

» Because faith gives hope. «

Activity Report 2021



PONTIFICAL FOUNDATION

Imprint

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First edition.

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Dear friends,

"But where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20). These words of St Paul offer us hope as we look back on the year 2021, which was marked by innumerable examples of pain, distress and suffering: The persistence of the pandemic almost everywhere in the world, the spread of jihadist violence in many African countries, war, violence and the persecution of Christians. All this compels us to help the suffering Church and wounded humanity with ever greater love.

Yet, despite so many ordeals, we have also been privileged to be astonished witnesses of the miracles of Divine Providence. For never before has your generosity in bringing aid and comfort to the needy been as overwhelming as it was this year. The response to increasing needs has been even greater generosity! We thank God that He repeatedly opens people's hearts to enable them to perform "heroic deeds" of love.

We are particularly concerned about violations of religious freedom, which are increasing worldwide. This not only includes the murderous bloodshed with which Christians are brutally persecuted in the Middle East and in large parts of Africa and Asia, but we also observe with growing concern the equally real "white-glove" persecution of Christians, which, although not engaging in physical violence, is no less aggressive in its ideological outlook. This hostile ideology is covertly invading the world of politics, culture, entertainment, education and communication.

More than ever, Christians around the world need our loving compassion, our solidarity, our apostolate and our prayers. On their behalf, I thank you, dear benefactors, for your generous love, and ask merciful God that with your help He may continue to enable us to respond to the many thousands of appeals for aid that will reach us again this year from some 130 countries around the world.

I bless you and entrust you all to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She will help us to transform our lives into a gift, into a constant "yes" to the will of the Lord, to open our hearts to Christ and to let the mystery of salvation penetrate deeply into our lives.

mauno Kand . Viacenza



Mauro Cardinal Piacenza President of the Papal Foundation Aid to the Church in Need





» I cordially bless you all. «

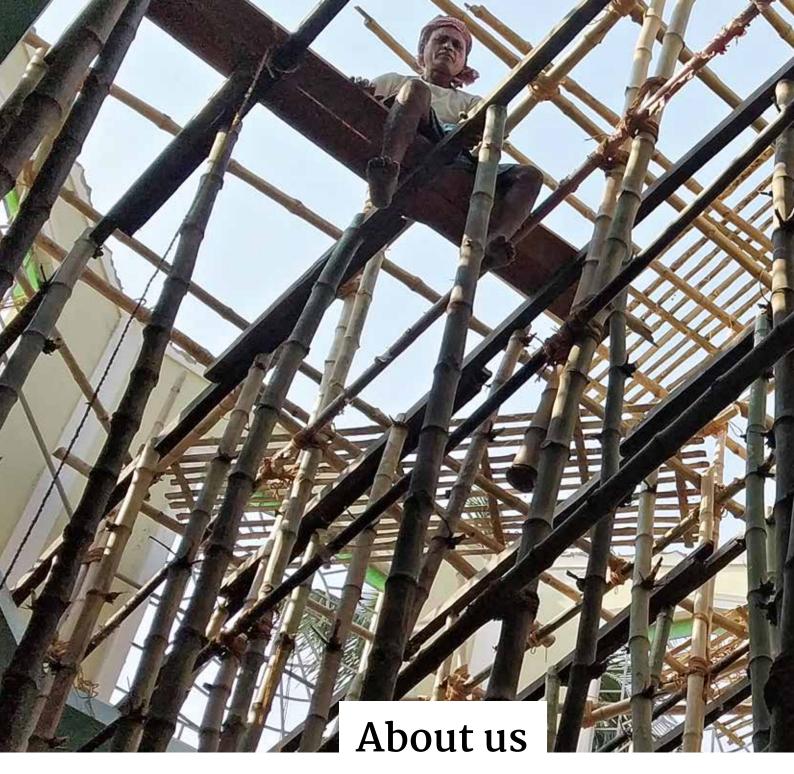
Dear friends, may the Lord make your prayers and your commitment to the mission of the Church always nurture more fruit throughout the world, especially where it is suffering from spiritual and material needs or is discriminated against and persecuted.

I cordially bless you all.

