



STRATEGY 2021+

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe 2021–2025

We are the humanitarian **assistance organisation** of the **Protestant churches** in **Germany**, based in **Berlin**.

In 2019, we were active in

37 **countries**
in Africa, Asia, America and Europe.

We carried out

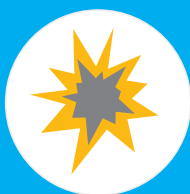
205 **projects** providing emergency aid, helping people with reconstruction and implementing disaster preparedness measures,

spending a total of **EUR 41** **Millionen**

Around **130** employees work

at our **13** locations around the world.

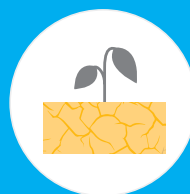
We provide assistance in the event of



CONFLICT



FLIGHT AND
DISPLACEMENT



DROUGHTS



EARTHQUAKES



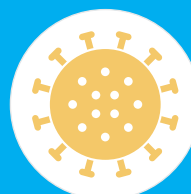
HURRICANES



FLOODS



TSUNAMIS



EPIDEMICS

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Our understanding of humanitarian assistance

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been providing humanitarian assistance for more than 65 years. Churches and church-based organisations are united by a shared understanding of the concept of Diakonie (social welfare), which motivates us to provide aid. We help people all over the world who are in need as a result of conflict or disaster. Over the years, our organisation has grown significantly and we currently employ around 130 staff at our head office in Berlin, in three regional offices (Asia/Jordan, Africa/Kenya and Latin America/Colombia) and in ten project offices on four continents.

In recent decades, the global political and humanitarian system has fundamentally changed. The world has become more complex, and crises and conflicts have too. Although globalisation brings many opportunities, we and our partners are also experiencing its dark side. We are already feeling the impact of climate change. The outlook for the coming years is increasingly gloomy. Despite digital and technological developments and social progress, huge inequalities persist and in some cases are even getting worse. For example, humanitarian assistance is often harder to access for women and girls than for men as they are not regarded as full members of society in many countries around the world.

