



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Cover photo: Joseline Tuhaise and her husband Sanairi jointly own their farm in Uganda and have received support via Act Church of Sweden's sustainable livelihoods pilot project. Photo: Magdalena Vogt/Ikon
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FROM DEATH TO LIFE

At the time of writing this chronicle, it is late winter and I am outside in nature. All around me there is intense preparation for the arrival of spring with its lush greenery. The meltwater is filling the streams and the river has become a mighty torrent, its roar drowning out the chirping blackbirds. It is as if only nature and religion can be containers for the deepest language, the language that always shifts between life and death, and death and life – in a perpetual cycle. I have rarely felt a greater need for resurrection, for a new beginning for everything and everyone. To be resurrected into a world where care, love and

tolerance are assigned far more space than polarisation, hatred and violence. A world in which Jesus' eye for the wounded human and the fragility of the Creation is allowed to guide political choices and the church's presence in society.

From life to death. The past year has been impacted by war and conflict. Russia continued to terrorise Ukraine's civilian population through its bombing and occupation. A violent civil war forced hundreds of thousands of people in Sudan to flee, exacerbating a famine that had already gained foothold in the region. In Israel-Palestine, the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October and Israel's subsequent bombing of Gaza has led to such widespread violence, death and destruction that there are no words to describe the horror. I carry within me the paintings of Gaza-based artist Heba Zegout, as well as the image of her holding a dove of peace. Heba and three of her children died in a bomb attack in Gaza in November. She worked for our partner Dar-al-Kalima at an arts centre in Gaza City, a centre that has now been razed to the ground.

From death to life. In the midst of the darkness in this world, there are people who never give up. People who, through their actions, can provide glimmers of hope in the darkness. This small-scale

work goes on quietly in the background, rarely making the headlines. Israelis and Palestinians in civil society coming together in mourning and in their joint work for dialogue and peace in Israel and Palestine. Women in rural Tanzania who read the Bible in a new way and are provided with support for their interpretation that men and women are equal, and that gender-based violence and the exploitation of young girls violate the overall message of love and their human rights. People working with humanitarian disasters in Gaza, Myanmar, Afghanistan and South Sudan, who risk their lives to provide people with care, support and supplies. All these initiatives received support from Act Church of Sweden in 2023.

For every war that is ongoing, there are people who, in their day-to-day work, are fighting to prevent new wars, uphold human rights, promote democracy and minimise the damaging effects of climate change. People who follow Christ in their daily lives and, when faced with the worst of circumstances, do not give in to them. If they do not give up, nor should we. Or as Israeli Rabbi Ruth from our partner organisation Rabbis for Human Rights put it during her recent visit to Sweden: "We must see the humanity in each other, let empathy carry us and be aware that God lives in every human being".