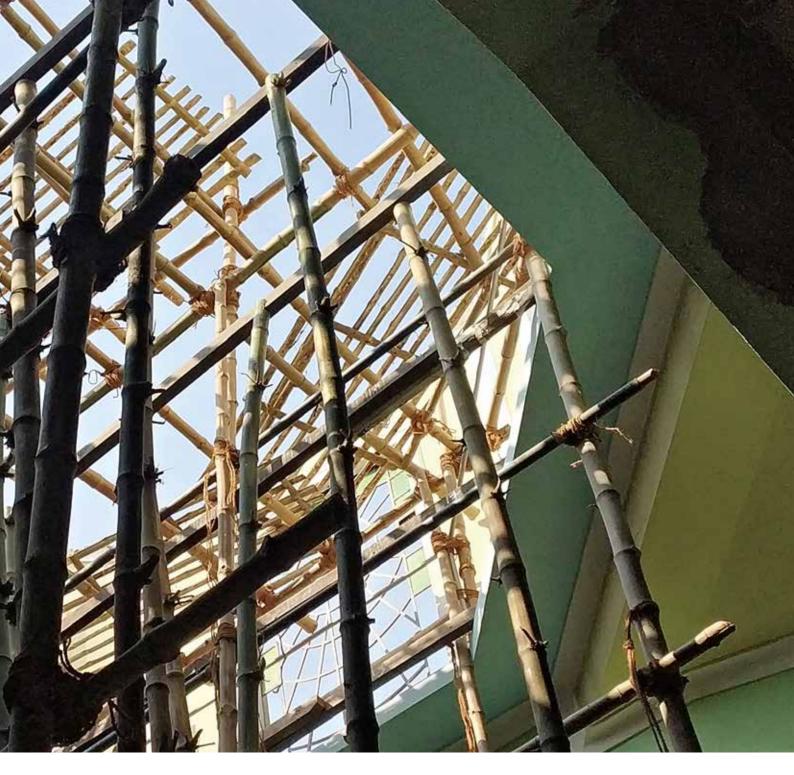
Pope Francis to the members and benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need at the general audience on 2 October 2013, in Rome

> As a Pontifical Foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has the mandate to act on behalf of the Church.





Learn more about Aid to the Church in Need on the following pages: How we were formed and the history of our mission; what we are committed to; our funding priorities in 2021.



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Cover back Aid to the Church in Need - contacts worldwide

» Aid to the Church in Need helps Christians around the world who are persecuted by violence and oppressed by terror. «



From its beginnings, the Church has always provided care for those in need. In addition to its pastoral mission, it is committed to sponsoring social assistance organisations worldwide and supporting those in need in many crisis areas.

But many do not realise that the Church itself often requires urgent help, mainly in developing countries and among those affected by displacement, persecution or catastrophe. According to our calculations, close to 70% of the world population live in countries without full access to religious freedom, and 50% of the world population live in countries with outright persecution. The fundamental right of religious freedom is not guaranteed in more than 62 countries.

More than 400 million Christians live in countries with religious persecution.Here the Church's infrastructure and the human dignity of the faithful cannot be main-

» I am so grateful for all that you are doing to help our suffering people. May our Lord bless you, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. «

Sr Annie Demerjian, project partner, Syria Thomas Heine-Geldern, Executive President

tained through their own resources, or if so, only with great difficulty. In many of these countries, monetary donations are the only source of income for the Church.

Unlike most charities working to alleviate social needs, Aid to the Church in Need concentrates on supporting local churches, thereby upholding the ideals of Christian charity.

Founded in 1947 as a Catholic aid organisation for war refugees and recognised as a Pontifical Foundation since 2011, Aid to the Church in Need is dedicated to the service of Christians around the world, wherever they are persecuted or oppressed or suffering material need. This is enabled entirely through the generosity of private donors, as our foundation receives no public funding.

Together with hundreds of thousands of benefactors and project partners, we support Christians around the world under our guiding principle "prayer, information and action". In addition, we are committed to religious freedom and reconciliation across all faiths. Our long-standing experience and belief in the power of charity encourage us to continue on this path and to inspire people about our work around the globe.



Church in Need - our name says it all

Over the 75 years since its foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has developed into an aid organisation with a broad range of tasks. Today, we can rightly claim that our name says it all. We now support some 5,300 Catholic projects each year in 132 countries - many of these over the long term. In this way, we frequently remain in crisis areas much longer than other aid organisations.