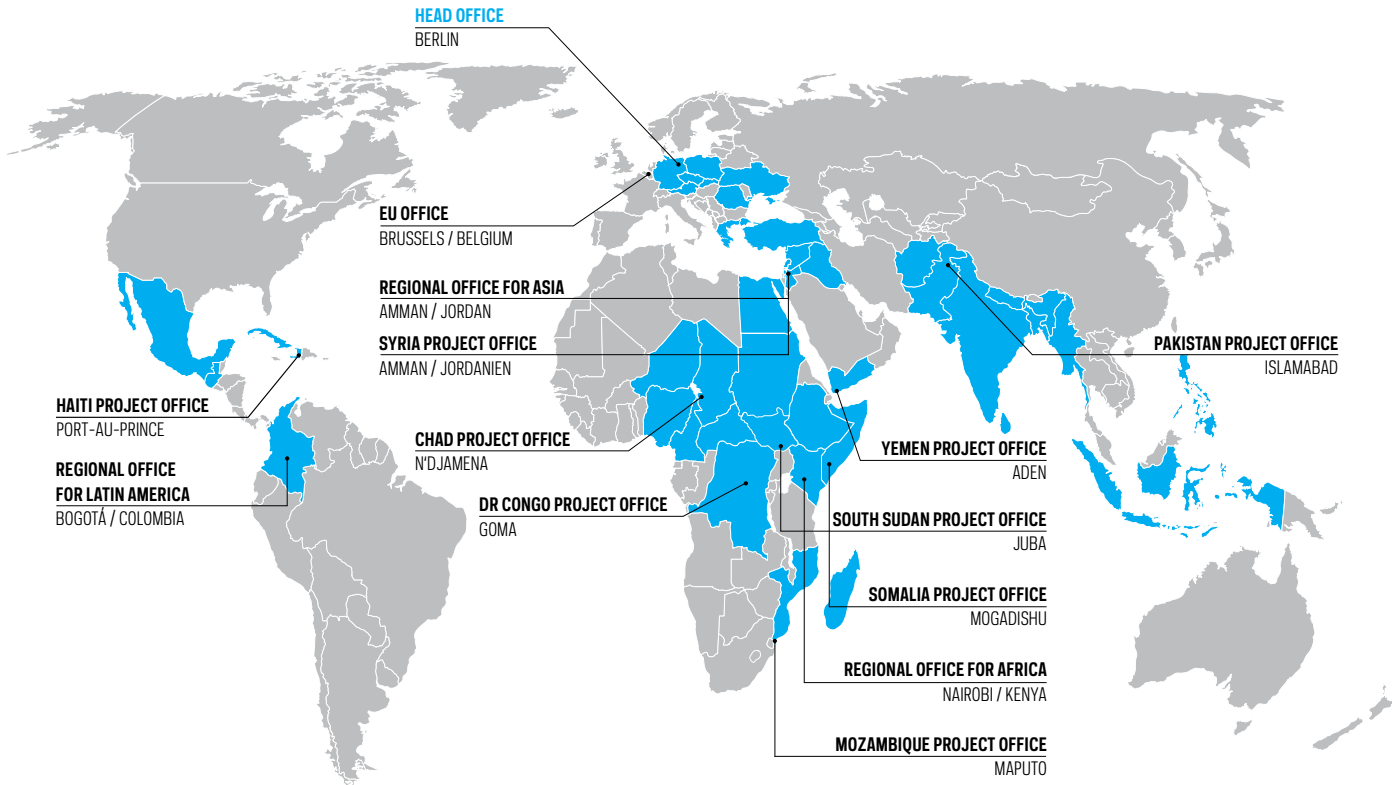
When we were founded in 1954, our main mission was to supply food and medicines to Eastern Europe. Over the years, humanitarian assistance has steadily changed and become more professional – and so too has our approach. Today, our aid is based on analysis of context and need, on market and risk assessments and on data security of the people we help. Now, as then, the aim is to enable affected people to live in dignity and safety, to offer them hope for the future and to alleviate human suffering.

Important standards and regulations such as the **Core Humanitarian Standards** and, most crucially, the humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence) have become established. However, in recent years we have observed a tendency for these principles to be ignored by state and non-state actors. We are noticing with deep concern an erosion of previously generally accepted values and thus a weakening of the humanitarian system as a whole. In many places we are seeing a contraction of the space for civil society (**shrinking space**). As a result, we and our partners are being denied access to the needy in these places.

In addition to global political developments, the forms of cooperation are also changing. Where most of our projects used to last just a few months, we are now often funding multi-year projects more closely tied to development. Third-party donors are increasingly pushing for the implementation of large-scale programmes that require long-term planning and consortium approaches. Consequently, strategies that bring humanitarian assistance, development and peace activities together – the so-called **Triple Nexus** – are gaining in importance. The close cooperation with our sister organisation Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World) enables us to plan coherent humanitarian assistance measures and development projects.

We welcome changes that aim to improve humanitarian assistance and to create a long-term perspective for the people and communities most in need of protection. We want to counteract the negative trends – such as the climate crisis, the crisis of multilateralism, an increase in intra-state conflict, the shrinking space etc. – and find new paths. Our future work will remain focused on the people and communities most in need of protection. Helping them motivates us

LOCATIONS AND PROJECT COUNTRIES



to constantly develop and refine our approaches. We are therefore very pleased to be presenting our strategy for the next five years. Because where we end up in the future will depend not just on global changes but also on ourselves. With this strategy and its implementation, we aim to set a course for the future and, together with our partners, provide stronger, more localised humanitarian assistance that has human dignity at its core.

Our vision and mission

Our vision

DIGNITY IN FOCUS – Localized humanitarian assistance

Our mission

We restore the life and hope of people in dignity.

We empower our partners.

Together we invest in preparedness, response, and resilience.