Photo: Magnus Atansson/Ikon



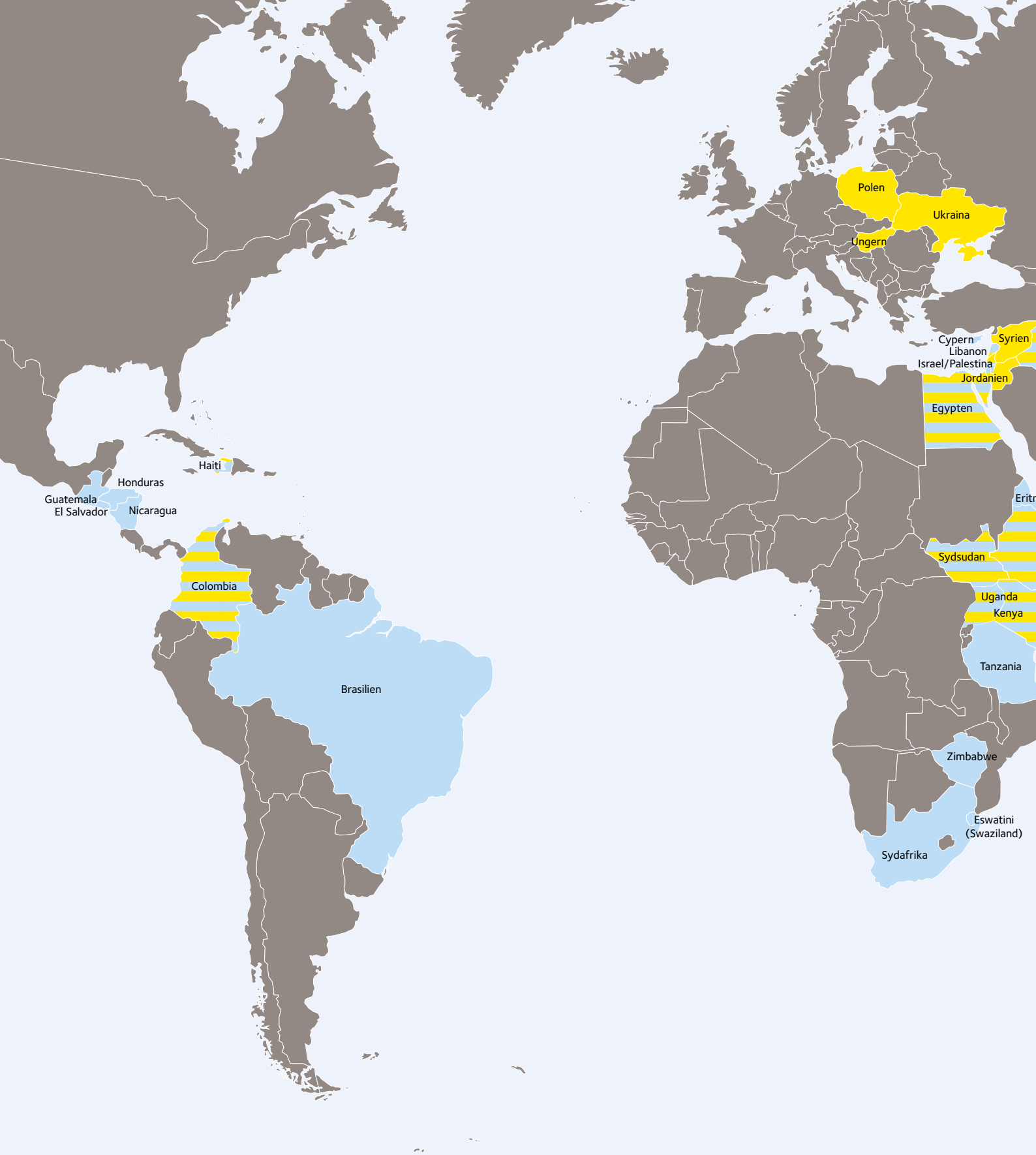
Erik Lysén
Director, Act Svenska kyrkan

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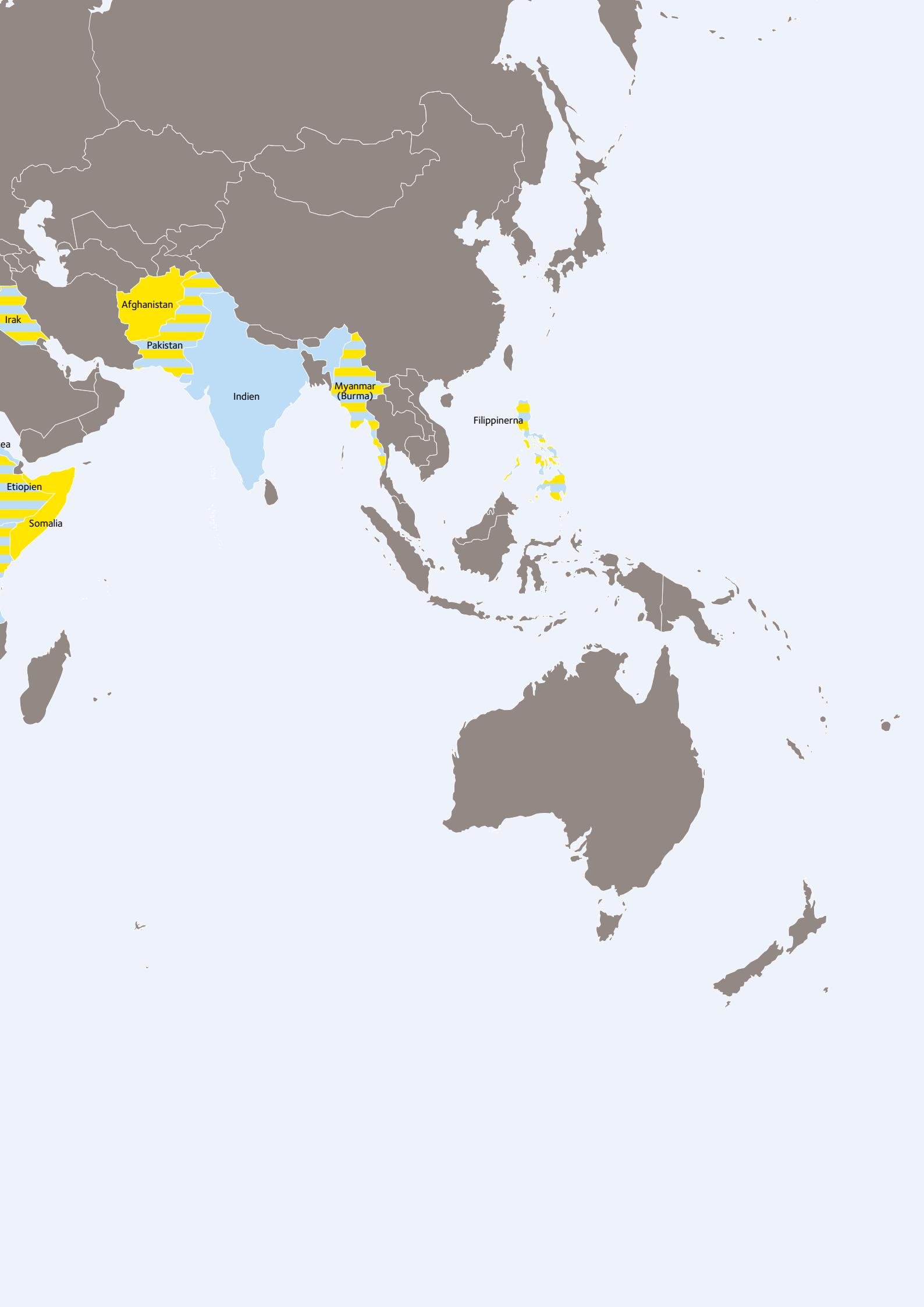
Photo: Jesper Wahlström/Ikon



During 2023, Act Church of Sweden has implemented:

- humanitarian actions in 21 countries*
- long-term development work in 26 countries*.

*Data compiled in February 2024.



FOR EVERY PERSON'S RIGHT TO A DIGNIFIED LIFE

ABOUT US

Act Church of Sweden works with humanitarian response, long-term development and global advocacy. Together with churches and partner organisations around the world, we fight against poverty, oppression and injustice. Act stands for acting and for transforming faith into action – while always focusing on people's equal dignity and rights.

Act Church of Sweden has a 150-year history with origins in the Church of Sweden Mission and Church of Sweden Aid. Our international work with mission and diaconia is largely dependent on the commitment in our congregations, which is an expression of our participation in a worldwide fellowship.

Standing up for human dignity is an integral part of our Christian faith. All people have the same value and rights and should have the power and opportunity to change their lives and communities. We base our work on our identity as a church and our belief in a God who stands up for those who are silenced, living under threat or in a vulnerable situation. Part of our mission is to take action against power structures that prevent people from living full lives, whether these structures are found in society, the church or in development cooperation.

Act Church of Sweden's work is based on theology while being conducted in line with accepted principles of development cooperation and humanitarian response. Our work is gender-integrated and human rights-based, meaning that gender is always a key starting point and that human rights need to be translated into practical action and accountability. In addition, we work on the basis of the humanitarian principles and are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

OUR GUIDING VALUES

FAITH AS A DRIVING FORCE

Faith provides us, our sister churches and partners around the world with inspiration, courage and strength. Together we stand up for people who are silenced or living under threat or in poverty, as well as for that which promotes life and gives hope for the future.

THE INTEGRITY OF THE CREATION

God's Creation is in constant renewal and all life is interdependent. We humans are responsible for the stewardship of the Creation, ensuring that life is not violated. The Creation, and the long-term survival of humanity, is being threatened by the current impact of humans on our planet. Act Church of Sweden wants to work for sustainable development, with nobody left behind and people taking responsibility for their lifestyle and impact on nature, the climate and the environment.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Every person has the right to a life in dignity and to human rights, as expressed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights conventions. Each individual, without exception, is entitled to all rights. Discrimination is unacceptable and nobody should be excluded.

EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

We believe in people's inherent ability and power to take action. Participation is fundamental to the ability of all individuals to play a key role in their own development and in that of society. This is why we support the empowerment and meaningful participation of vulnerable groups and individuals.

DEMOCRATIC SPACE AND ORGANISATION

When people join forces and organise, they are better able to further their interests and call for their rights – with one voice. An objective of the activities we support should therefore always be to increase the level of organisation and strengthen civil society organisations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to protect, respect and realise human rights, states and other actors, including religious actors, need to be held politically and legally accountable for their actions. People's ability to demand accountability forms an essential part of human rights-based efforts and a democratic society.

ECUMENICAL APPROACH

Part of the identity of Act Church of Sweden is ecumenical cooperation with other churches and church-based organisations. Together, we share our faith, mission and experiences, bringing different skills and resources to the work on humanity's great issues regarding peace, justice and the integrity of the Creation. The ecumenical approach guides all our programmes.



We believe in the power of local, regional and global cooperation. Our identity as a church is part of our strength Photo: Sean Furlonger/Ikon

LOCAL ACTORS BRING LASTING CHANGE

Underpinning the work of Act Church of Sweden is the conviction that lasting and sustainable change can be achieved if it is owned by the people affected by it, those who live in and know the local context. This is why we work with churches and local organisations around the world. Our theory of change focuses on how faith-based actors can help enable people to live in just, sustainable and democratic societies. These methods are firmly rooted in human rights and our theological interpretation, allowing us to take a holistic approach to boosting the long-term capacity of people and local communities to manage change and continue to develop.

Our activities are to help transfer power and resources to local actors, the people whose lives are impacted by economic, legal, religious and political frameworks, locally and globally. Only when people have the power to change their lives and communities themselves can the conditions for real change and a just world be created.

Being a religious actor is a strength in contexts where religion and religious leaders have power and influence over people's values and societal norms. In addition, local actors are present before, during and after a crisis or disaster, enabling us to take rapid action and a long-term approach in situations of humanitarian need.

GLOBAL NETWORKS

The Church of Sweden is a member of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. Act Church of Sweden is also a member of the ACT Alliance. This provides us with good opportunities to influence the churches' joint theological reflections and, as a network, to be a powerful voice in the UN system and in other important forums on issues such as peace, human rights and the climate.

The Lutheran World Federation works on behalf of the UN in several refugee camps around the world, and ACT Alliance, which stands for Action by Churches Together, is made up of churches and church-related organisations working on humanitarian response and development work in over 130 countries. Through these partnerships, we can respond quickly to disasters and be effective in long-term development cooperation.

HOW WE ARE GOVERNED

Act Church of Sweden is an integral part of the Church of Sweden, and its work is coordinated by the International Department at the Central Church Office. The General Synod and the Central Board of the Church of Sweden are the highest decision-making bodies of the church. The Central Board also appoints the International Council, which governs and develops the international work. The council consists of 13

members, who also have access to an International Reference Group with representatives from our partners and networks. The International Department employs around 120 staff in areas such as development work and church cooperation, advocacy, engagement and fundraising. We have a number of employees, both Swedish staff stationed abroad and local staff, all over the world.

