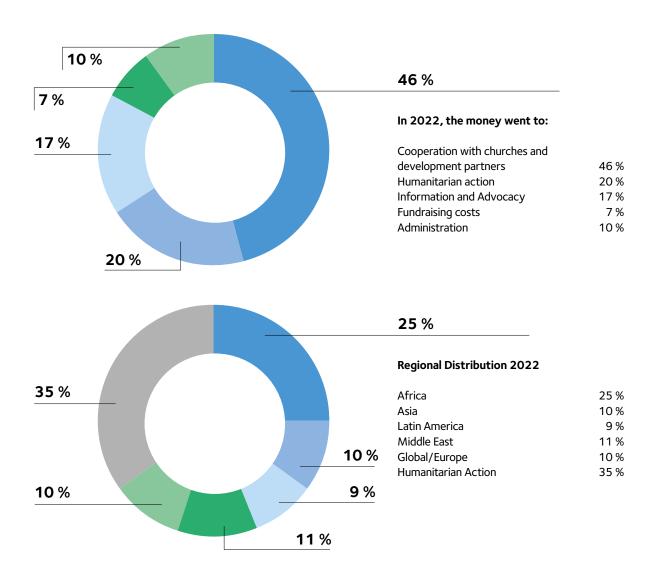
The international department at the national level is responsible for the Church of Sweden's work with international mission and diaconia and the partner relationships this entails. It is about advocacy work, policy dialogue, the programme activities locally around the world and the collaboration with the ACT alliance, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches, within the framework of our strategic plan. It also includes work for awareness, engagement and mobilisation in Sweden and external funding through institutional funding and collected funds or national collections.

#### International reference group

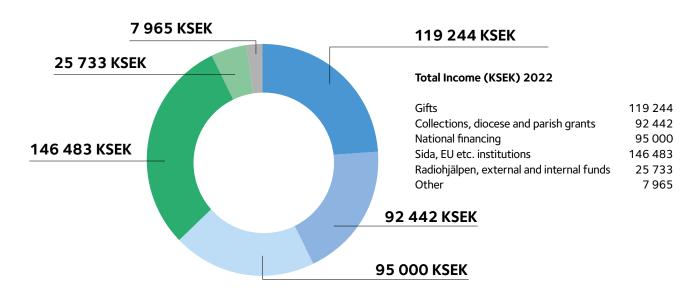
In support of its mission, the International Council has an International Reference Group. It consists of representatives from Act Church of Sweden's partners and networks. The group supports the Council with analysis of the work and long-term goals and strategies.

## FINANCING

#### Act Church of Sweden's total operating costs for 2022 were SEK 450 516 000.



Act Church of Sweden's total income for 2022 was SEK 486 867 000.



### **EXTERNAL FINANCERS**













Sweden

(Ugandas ambassad)

Sverige



**Embassy of Sweden** Addis Abeba



(Sida CSO, Sida HUM, Sida Information och Kommunikation)

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Act Church of Sweden,751 70 Uppsala givarservice@svenskakyrkan.se 010-181 93 00

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