Our vision, **dignity in focus**, as well as our mission to deliver humanitarian assistance with dignity, makes it clear that for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe as a Christian organization dignity plays a central role for us. We believe that every person is created equal in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity. Since humanitarian assistance is often provided in moments when lives are at stake and peoples' means to support and maintain themselves in a dignified way are stripped away, leaving them dependent on outside support, it becomes even more important for providers of humanitarian assistance to observe the rights and dignity of affected people carefully and intentionally. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe wants to uphold the

dignity of affected populations by recognizing them as equals, serving them with full respect, and mindfully encouraging their self-reliance, self-determination, and capacity for self-organization as much as possible. People should be empowered and able to provide for their own needs and, whenever possible, to make their own choices about their lives and future ; when they are unable to provide for their needs, they should be able to express those needs to others who can provide support. Our work is fundamentally grounded in the principles of mutual respect and accountability. **How** we deliver humanitarian assistance therefore should be at least as important as **what** we deliver.

In practice, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe applies the concept of dignity by

- working through and empowering local partners who are embedded within or located nearby to the local population;
- promoting strong community participation and context specific, culturally sensitive responses that place great emphasis on and promote people's own preferences and choices as well as an organizational culture of openness, transparency, and learning;
- acknowledging the added value of religion and of faith-based actors in humanitarian response;
- linking prevention, emergency response, and rehabilitation; and
- strengthening local community prevention and response strategies to build resilience as well as highly participatory community based and mutual accountability.

Our strategy 2021+

Our way of working – WORKING ENVIRONMENT

How do we see the working environment?

Humanitarian assistance is mostly provided during crises, so we are frequently confronted with complex security situations. The social and economic situation of the population is usually desperate. Working in such difficult circumstances requires very good analysis of the socio-economic and political power relations, good knowledge of the local conditions and access to the sections of the population that are most badly affected. The way in which aid is delivered is very important to us, and we endeavour to provide our aid in such a way that human dignity is maintained and the context is appropriate. A key part of this is cooperating with local partner organisations. Via these partners, we can build on existing structures and networks and provide sustainable humanitarian assistance. In the best case, sustainable humanitarian assistance and development promote peace. This approach has been incorporated into the **Triple Nexus** concept. The Triple Nexus is addressed by the mandates of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its sister organisation Brot für die Welt. Joint initiatives by our two organisations are still in their early stages and this strategy will help to develop them further. Another goal of our work is to integrate the progress of digitalisation into our activities. Digitalisation plays an increasingly

important role in a humanitarian context too, not only in emergency relief but also in the various phases of disaster management. One example is the wide use of cash payments and vouchers, where technology such as iris scans and other biometric processes can be used to verify identity. These and other forms of data collection increase the data protection risks. Good data protection standards and appropriate technologies are becoming increasingly important and we are seeking to establish them.

Where do we want to be?

We firmly believe that local people and local partnerships are the key to providing aid more effectively and more sustainably. Our programmes are based on the ‘Do No Harm’ principle and are conflict sensitive. They take account of the needs of the people affected, especially women and girls, in long-running crises. Our aim is to equip people to make their own decisions. Because the most important actors in the development and structuring of humanitarian assistance are those who are actually suffering. They are our priority. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, its partners and ultimately the people affected should benefit at all levels from digitalisation.

How do we aim to achieve change?

- We are pursuing a globally coherent and localised approach adapted to local needs and circumstances. This enables us to integrate the challenges associated with providing aid in conflict and crisis situations into our work and deliver sustainable humanitarian assistance.
- Our programmes are designed and delivered in accordance with the Triple Nexus approach.
- We aim to harness the possibilities afforded by digitalisation to further increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our humanitarian assistance for the benefit of people in need.