WE LIVE UNDER THE SAME SKY AND HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS. BUT DEPENDING ON WHERE WE ARE BORN, OR WHAT GENDER WE ARE, OUR REALITIES DIFFER. TOGETHER, WE ARE FIGHTING FOR EVERY PERSON'S RIGHT TO A DIGNIFIED LIFE.

CHANGE AND IMPACT IN FIVE FOCAL AREAS

HOW WE WORK

Act Church of Sweden's work is based around five focal areas: Disaster response, Livelihoods and climate justice, Gender equality and health, Peace and democracy, and Faith and learning. Together with our partners, we contributed to nearly 280 projects worldwide in 2023, all aimed at saving and transforming lives.



DISASTER RESPONSE

War, famine and natural disasters shatter the lives of millions of people every day, and behind every number is a human being. One who has the right to security, support and a dignified life.

Thanks to our cooperation with local partners around the world, we can quickly mobilise when a disaster hits. Also, our identity as a church gives us a unique opportunity to reach out and start rebuilding what has been destroyed, together with actors from different religions.

To rebuild communities and boost resilience to deal with future crises, we involve the people affected to ensure that they are active in making key decisions on how to make use of our support.



LIVELIHOODS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

We protect God's creation and defend the right of all people to live in dignity. Basic security, gender equality and climate justice are essential for a sustainable world.

Together with local churches and partners, we work to improve people's own opportunities to make a living. At the same time, we call on those in power to realise the right to social security and climate justice globally. When people are able to work and survive on their income, they gain self-confidence and hope for the future. The aim is to ensure that people living in vulnerability, poverty and climate emergencies have access to fair and sustainable livelihoods.



GENDER EQUALITY AND HEALTH

We work to enable all people, regardless of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, to live a life of dignity. Sexual violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation are examples of abuses that affect structurally vulnerable groups. Many are also denied education and healthcare. Every individual has the right to decide over their own life and body.

Act Church of Sweden works with religious representatives and partners around the world who stand up for gender equality and everyone's right to health and security. Religious actors and representatives often have power and influence over what is considered right and wrong in a society, giving us unique opportunities, and a particular responsibility, to contribute to positive change.



PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

We work with local actors around the world to strengthen human rights, build trust and achieve sustainable peace. Violence and human rights restrictions are a major problem globally. People are prevented from making their voices heard, through direct physical violence and by means of unjust structures. In many places, people's rights are being restricted due to their sex, ethnicity, religion or on other grounds.

Every person is loved by God and has the same value and rights. This is why we work to defend people's rights, for example by providing training to prevent domestic violence or by protecting human rights defenders who are under threat.



FAITH AND LEARNING

We work to strengthen tomorrow's leaders in churches and communities, especially women, who have long been underrepresented. Initiatives include support for theological education focused on giving participants the tools to, on the basis of their faith, stand up to oppression and work for human rights..

In many countries, religious leaders exert great influence over people's lives and daily routines. Faith and religious beliefs can be used to guide, liberate and provide comfort, but unfortunately also to oppress, stigmatise and exploit people's vulnerability. This is why, as a church, we have a particular responsibility to fight for justice and gender equality.

Act Church of Sweden provided support to a total of

273 PROJECTS

in 2023.

OBJECTIVES AND WORKING METHODS

The overall objective of Act Church of Sweden is "People living in just, sustainable and democratic local communities, backed by global solidarity and based on human rights". Our contribution takes the form of four strategic approaches:

Mobilisation

We build on the commitment and agency of individuals for global solidarity and mobilize resources to address fundamental issues of human equality and rights, the integrity of creation, global justice, and peace

Capacity building

By engaging in dialogue and mutual learning with partners and rights holders, we contribute to processes in which people, organisations and societies as a whole release, strengthen, create and maintain capacity over time.



Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon

Cooperation

As a church, we are part of a worldwide fellowship. We work with churches and organisations all over the world. By contributing to platforms for exchange and dialogue, we promote cooperation and coordination locally, regionally and globally.

Advocacy

We help achieve change by conducting qualitative, long-term policy dialogue and opinion forming to influence political decision-making processes, attitudes and social norms locally, regionally and globally.



Act Church of Sweden works with a partner in a refugee camp in Ethiopia to create opportunities for the refugees to make a living.
Photo: Magnus Aronson/Ikon

LIFE-SAVING AND LONG-TERM SUPPORT

In 2023, Act Church of Sweden provided emergency response to people in need in the form of tents, medicines, food and clean water, alongside its long-term efforts in disaster areas such as Ukraine, Myanmar, Syria and Gaza. Psychosocial support formed an important part of the 42 projects we were involved in, as well as strengthening people and communities to cope with new disasters.

Media coverage during the year was largely dominated by the continuing war in Ukraine and the ensuing war in Gaza following the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October. At the same time, other disasters were taking place: earthquakes, cyclones, refugee crises were devastating people's lives around the world.

The major earthquake disaster in Turkey and Syria affected nearly 16 million people and claimed around 60,000 lives. Almost 130,000 people were injured and millions were made homeless.

Following the earthquake, Act Church of Sweden contributed to several initiatives in northwest Syria, where people were

already in great need of humanitarian assistance after years of war and conflict. Approximately 25,000 meals and 1,000 large food parcels were distributed, and we also provided 4,000 hygiene kits, 2,000 special sanitary kits for women and 2,000 kits adapted for babies. Our support also encompassed medical care, medicines and psychosocial support in the form of activities for children, young people and women.

"In our humanitarian work, we focus on emergency life-saving interventions and on increasing resilience to future disasters in communities that are often already vulnerable," says Fabian Pfeiffer, who is a methods advisor for Act Church of Sweden's psychosocial work. "In addition

to financial support for local partners, we provide expertise in psychosocial support and gender."

Afghanistan was also hit by a severe earthquake in 2023, killing thousands, as well as injuring many people and destroying their homes. The earthquake also affected people who were already struggling after years of conflict in a country in which there is a high level of discrimination against women and girls.

Together with partners on the ground, we were able to reach around 2,800 earthquake victims in Afghanistan with food parcels, water, cash, sheets, household items and hygiene products. Also, 145 tents



The spring 2023 cyclone in Myanmar affected an already hard-hit population. Photo: EPA/STR/TT

**ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN SUPPORTED A TOTAL OF 42 DISASTER RESPONSES IN 2023.
THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME EXAMPLES:**

- Protection, clean water and sanitation in the conflict-ridden Chocó region of Colombia.
- Protection for Sudanese refugees in Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan.
- Capacity-building on disaster preparedness in Haiti and psychosocial support for our partners.
- Trauma processing through creativity and empowering the voices of children and young people in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya.
- Emergency relief and resilience building for populations affected by drought in the Horn of Africa.
- Support for flood survivors in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Support for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.
- Support for survivors of Typhoon Rai in the Philippines.
- Efforts to combat child labour in Somalia.
- Psychosocial support and prevention of sexual violence, child marriage and child labour in Jordan.



were provided as temporary accommodation. Some of these initiatives particularly focused on women and girls.

Another disaster situation in which Act Church of Sweden provided support was the aftermath of the cyclone in Myanmar. This was another disaster that affected

communities that were already struggling. In this instance, the benefits of working with partners on the ground became very clear when the military junta prevented aid organisations from entering the affected state of Rakhine, where Rohingya people live in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps. Through the cooperation within

ACT Alliance, and working with partners on the ground, we were able to quickly provide emergency relief, including temporary accommodation. Across the affected area, hygiene kits were distributed to almost 700 households, and 5,000 people received financial assistance for food, water and other necessities.



**IT IS ABOUT PROVIDING
SUPPORT TO ENABLE
PEOPLE TO LIVE, NOT
JUST SURVIVE.**

Top left: The February 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria killed nearly 60,000 people. Photo: GOPA-DERD

Top right: Anna Horkun works at one of several support centres in Ukraine supported by Act Church of Sweden. Photo: Josefín Casteryd/Ikon

Bottom left: Detaljbild från Gaza. Photo: Doaa Albaz/Anadolu/TT

Like other established development aid actors, Act Church of Sweden always bases its disaster response on the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity. This means that support is always provided to those who need it, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or nationality. Saving lives and alleviating suffering is an absolute priority.