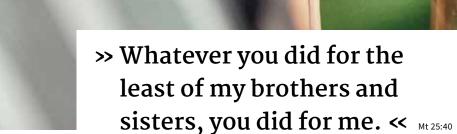
Of course, this requires not only personnel and logistical resources, but also the necessary financial means. Only through the donations of over 347,000 benefactors from all over the world are we able to fulfil our mission of providing and promoting pastoral assistance.



And the list of areas in which we are asked to help continues to grow:

- ÷ Mass stipends (→ p. 18)
- Training of priests and religious (\rightarrow p. 20)
- Existential help മ for religious $(\rightarrow p. 22)$
- Faith formation 0 of laity $(\rightarrow p. 23)$
- Construction and reconstruction Ω of church facilities $(\rightarrow p. 24)$
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- Media support for the U propagation of faith $(\rightarrow p. 40)$





The roots of Aid to the Church in Need go back to the period following the Second World War. Europe lay in ruins, with millions of people displaced, traumatised, homeless and plagued by hunger. Among those suffering most were Germanspeaking refugees from Central and Eastern Europe.

In this time of great need, Father Werenfried van Straaten founded – at the behest of Pope Pius XII – the organisation Aid to the Eastern Priests ("Ostpriesterhilfe") at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tongerlo, Belgium. This later became the papal aid organisation that we know today as Aid to the Church in Need.

As a pastoral initiative to provide spiritual and material support to priests and German-speaking Catholics who were expelled from Central and Eastern European states after the Second World War, our organisation operated in the spirit of reconciliation from the very beginning.

One of the first steps it took was to organise food and clothing for war refugees in Germany, as well as providing them with pastoral care. Initially the task seemed nearly impossible – especially considering that those from whom donations were sought were themselves victims of the German war occupation in Belgium and the Netherlands. However, with passionate calls for reconciliation and brotherly love, Father Werenfried succeeded in bringing about a wave of charity.

It was above all our aid organisation's highly original projects that thrust it into the spotlight. For instance, it dispatched "rucksack priests" on motorcycles and in VW Beetles to German Catholic diaspora







charity as concretely nived far

areas to provide pastoral care for the displaced people there.

In 1950, we also started the "chapel truck campaign", converting 35 trucks into "chapels on wheels" for displaced people. Our aid organisation repeatedly demonstrated its ability to meet exceptional challenges through successful projects. During the Cold War years, for example, we undertook unparalleled steps to protect the interests of the persecuted Catholic Church in the Iron Curtain countries. In the 1960s, our aid programmes were extended to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Thanks to the hundreds of thousands of benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need, annual donations worldwide now total over 133 million euros. This story proves once again how faith, when put into practice, leads to charity.

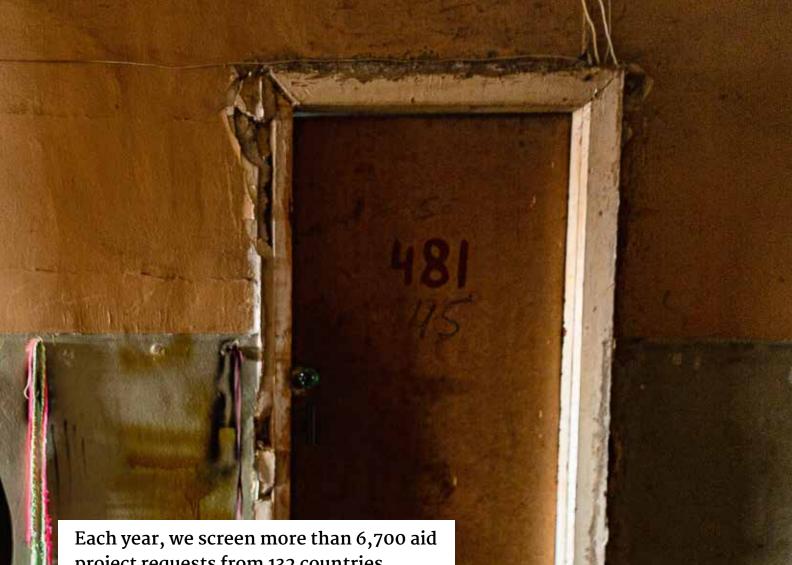


» The camaraderie among the staff and volunteers is simply wonderful, and this itself makes our job all the more worthwhile. « Mervyn Maciel, volunteer, UK



There are numerous charities that look after those in need. What distinguishes Aid to the Church in Need from these organisations? We are the only international Catholic organisation focusing on the pastoral and spiritual support of persecuted and suffering Christians. Following our inclusion under the Vatican's umbrella, our General Secretariat in Germany and our 23 National Sections have been successful in building a unique bridge between benefactors and those in need.





project requests from 132 countries.