Partnership & Networks

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is a signatory of the Charter for Change of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. We have committed to work with local partner organisations to implement humanitarian assistance programmes. This is reflected in the policy paper 'Unser Verständnis von partnerschaftlicher Zusammenarbeit bei Brot für die Welt und Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe' (Our understanding of partnership-based cooperation at Brot für die Welt and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe). The importance of strengthening churches and church-based and civil society organisations as locally based humanitarian actors is obvious to us. We already have an established network of local church and secular partners. As an organisation whose roots lie in the church, we are also a member of the ACT Alliance, an international church-based network of aid organisations with 135 members. The ACT Alliance provides

humanitarian assistance all around the world and is also active in development and lobbying. This network enables us to identify new local partners more easily.



Our objective

- We pursue an approach of long-term partnerships through which we seek to strengthen local humanitarian assistance.
- We see local organisations as strategic partners with whom we want to establish long-term collaboration. They are an integral part of our activities. We work with them as equals. We want to communicate this collaboration more effectively to the outside world in future, for example by contributing to localisation debates.
- We want to present ourselves to the public as a respectful organisation that works closely with its partners.
- We will support the local partner organisations to gain better access to international funding (e.g. UN funds), conferences and forums - in particular the UN cluster meetings.
- The ACT Alliance is an important and strategic network for us and we hope to continue working with it.



Conflict, Crisis & Nexus

Most conflicts have complex causes that cannot be quickly resolved. The main features are recurrent outbreaks of violence, destruction of infrastructure, poor or non-existent basic public services, a low presence of development actors and a large number of (both short-term and long-term) displaced persons. In order to reach suffering people in these regions, respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law is essential. But even when we are allowed access, working in such an environment comes with high risks for the safety of employees, partner organisations and the local population. For example, sexual violence against women and girls is often widespread in such situations, and is frequently used as a tactic of war.

In conflict and crisis zones, there is a heavy demand for infrastructure, support and services that require multi-year planning and funding. We support the increasingly strong international focus on cooperation between humanitarian assistance, development and peace-building. The



report of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit calls upon actors to coordinate their efforts and work towards joint results - a demand that is justified in view of the challenges mentioned above and one that we wholeheartedly support.

Our objective

- Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its partners are able to deliver conflict-sensitive, policy-based humanitarian assistance and protection in conflict zones.
- Our programmes and projects apply the Triple Nexus approach. The projects of the Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung are developed jointly with our sister organisation Brot für die Welt.
- We help to ensure that those who are worst affected by conflict and displacement - especially women and children - live in dignity and safety. Their basic needs are met and they can exercise their rights and gain access to basic services. We help people to make their own life choices and develop realistic prospects for their future.
- In our programmes, we take account of the local situation and pay particular attention to the special needs of women and girls.
- The lobbying and advocacy work of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its partner organisations will continue to focus on ending violent conflict, ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles and finding solutions for long-running crises and population displacement.



Digitalisation

Digitalisation has led to radical changes and affects all areas of society, including health, education, work and mobility. Technological solutions are becoming increasingly prevalent in the area of humanitarian assistance, too, and now influence our work. Social media, crowdsourcing and satellite images enable us to gather information and pictures of the current situation on the ground, even in places that are hard to reach. Some technologies have become considerably cheaper and more flexible over time and are therefore affordable for a larger section of the world's population. However, neither the potential to improve humanitarian assistance nor the associated risks of digitalisation

have been sufficiently explored so far. There has also been little discussion of gender issues relating to digitalisation. One question is whether new technologies will reinforce old role models or offer opportunities for improving the position of women in traditional communities.

Digital methods in humanitarian assistance workflows are still relatively new for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. We use tools for communication, but so far have no integrated, custom-built IT infrastructure. Software solutions offer opportunities for the more efficient integration of our global locations and partner organisations into project management. We aim to make this development usable for our partners and thereby make our work more efficient. In addition, the use of digital platforms will allow us to link our global project activities more closely to our communication activities, and make them accessible to the public.



Our objective

- We are a digitalised organisation that uses new technological solutions in its humanitarian work.
- We ensure that digital technologies are used safely so as to protect our partner organisations and the affected population.
- Our work in the offices in Germany and abroad and the cooperation with the partner organisations is supported and made more efficient through the use of digital tools.
- We analyse the opportunities and risks of digitalisation and use the new digital opportunities at all levels of programme planning and implementation for the benefit of people in need.