We also take a psychosocial approach, which means that in addition to addressing physical needs such as food, clean water and shelter, we also focus on social and psychological needs. Initiatives can include activities for children and adults such as music, art and sport, or establishing the foundations for dialogue. Psychosocial support is thus not about therapy in the

traditional sense, but about enabling people to rebuild social networks, help to support others and talk about experiences with other people. This has been shown to have a positive impact on recovery.

In war-torn Ukraine, we provided extensive psychosocial support in 2023 by supporting local reception centres and refugee accommodation whose activities target children, adults and pensioners.

“Ukraine is an example of a protracted crisis where much of our work is about providing support to enable people to live, not just survive, despite their extreme vulnerability and the continuing challenges of the war,” says Fabian Pfeiffer.

Through the ACT Alliance Rapid Response Fund for local organisations, we provide support for local organisations’ disaster response. In 2023, we contributed SEK 3 million to the fund. The funds were used for initiatives in Ukraine, Palestine, India and Lebanon, to mention a few.

VITAL SUPPORT FOR GAZA

Throughout late autumn 2023, Palestinian and Israeli partners witnessed an acute humanitarian crisis, with huge shortages of food, clean water, medicines and medical care in Gaza. At the same time, due to limited access and heavy fighting, it was difficult for humanitarian assistance to get through. By risking their own lives, our partners still managed to some extent to distribute basic necessities to people fleeing in Gaza. Food parcels and milk were distributed, as well as water and dates.

Despite difficult circumstances, the local partner we support through the cooperation within ACT Alliance, was able to carry on providing some primary care and dental care at one of the very few health clinics in Gaza not destroyed by the war. In December, an average of 400 people per day were assisted by around 30 employees, who at times worked virtually around the clock.

Traumatized refugees have also been offered various forms of vital psychosocial support. For example, in November and December, activities were organised for forcibly displaced mothers and children



The devastation in Gaza after one of many bombings. Photo: DSPR MECC/Ikon

in southern Gaza. We were able to reach around 5,000 children through open days and playful activities for children at various temporary refugee camps and schools in which people had taken refuge.

Like many other organisations, Act Church of Sweden and its partners were ready to

do much more for the civilian population in Gaza than was possible. Limited access and constant bombing made work difficult.

Read more about our long-term efforts towards peace and democracy in Israel and Palestine on page 18.

FIGHTING STIGMA IN REFUGEE CAMPS



Hawa with her daughter Fatma, who received a wheelchair thanks to the project in Dadaab, Kenya. Photo: Josefin Casteryd/Ikon

More than 2,500 children with various disabilities were supported in their education in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. The projects reach out to children who are often hidden away due to stigma and prejudice. Their aim is to ensure that the children have the opportunity to attend school and receive the necessary assistive devices, boosting their self-esteem as a result. Over 500 children were offered access to simple diagnostics during the year, with initiatives including physiotherapy and testing various assistive devices.

One of the children the project supported is Fatma, who is eight years old and has several severe disabilities. She is almost blind, her hearing is impaired and she is unable to walk. For many years, Fatma and

her mother Hawa were plagued by stigma and prejudice, which made Hawa stop taking her daughter to school. Thanks to the project, Fatma received a wheelchair and was able to return to school.

“Life is not easy here in Dadaab, but it is not impossible anymore,” Hawa told us when we visited the camp.

About 340,000 people live in Dadaab. Many of them have lived in the refugee camps for generations, with the majority having fled war and unrest in Somalia. The initiative in Dadaab is also helping to improve learning conditions and access to education for the approximately 40,000 children living in the camps.

FIGHTING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Act Church of Sweden is working to ensure fair and sustainable livelihoods for people living in vulnerability, poverty and climate emergencies. We influence those in power and support projects around the world. An investment in small-scale farming in Uganda and Kenya, for example, increased food production.

Act Church of Sweden's priority areas for sustainable livelihoods are sustainable production and consumption, responsible business and climate justice. We believe in strengthening people's opportunities to make a living, which is why we support local initiatives around the world. In Uganda and Kenya, for example, we are running a pilot project called Innovative Finance for Improved Livelihood (IFIL), in cooperation with the development cooperation non-profit We Effect and the financial institution Oikocredit. The project aims to offer cooperatives and farmers' organisations customised training, followed by loans to start or grow their businesses and food production. Another focal area is women's empowerment.

"As a woman, being a farmer is particularly challenging," Agnes Masika told us when we visited the project in 2023. "It is usually men who own the land and control the income."

Agnes is one of the founders of a cooperative in a village in Uganda that participated in the IFIL pilot project. The project has enabled an increased focus on gender



Agnes Masika, a farmer and small business owner in Uganda, was involved in a unique pilot project. Photo: Magdalena Vogt/Ikon

equality and helped an estimated 2.2 million people benefit from increased production. Work is also underway to make the production more environmentally friendly.

Many of the world's poorest people are farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. Enabling people to increase their production and incomes is crucial when it comes to reducing poverty and ensuring global food security.

ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN SUPPORTED A TOTAL OF 43 LIVELIHOOD AND CLIMATE JUSTICE PROJECTS IN 2023. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

- Self-help groups in Ethiopia to empower women, who make a living selling firewood.
- Community-led projects on disaster preparedness in Haiti
- Support for sustainable livelihoods to farmers in Ethiopia.
- Climate, livelihood and resilience projects in Myanmar.
- Churches for climate justice in the Philippines.
- Social security systems, economic justice and work with the Christian councils in South Africa.
- Projects to improve livelihoods in South Sudan.
- Projects in Tanzania to promote gender-equal and sustainable livelihoods through livestock farming and cultivation.
- Support for children with disabilities and schools for the deaf in Ethiopia.
- Projects in Colombia to empower people affected by humanitarian crises.



FOCUS ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

As part of the global ecumenical movement, Act Church of Sweden took part in the UN's COP28 climate change conference in Dubai. The purpose of our presence at the conference was to follow and comment on the negotiations and hold decision-makers to account for their lack of climate ambition.

“It is crucial that civil society, indigenous peoples and faith-based actors have a place when it comes to demanding that decision-makers take responsibility for more ambitious climate goals,” says Hanna Soldahl, who works with opinion forming at Act Church of Sweden.

The Church of Sweden's lobbying at COP28 was a joint effort, and our message of climate justice had an impact in the media before, during and after the climate conference. The message of Bishop Marika Markovits of Linköping Diocese and the other delegates regarding the need to increase climate aid to the countries most severely affected was widely covered by the media.

Act Church of Sweden also criticised the Swedish government's climate



The Agera youth volunteer Sofie Ohlsson and Hanna Soldahl from Act Church of Sweden were two of the Church of Sweden's representatives at the COP28 climate change conference in Dubai. Photo: Simon Chambers/Ikon

policy, stressing that Sweden should take responsibility for its historical and current emissions by financially compensating the most affected countries. We believe that the 1.5-degree target needs to be met and that the world's wealthy high-emission countries should honour the current climate finance commitment of USD 100

billion per year to the countries most severely affected by climate change.

A joint report produced with partners in Sweden and South Africa was also presented during the year on how social security needs to be part of the work towards climate justice in several different ways.

SUPPORT FOR THE RESIDENTS OF INDIA'S SLUMS



Act Church of Sweden supports a project that helped Sandhya Jagulia and her husband Biswajit improve their livelihood. They live in the Bagbazar neighbourhood with their daughter Heena. Photo: Christy Jennifer/Ikon

Act Church of Sweden's continued support in 2023 to a livelihood and gender equality project in India improved the abilities of vulnerable families to make a living. The project aims to improve the living conditions of people living in slums. It also promotes greater gender justice and focuses in particular on girls, women and transgender people. The work thus encompasses several of Act Church of Sweden's focal areas such as gender justice and sustainable livelihoods.