Our focus – OPERATIONAL FIELDS

How do we see our operational fields?

We work with our partners to develop projects and then present them to donors or fund them ourselves. The areas in which we operate are very diverse. They are selected on the basis of the specialist knowledge of the partner organisations or the local context. We select our partner organisations not on the basis of the field in which they specialise, but on the basis of their experience in humanitarian assistance. This is why the areas in which Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe operates vary from project to project and from country to country. On the one hand, this makes us flexible and able to respond to all types of disaster and emergency situation. On the other, the specialist support we can offer to partners is limited. However, our strategy process has shown that we have many effective strategies and practical expertise in a wide range of areas. The aspect that is still somewhat lacking is the ability to translate this expertise into practical work and make it usable for all regions and partner organisations.

Where do we want to be?

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its partner organisations have a holistic approach to the provision of humanitarian assistance. Our work is based on analysis of need and risk, is strictly aligned with humanitarian principles and standards and takes account of the special needs of women and girls. This applies at every phase in



the provision of humanitarian assistance and has the overarching goal of helping people affected to take control of their own lives.

We want to consolidate the existing expertise, build on it, and thereby position ourselves more strongly in the following areas: (1) safeguarding, protection and psychosocial support, (2) food security and nutrition, (3) livelihoods and markets and (4) disaster risk reduction and climate change impact mitigation. In future, we will work with partner organisations that specialise in at least one of the four areas or are prepared to strengthen their capabilities.

How do we aim to achieve change?

- We want to develop expertise-based concepts and deepen our specialist knowledge in the four selected areas.
- We ensure equality of the sexes in our programmes.
- Our donors, partner organisations and the public are aware of our expertise and regularly call upon it.



Safeguarding, Protection & Psychosocial Support

In conflict situations, the displacement of people and the destruction of infrastructure create a domino effect. The worst-affected people are no longer able to meet their basic needs and are very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, which further increases their plight. Women and girls are at greater risk of becoming victims of gender-specific violence and human trafficking. There is also increased susceptibility to disease and exposure to other risks such as mortality of mothers and infants, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion, child marriage and forced marriage. The legal status of refugees, frequently also of internally displaced persons, is in many

cases unclear. In conflict situations, refugees and internally displaced persons often have no access to education and healthcare or to the labour market. Here too, women and girls without male companions are more often affected.

These situations can have a considerable impact on mental health, which also adversely affects the ability to function in society and changes the dynamic within families and communities. Social cohesion may also be affected by xenophobia, by living in a camp or by violence (gang violence, domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence).



Our objective

- We and our partner organisations work to ensure that people who are affected by disasters, violence and displacement are shielded from the knock-on effects. They should know their rights and be able to exercise them, and have access to services that allow them to meet their basic needs.
- Our employees and partner organisations are trained in the psychosocial effects of conflict and disasters and are able to tackle them.
- Our programmes treat the particular needs and competencies of women and girls with the same level of urgency as aspects such as shelter, water and food.
- We use a systematic approach to address the rights and needs of women, children, older people and people with disabilities.



Food Security & Nutrition

The number of people around the world affected by food insecurity has risen to an estimated 821 million in recent years. That means that one in every nine people in the world goes to bed hungry (FAO 2019). There is a direct correlation between food insecurity of families and undernourishment in children. The various forms of undernourishment over the course of a person's life are connected and affect women (mothers, pregnant women, breastfeeding women) and children in particular. Insufficient and unsuitable food is not only linked to hunger and direct health consequences, but also hampers progress in many areas of development, such as education and employment. The many factors that lead to food insecurity and malnutrition include conflict, political instability or unrest, economic shocks, inequality, unstable food systems, extreme weather conditions, climate change and the increase in pest plagues (armyworm, locusts) that threaten harvests. These factors affect most of the countries in which Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe operates.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has already triggered a global economic crisis and will also have negative effects on local economies and markets. Forecasts suggest that the pandemic and its consequences are destroying livelihoods and increasing the threat to food security, particularly in places where these were already fragile. The sections of the population most in need of protection will be the most badly affected.