“The project encourages women to organise in self-help groups in which they receive training and financial support,” says Sandra Bäckelid, programme officer at Act Church of Sweden. “They are trained in gender equality and gender justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights, economics and other key areas in terms of coping in society.”

There are a total of 54 self-help groups, and support is provided to around 12,300 households in the slums, where needs are great. One participant is Sandhya Jagulia, who lives in Bagbazar with her husband and children. She received an investment grant to start her own street-side retail business.

India has a population of over 1.4 billion people, and the gap between rich and poor is huge. Millions of people live in slums, and precarious housing conditions, unemployment and food shortages lead to poor health, depression and alcoholism. In particular, the situation of women and girls in the slums is extremely vulnerable.

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Act Church of Sweden fights for gender equality in family law and against genital mutilation. In 2023, this work included support for a project in Egypt, a country in which girls are subjected to FGM due to religious and cultural traditions.



Mariam resisted the pressure to subject her youngest daughter to FGM. Photo: Andrew Adel/Ariu/Ikon

Act Church of Sweden considers reforming discriminatory family legislation to be crucial to achieving gender equality. The reason for this is that family law has an impact on the rights of women and girls, influencing factors such as the age of marriage, the choice to marry or divorce voluntarily, and attitudes towards domestic violence. Gender-equal family law is also a prerequisite for women's economic empowerment, such as inheritance rights, the right to open a bank account or to

sign contracts without their husband's consent.

During the year, we launched a brand new page on gender-equal family law on our website. We were also part of Sweden's official delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in New York – the single biggest international summit focusing on women's rights. The Director of Act Church of Sweden, Erik Lysén, and Archbishop Emerita Antje Jackelén were

also present, to ensure that the voices of church leaders in favour of gender equality were heard as a counterbalance to the robust opposition to the rights of women and girls among faith-based and conservative actors.

We also continued to support work to counter FGM in many countries during the year. In Egypt FGM still takes place despite it being illegal, and many girls are also denied access to education.

“In rural villages, many women and girls live under strict patriarchal conditions,” says Jacob Hyving, programme coordinator at Act Church of Sweden.

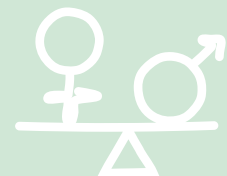
Act Church of Sweden's partners in the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt have long fought to combat FGM and to influence norms in Egyptian society. One person who can testify to the difference this work is making is Mariam, a victim of FGM herself. So are her eldest daughters. But when it was time for her youngest daughter to undergo the procedure, Mariam refused.

“My husband and father put a great deal of pressure on me and questioned why I wanted to blindly follow Western norms,” said Mariam about her experience. “Had it not been for the knowledge I acquired through the church, I might have had my youngest daughter circumcised as well.

Thousands of men, women and young people have been educated about the risks of FGM during the year. Several hundred women and girls have also received individual support and counselling.

ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN SUPPORTED A TOTAL OF 42 GENDER EQUALITY AND HEALTH PROJECTS IN 2023. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

- Projects to empower women and young people to claim their rights in Africa.
- Sex education and livelihood opportunities for young people in Ethiopia.
- Support for mentor mothers in South Africa, Eswatini, Egypt and Ethiopia.
- Women's and young people's reproductive health projects and self-help groups in Ethiopia.
- Gender justice projects in India.
- Church partnerships and networks to counter sexual violence in the Philippines.
- Initiative to increase gender equality in the church and society i, particularly focusing on gender-based violence, in Tanzania.
- Initiative to eradicate gender-based violence, particularly FGM, in Tanzania.
- Raising awareness of HIV in Uganda.
- Support for work on sexual and reproductive health and rights for young people and young adults in Zimbabwe.



WOMEN'S ROLE IN PEACE PROCESSES HIGHLIGHTED

In the autumn of 2023, Act Church of Sweden travelled with around ten Colombian women's organisations to the UN headquarters in New York to follow up on Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The Colombian peace process and the role of women in it was mentioned as an inspiring example during the open debate. "The contribution of civil society and its role in the Colombian peace process is a chink of light in a dark world right now," said Verdiana García in her report from the meeting. She is a programme officer at Act Church of Sweden and was one of those present in New York.

For many years, Act Church of Sweden has been working for a just and sustainable peace in Colombia, work that falls under the focal area of peace and democracy. But our cooperation with partners on the ground is also about contributing to more peaceful and secure societies by assigning a stronger female and feminist perspective



Act Church of Sweden in New York, along with around ten Colombian women's organisations. From left, in front of Carl Fredrik Reuterswård's bronze sculpture: Marcela Sanchez (Colombia Diversa), Verdiana García (Act Church of Sweden), Adriana Benjumea (Humanas), Beatriz Quintero (Red Nacional de Mujeres), Rosa Emilia Salamanca (CIASE) and Janeth Lozano (CODACOP). Photo: Ikon

to peace and security. The conflict in Colombia has a major impact on the rights of women and girls to peace and security,

and a key part of our work is supporting women so they can play a greater part in the work of various organisations.

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN IN GUATEMALA

Increasing poverty and gender-based violence pose a challenge in Guatemala. More than 50,000 cases of violence against women and girls are reported in Guatemala each year, while the number of unreported cases is high. More than half of the country's

girls drop out of school before secondary school, and most of them are not aware of their rights. In 2023, Act Church of Sweden provided support to projects focusing on preventing violence and supporting vulnerable women and girls. Activities

include psychological and legal assistance for women and girls who are victims of domestic violence, have difficulties making a living or want to leave their partner.

Our local partners encounter many children who have been forced into marriage, as well as women who are victims of violence. It can be difficult for a young woman in Guatemala to claim her rights. Many have to fight hard against prejudices and social norms that violate their rights. This is where support in the form of legal advice and counselling makes a big difference.

We also organised a study trip to Guatemala and Colombia during the year for a number of MPs from different Swedish political parties. The aim of the trip was to help ensure Sweden's continued commitment to peace and democracy in the region. After the trip, the politicians received visiting delegations and formed a Latin America network in the Swedish Parliament, a commitment that can be assumed to have contributed to the continuation of Swedish development aid to Guatemala.



Social worker Ammi Rompich and lawyer Lesly García visit 17-year-old Damaris, who receives support from a project for vulnerable women and young mothers. Photo: Eva Pérez Järnil/Ikon

CONTINUED FOCUS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Act Church of Sweden has long cooperated with Israeli and Palestinian organisations working for democracy, human rights and gender equality. The terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war of aggression in Gaza pose major challenges. But the fight for each individual's right to safety, freedom and dignity has continued.

Act Church of Sweden has worked in Israel and Palestine for many years and our focus is on contributing to create a society in which Israelis and Palestinians, Christians, Jews and Muslims can live side by side. We work with both Palestinian and Israeli organisations – in Gaza, in the West Bank including East Jerusalem and in Israel. All organisations have been significantly affected by the developments since 7 October, with several of them adapting their work by switching their focus to humanitarian response.

Our partner, the Rossing Center for Education and Dialogue in Jerusalem,



Many of Act Church of Sweden's partners in Israel and Palestine have had to adapt their work due to the war, but the struggle for freedom, dignity and human rights continues. Photo: Håvard Bjelland/Kirkens Nødhjelp/Ikon

distributed supplies such as food parcels to vulnerable Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, who became indirect victims of the war in Gaza when violence and restrictions on their freedom of movement prevented them from going to work.

Another partner, B'Tselem, works to counter hate speech and reports on human rights violations. Through its field workers

in the West Bank and Gaza, the organisation gathers testimonies and documents human rights violations that are mainly committed by Israeli soldiers and settlers.

“Act Church of Sweden's support in Israel and Palestine focuses on human rights and international law,” says Johanna Wassholm, policy advisor for the Middle East at Act Church of Sweden. “Accountability for the innumerable violations of international law is essential for long-term peace and reconciliation. At the same time, we support our partners' crucial work on trauma processing, dialogue and initiatives during a period of increased polarisation.”

In Sweden, opinion forming and political lobbying efforts were even more imperative throughout the autumn of 2023 due to the extensive abuses and probable violations of international law suffered by the civilian population in Israel and Palestine. Erik Lysén, Director of Act Church of Sweden, regularly commented on the situation in the Swedish media, and at the end of November, Act Church of Sweden, along with several other civil society organisations, presented a report showing that Swedish development aid in Palestine goes to organisations working for democracy, human rights and gender equality.

Read more about our disaster relief work in Gaza on page 13.

ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN SUPPORTED A TOTAL OF 77 PEACE AND DEMOCRACY PROJECTS IN 2023. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

- Support for an ecumenical platform coordinating the work of Christian councils for peace, gender equality and democracy in East Africa.
- Initiatives to strengthen the rights of refugees in East Africa.
- Peacebuilding in the social and armed conflict in Colombia.
- Capacity building, opinion forming and sharing of best practices regarding masculinities, gender and religion in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.
- Peace efforts and initiatives to counteract violent extremism in India.
- Initiatives to create fair, inclusive and sustainable societies in Central America.
- Peace efforts and initiatives to counteract violent extremism in Pakistan.
- Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine.
- Support for sustainable peace, livelihoods and mental health in Uganda and South Sudan.
- The reconciliation process and local peacebuilding in Zimbabwe.



FIGHTING FOR A PEACEFUL AND JUST SOUTH SUDAN

Act Church of Sweden works with local and international partners for a peaceful and just South Sudan. During the year, we continued to support training on efforts to achieve peace, as well as meetings and workshops on reconciliation processes. This work included former warlords learning to resolve conflicts peacefully. A total of almost 1,900 people took part in various activities focusing on conflict management and peace.

People in South Sudan are afflicted by several acute challenges. Violence and inter-ethnic conflicts have continued, and crime rates are high. Illiteracy rates are also through the roof following a prolonged humanitarian crisis affecting millions of people. Also, climate change is causing both widespread flooding and massive drought, with resulting food and water shortages.

To reduce gender-based violence, our local partner in South Sudan works to raise awareness of the consequences of the violence and to expand people's knowledge



Loparimoi Peter Mourice has himself experienced war. He now works for Act Church of Sweden's partner organisation in South Sudan and is an invaluable change maker. Photo: Alexander Öbom/Ikon

of gender justice. We have also helped establish a centre for women survivors of domestic violence, a centre that offers a safe space, psychosocial support and a chance to process the trauma the women have endured. A total of almost 12,700 women

and girls have benefited from this support. We also supported a foster care programme that provides orphans and children who have fled refugee camps with new homes with foster families and supports them so they can stay in school.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE IN IRAQ

Act Church of Sweden supports an organisation in Iraq that offers young adults a meeting place in which they can grow and thrive, and experience a sense of community. The organisation, founded by young activists, is called Youth Speak, and 256 young volunteer leaders have been involved in its activities during the year, including

140 women, and it reached large numbers of participants.

Iraq has a history scarred by war and conflict. A key aim of the organisation is thus to bring different groups in the country closer together, reducing the antagonism between them. Another aim

is to help young people make their voices heard. There is a strong desire among many young people in Iraq to gain new perspectives and break with harmful traditions and patterns of life. But the situation, the society and old ways of looking at things make this difficult. Youth Speak serves as a hub for young people from all backgrounds, enabling them to come together as equals – transcending conflicts and borders.

Youth Speak is based in the city of Duhok, where many young people are refugees, either internally displaced by the ISIS terror regime or from the war in Syria. The organisation also offers various groups such as a book club, environmental club, art club, sports club and a peace club, which also deals with issues of health and well-being. The groups are initiated by the young people themselves.

Youth Speak aims to contribute to greater social cohesion and to support the dreams, well-being and opportunities of young people.



Originally from Syria, 22-year-old Suad Adnan Ismael has fled for her life twice. Here, she is speaking at a Youth Speak meeting. Photo: Meethak El-Kathib/Ikon

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN MYANMAR

Act Church of Sweden supports theological education that promotes human rights, counters religious extremism and helps people deepen their faith. One of many specific examples is the cooperation on a new master's programme focusing on gender and theology in Myanmar.

The university programme at Myanmar Institute of Theology is the first of its kind and aims to generate greater understanding of the importance of gender justice and ultimately help reduce gender-based violence in the country. Myanmar is one of the world's most conflict-ridden countries, with hundreds of thousands of people living in IDP camps.

The background to the initiative on gender is that Myanmar Institute of Theology considers it important to address harmful gender norms from a theological perspective. The majority of citizens in Myanmar are religious, and there is a widespread conservative tradition in which religious doctrine is often used as an excuse for gender-based violence or negative attitudes towards women. Around 30 students from various religious backgrounds began their master's programme in 2023.

"Providing opportunities for theological discussions on gender generates an understanding of how norms are influenced by culture and religion, which can increase awareness of gender discrimination," says Anna-Maria Sandström, programme officer at Act Church of Sweden with responsibility for Myanmar. "We are happy to be able to support them in this work in various ways."

Myanmar Institute of Theology, which focuses on education in the areas of research, peace and gender, has been working for several years to highlight discrimination and to counter gender-based violence. This aligns well with Act Church of Sweden's view that theological education should encourage critical thinking, counter religious extremism and polarisation, and equip future leaders in church and society with the tools they need.

In order to boost commitment to continued support for civil society in Myanmar, we also organised an event with Stockholm Diocese to mark the second anniversary of the military coup.



Employees of the Myanmar Institute of Theology. Together we highlighted the campaign #16daysofactivism against gender-based violence. From left: Ei Zin Zaw Min, Aye Nwe, De Mi Moore and Thane Htut Pan. Photo: Anna-Maria Sandström/Ikon

ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN SUPPORTED A TOTAL OF 35 FAITH AND LEARNING PROJECTS IN 2023. THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME EXAMPLES:

- Support for an ecumenical organisation for collaboration between churches in Africa.
- Support for a vulnerable church in Eritrea.
- Master's programmes in Ethiopia in the fields of gender, health and theology, community development and theology, and sustainable development and peace.
- Support for master's students, PhD students and the development of a more gender-equal faculty at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST) in Ethiopia.
- Initiatives for gender justice and religious freedom in India.
- Ecumenism and religious dialogue in Pakistan.
- Church cooperation in the Philippines, focusing on issues such as children's rights and protection against sexual exploitation.
- Upgrading the libraries of the church's educational institutions in Tanzania.
- Pastoral care training in northern Tanzania.
- Support for a theological institute, renovation of premises and work on gender in Zimbabwe.
- Support to strengthen the Christian council New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) in Sudan.
- Theological education in the Philippines.



REBOOT FOR CHURCH YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

In 2023, work on the Young in the Worldwide Church exchange could finally kick into gear. The programme was put on hold for a few years due to the coronavirus pandemic. The work included a trip to Tanzania to reconnect with colleagues from the dioceses of Karagwe and Bukoba, who will participate in the 2024 exchange. Twelve places on the exchange are currently offered each year in Sweden, but in the long term the idea is to offer 16 young adults aged between 18 and 30 a chance to participate. The exchange is reciprocal, with young people from the countries concerned in turn being hosted through Church of Sweden cooperation.

“An interest in religion, the worldwide church, other cultures and global issues is a plus,” says Maya Skagegård, coordinator of the exchange programme. “But participants do not really need to have any special qualifications – the exchange is meant to open doors for young people.”