Our objective

- The integrated programmes for food security we deliver together with our partner organisations help to strengthen the resilience of the population groups affected so that they are better able to cope with crises.
- In acute humanitarian emergencies, our assistance may involve directly supplying food. Access to a safe and balanced diet prevents potentially life-threatening deterioration to a person's nutritional status.
- We want to preserve livelihoods and create the conditions in which people can become self-reliant again. This can be achieved through in-kind assistance, cash, vouchers and/or support for local markets.
- In the medium term, we combine these measures with programmes that support people in building a livelihood, thereby leading to more lasting solutions.



Livelihoods & Markets

Securing livelihoods and establishing food security are central and closely linked themes in humanitarian assistance. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) defines livelihood as activities that enable people to secure their basic needs through an income. Income is earned on the basis of knowledge, skills, materials and other resources and through work in agriculture, livestock or employment. This enables people to provide for their food security and self-reliance in a dignified way, which in turn leads to stability,



prosperity and peace. Functioning local markets are essential to ensure that all people can access food. Markets offer the most important means of earning an income or buying goods to meet one's basic needs.

Conflict, extreme weather events, economic shocks and epidemics can affect small local businesses and local markets and thereby threaten people's livelihoods and food security. Weather events can directly endanger harvests and/or livestock and make roads impassable so that goods are prevented from getting to markets. Market-based programmes operate via local markets or support them, for example through the distribution of cash or vouchers or by strengthening the ability of market players to run or expand their own businesses. Measures aimed at livelihoods and markets create additional links between emergency relief and reconstruction on the one hand and longer-term development on the other. They thereby contribute to the nexus.

Our objective

- Our programmes strengthen people's resilience so that they are better able to cope with crisis situations. Our programmes are focused on food security, markets and livelihood and link these areas together.
- Working with our partner organisations, we use appropriate tools and systems and implement market-based programmes as well as programmes aimed at securing livelihoods.
- The local markets are regularly analysed and are central aspects in our project evaluations and monitoring activities.
- While providing aid - and not just in connection with our projects - we secure the livelihoods of the people affected.



Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Impact Mitigation

The impact of global climate change and the effects that are already noticeable today will undoubtedly play a major role in the coming years and will intensify the ecological, economic, social and political problems all over the world. Disasters triggered by natural (hydro-meteorological, geological and biological) hazards or by man (environmental destruction), such as droughts, floods, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions as well as outbreaks of disease and pest infestation, affect many developing and emerging countries. Extreme weather phenomena and sustained periods of drought, often caused or exacerbated by environmental destruction, are happening more frequently, are more severe and last longer. The possible consequences include loss of human life and immense damage to communities, infrastructure and the local and national economy.

The aim of disaster preparedness is to help prevent risks before they materialise. The disaster preparedness measures based on cooperation with local communities include the development and communication of knowledge and skills. Communities should be equipped to effectively anticipate the impact of disasters and respond to them so that they can recover. Women are disproportionately badly affected in this context,

too, and therefore play a key role in preventing disasters. We believe humanitarian assistance should not only invest in disaster preparedness in places where there is peace, but also investigate how measures to prepare for, adapt to and prevent disasters can also work effectively in conflict zones.



Our objective

- Working with our partner organisations, we define, plan and implement suitable measures. These include digitally-enabled risk assessments and early warning systems, participatory scenario planning, disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation measures, community-led disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction.
- We strengthen local communities - with a focus on women and girls - and partner organisations, and support them in preparing for disasters. This means taking preventive measures to minimise the impact of disasters and develop greater resilience.
- We encourage communities, civil society organisations and church-based organisations to actively engage in forums, networks and consortia in order to influence decisions on policies, systems and processes that have an impact at the local level.

Member of
actalliance

Diakonie 
Katastrophenhilfe