During the year, contact was re-established with a friendship diocese in Tanzania. From left: Pontus Gunnarsson, Director of Rättvik Diocesan Centre, Sweden; Pastor Stephen Kajjage; Maya Skagegård, Programme Coordinator for Young in the Worldwide Church; Jonathan Ntwale, Programme Coordinator for the Northwest Diocese of Tanzania and Phenias Ndamwesiga, former participant in Young in the Worldwide Church. Photo: Tinde Carlbrand/Ikon

Young in the Worldwide Church, which is now run in cooperation with Rättvik Diocesan Centre, includes training in

Sweden, three months in Tanzania or the Philippines and follow-up including parish visits after returning home.

MASTER'S THESIS ON THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Act Church of Sweden has been supporting the master's level education of religious leaders and theology students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa since 2013. The programme focuses mainly on religion, gender and health. Last year, we also supported a university project that highlighted the influence of religious

leaders and women's own religious and cultural beliefs on abortion.

The university project and thesis are the work of master's student Mduduzi Khoza, an ordained minister with experience working in this capacity in rural KwaZulu-Natal. In this role, he is familiar with the

problem of religious leaders whose theological interpretations can sometimes violate the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, i.e. their right to decide over their bodies and make decisions regarding issues such as abortion and contraception. As a minister, he has met many young women struggling with anguish when considering terminating an unwanted pregnancy, encounters that influenced his choice of project topic. Although South Africa has legalised abortion, many illegal abortions are still carried out due to religious and cultural beliefs that abortion is not an option, regardless of the circumstances.

In his research, Mduduzi Khoza points to the importance of working with religious leaders to bring about change on issues such as abortion and the rights of women and girls. This is a position that Act Church of Sweden supports within the scope of its work on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and is also one of the reasons for its long-standing support for the university's education and research on theological interpretations in the context in question.



Mduduzi Khoza, pictured with his young child, has experience working as a priest in rural KwaZulu-Natal. His research highlights the importance of working with religious leaders to strengthen the sexual and reproductive rights of girls and women. Photo: Alexa Sedgwick/Ikon



Fundraising activities around the country contributed to this year's good results. The Christmas market was traditionally organised at the Archbishop's Court in Uppsala (top left) and the picture shows Maria Wiborgh and Pernilla Östlund from the Church of Sweden's donor service. In Enskede-Årsta parish, Hazel Lindkvist and others stood in the tent at the Christmas market (bottom left). Another well-attended event was the children's flea market in Storvreta, where Mats Boije, Jenny Storm and Anneli Ekström participated (centre right). Bottom right: Fundraising Manager Tinde Carlbrand.

Photo: Josefin Casteryd och Ella Lindkvist/Ikon

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER WORLD

The work of Act Church of Sweden is largely dependent on the involvement of local parishes. Together we fight against poverty, oppression and injustice. With these parishes, we raised SEK 221 million in 2023, with digital donations continuing to grow in importance.

All the activities that take place around the country create a network of engagement, showing that we as a church stand with our fellow human beings in a worldwide fellowship.

“The parishes enable our work for international mission and diaconia, as well as our fight for climate justice and a just world,” says Tinde Carlbrand, Head of Fundraising and Engagement. “Together, we make up one of Sweden’s biggest popular movements for compassion, courage and hope.”

As in 2022, the war in Ukraine meant that parishes and individuals were very willing to make donations. This was also the case regarding the war in Gaza. The fundraising target was met, with funds raised totalling SEK 221 million. A clear trend is that digital donations are continuing to grow in importance. A total of 59,000 new donors were registered during the year, with 49,000 of these coming via Swish.

Act Church of Sweden’s loyal monthly donors donated more than SEK 25 million and a marketing campaign resulted in 4,000 new monthly donors. A total of SEK 43 million was raised for disaster response. Act Church of Sweden’s disaster response efforts continue in many parts of the world, and the donations are always used where they are most needed. In 2023, these included projects in Ukraine and Gaza.

Another important source of income is grants from parishes and dioceses. Annual grants are crucial to our ability to provide long-term, reliable support to our sister churches and partner organisations in vulnerable parts of the world. Grants of SEK 18 million were received in 2023, which is a decline compared to previous years.

All over Sweden, there is strong commitment to Act Church of Sweden. In 2023, there were 3,000 registered representatives, and many more employees and volunteers, who created activities to highlight the work of the organisation. And there has been a great deal of creativity. In Hudikvallsbygden parish, Hudik Hockey’s A-team was involved in handing out information about Act Church of Sweden. Many parishes chose to display the summer campaign’s photo exhibition, while others sold items such as cheese, candles, handicrafts and homemade flatbread to raise money for the organisation’s international work.

Act Church of Sweden employees also took part in over 60 local events to provide information on the international work. The Agera volunteers, a collaboration between Act Church of Sweden and the Church of Sweden Youth, took part in several important forums. These included the Järva and Almedalen political weeks and Gothenburg Book Fair.

CONTROL OF OUR FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Act Church of Sweden

- has a ‘90 account’ (registered fundraising account) under the scrutiny of Swedish Fundraising Control. The account provides donors with a clear guarantee that they are donating to a serious and responsible organisation
- is a member of Giva Sverige (the Swedish Fundraising Association), which works for secure donations, quality assurance, training, skills development and advocacy, focusing on the ethical, transparent and professional governance of non-profit organisations and
- offers the Tryggt givande (Secure Donations) certification, which is issued to organisations that comply with Giva Sverige’s quality code, certifying that the organisation stands for quality, professionalism and conducts fundraising in a secure, ethical and transparent manner.



SEK 221 MILLION

FUNDS RAISED IN 2023



LENTEN FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN FOCUSING ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The 2023 Lenten fundraising campaign, entitled *Dela lika under samma himmel* (Sharing equally under the same sky), focused on the right to food for all. We are not sharing the earth's resources equally today, despite the fact that health, safety and access to nutritious food are human rights.

Sales of candles, bread, waffles and knitted items are just a few examples of the creative activities organised in parishes across Sweden to raise funds for the campaign. The funds raised during the campaign period totalled SEK 36.7 million, making it possible for Act Church of Sweden to continue the fight for sustainable and just food security.

SEK 36.7 MILLION IN 2023

(SEK 61.6 million in 2022, of which SEK 24 million were earmarked for Ukraine.)

VÄRLDENS BARN – MAKING CHILDHOOD POSSIBLE

Along with 13 other children's rights organisations, Act Church of Sweden takes part in the *Världens Barn* (Children of the World) fundraising campaign of *Radiohjälpen*, the Swedish national television and radio foundation coordinating fundraising activities for humanitarian aid, which in 2023 had a new slogan: "Making childhood possible". More than SEK 100 million was raised under that slogan during the year, an increase on previous years thanks to the Akelius Foundation's contribution totalling SEK 45.3 million.

Act Church of Sweden receives 11 percent of the donations raised during the *Världens Barn* campaign. In 2023, these funds went towards education and safe spaces for children in conflict-ridden Myanmar, and projects for children with disabilities living in the refugee camps in Dadaab, Kenya (read more on page 13).

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE NUMBERS

In summer 2023, we highlighted the importance of seeing the people and stories behind the statistics. Over 100 million people have been displaced and 300 million are in need of humanitarian aid. Behind every number is a human being.

During the campaign period, 86 photo exhibitions were commissioned by parishes throughout Sweden, and over 2,300 fundraising activities took place. In addition, collections were taken on 1,600 occasions.

SEK 30 MILLION IN 2023

(SEK 30 million in 2022.)



PARISHES HIGHLIGHTED THE CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

The 2023 Christmas fundraising campaign “Break a Tradition” focused on the fight against harmful traditions, such as forced marriages and other abuse against girls. Act Church of Sweden supports humanitarian responses and long-term development projects all over the world to boost the rights of women and girls to good health, dignity and power over their own lives.

During the campaign period, the entire Church of Sweden was subjected to a cyberattack that affected websites, donation forms, advertising tools, mailing lists and other important channels. Despite these challenges, the fundraising target was met, with parish involvement being one of the keys to success. Through sales of items, concerts, collections, mailings and various creative fundraising activities, SEK 42.1 million was raised during the campaign period.

SEK 42.1 MILLION IN 2023

(SEK 52.9 million in 2022.)



To the left: A box where complaints can be submitted to partners in India, taken a few years ago. Nowadays, digital solutions are more widely used. Photo: Josefin Casteryd/Ikon. To the right: Poster from Act Church of Sweden's partner in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya, with information on how to report issues such as sexual abuse, fraud and corruption. Photo: Lennart Hernander/Ikon

REGULAR MONITORING AND GOAL-ORIENTED WORK

Act Church of Sweden has goal-driven programmes and a designated function to manage and respond to complaints. All work takes place in dialogue with our partners, and we comply with Swedish requirements from the organisations Giva Sverige and Swedish Fundraising Control.

Act Church of Sweden works in line with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), an international standard for humanitarian development work focusing on continuous improvement. To ensure that our activities are carried out efficiently and responsibly, a variety of follow-up activities are carried out throughout the year. These include goal-oriented programmes, regular performance monitoring, a complaints management system, a code of conduct and guidelines on anti-corruption and other issues.

In order to monitor and measure the development of the organisation, we continuously collect and compile data. One method we take as inspiration for this work is outcome harvesting, which involves comparing different progress indicators in order to analyse and understand performance and results in relation to the overall long-term objectives, and to identify development needs.

We make use of internal control systems, along with regular external audits.

The work on quality and accountability takes place in dialogue with our partners, the aims being to develop accountability mechanisms and to ensure transparency and scrutiny of both ourselves and our partners.

A total of 16 new complaints were received by our complaints mechanism in 2023. The corresponding figure in 2022 was 24. Of the 16 complaints received this year, four did not fall within the scope of the mechanism and in most cases, the person lodging the complaint was referred to other church units. The remaining 12 all related to the activities of international partners.

Extensive work also took place in 2023 regarding the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the complaints mechanism now has a protected space that requires special access authorisation in order to protect sensitive information.

IN TERMS OF QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, WE HAVE COMMITTED TO:

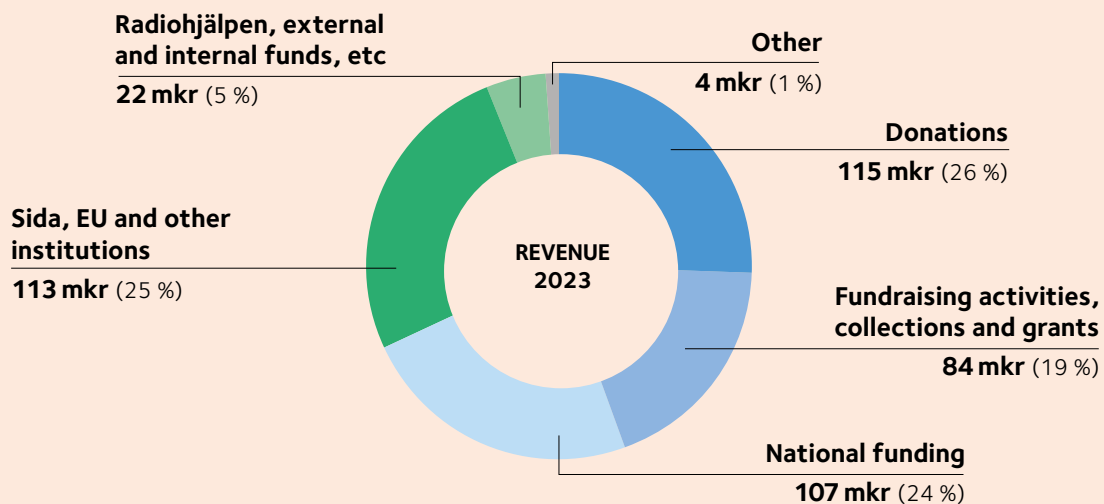
- working with a human rights based approach;
- working in a gender-integrated way;
- working towards ecological sustainability;
- working in partnership and reciprocity;
- working in an open, transparent and participatory manner;
- providing effective, results-based, relevant and conflict-sensitive support;
- dealing with complaints;
- being a learning organisation;
- providing support and skills development for staff;
- complying with the Church of Sweden's Code of Conduct and applicable Swedish requirements from the organisations Giva Sverige and Swedish Fundraising Control, as well as the principle of public access to official records.

HOW THE MONEY WAS USED IN 2023

Act Church of Sweden's total revenue was SEK 443 million in 2023. Largest revenue item were gifts in the form of funds collected from dioceses, parishes and private individuals. Operational costs amounted to just over SEK 459 million, and most of the money was spent on long-term development cooperation and church collaboration.

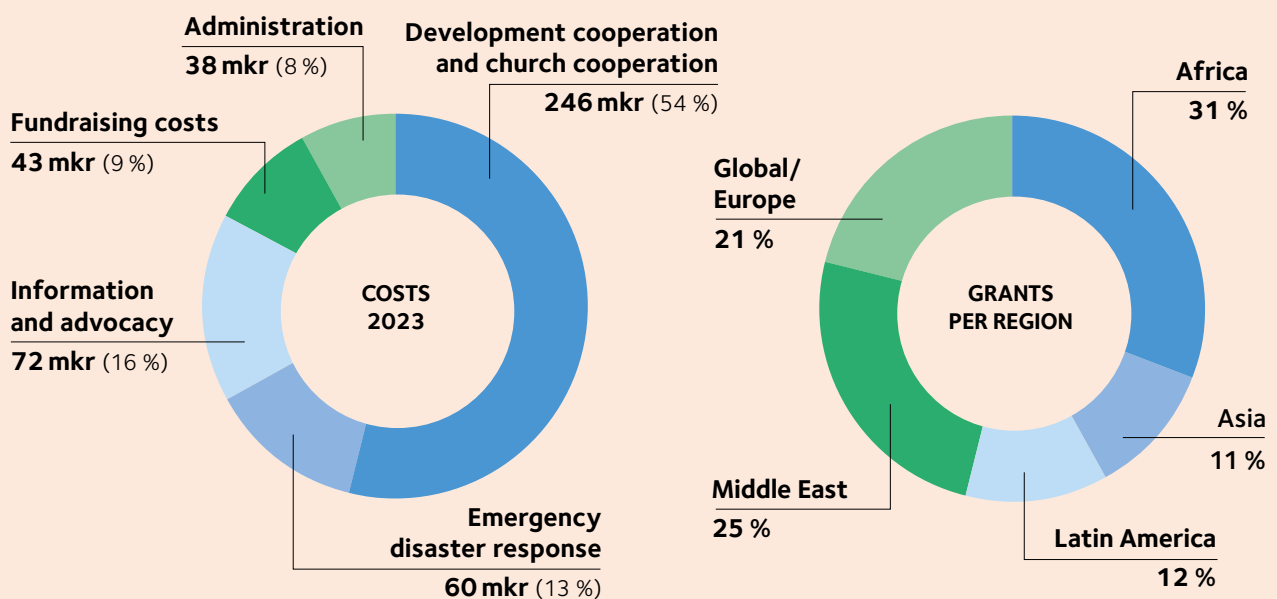
WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM

Funds raised constituted the largest revenue item, followed by national funding from the General Synod and the Church Board, as well as funds from Sida, the EU and other institutional donors.



COSTS

Most of the money was used for long-term development cooperation and church cooperation. This also includes support for protracted humanitarian crises. A large part of our support also went to advocacy work in Sweden and globally, as well as emergency disaster response.



Fotnot: In 2023, just over SEK 15 million raised in 2022 were used for projects in Ukraine.

Fotnot: The above includes funding for long-term development cooperation and humanitarian response. Act Church of Sweden contributed SEK 20 million to Ukraine and SEK 25 million to Gaza and Israel/Palestine.

EXTERNAL FINANCERS



European Union
Civil Protection and
Humanitarian Aid



Elof Hansson



Lunds
Missionsällskap



Radiohjälpen
90 1950-6

SI. Svenska
institutet



Sida



Water
for All