Due to its global structure, Aid to the Church in Need can quickly identify needs and respond promptly with aid projects. This is enabled by an efficient framework that keeps bureaucracy to a minimum while thoroughly verifying and approving projects for our project partners.

Our General Secretariat supports the fundraising efforts of the National Sections and annually screens about 6,700 aid applications from around the world, which are examined and either approved or rejected by the decision-making bodies. Our head office maintains contact with project partners in 132 countries, ensuring the appropriate use of donations.

Through our National Sections, we maintain close contact with our donors. The public relations work of our offices aims to deliver a high degree of transparency regarding the purpose of donations and how they are used locally, building a bridge between project partners and benefactors.

In addition, our income and expenditure are audited annually by certified accountants, as the trust of our donors is the basis of our success.



» I often thank the Lord for your presence beside us. Without you, it would be so hard to go on with our ministry. « Sr Hanan Youssef, project partner, Lebanon

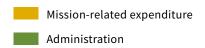
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» We were able to support 5,298 projects around the world in 2021. «

In 2021, we received 6,782 applications for aid from all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we collected record donations of 133,1 million euros, enabling us to fund activities amounting to 128.5 million euros. 4.6 million euros that could not be used in 2021, are earmarked for project aid in 2022. In line with the three pillars of our work, "prayer, information, action", by far the largest share of our expenditure, 82.4%, was devoted to mission-related expenses, i.e. concrete project work, information and prayer activities.

The proportion of necessary expenditures for administration and fundraising was, as always, very low at 6.7% and 10.9%, respectively, so

Detailed use of funds (2021)

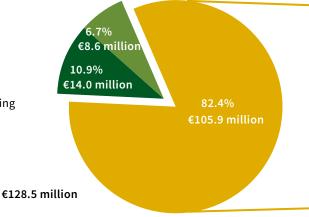


Donor relations and fundraising

that as many funds as possible could reach local Christians.

In 2021, we supported a total of 5,298 projects in 132 countries with approximately 92,8 million euros. A further 13,1 million euros were used for proclamation of the faith, information work and advocacy for disadvantaged and persecuted Christians worldwide.

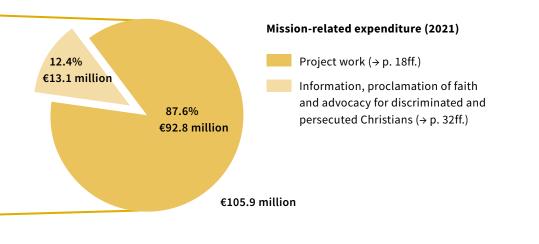
Bequests made up a significant part of our support for the Church in 2021 at 27.2 million euros, or 20.4% of our revenues. Together with our brothers and sisters in need, we therefore not only thank our living benefactors, but also gratefully remember those who support us beyond death.





Offices in 23	countries
More than 347,000	donors worldwide per year
133,124,304	euros in donations and legacies
Project partners in 132	countries
5,298	projects supported worldwide
82.4	% of the funds used are allocated to mission-related expenses

All financial figures are audited by the independent auditing firm PwC.



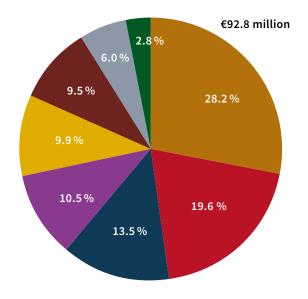
*Valid as of 2021



At 28.2%, building and reconstruction projects for churches and church institutions claimed the largest share of funding.

One fifth of the funds was used for Mass stipends, which benefited priests and their parishes. Another fifth was used for the training of priests and the faith formation of lay people. As many religious sisters have been severely affected by the ongoing pandemic, we once again increased our subsistence aid for the sisters – which rose to 10.5% of our total aid.

In addition, we are active in acute crises with emergency aid measures for the suffering population. In 2021, such emergency aid in areas where Christians are threatened by violence and displacement accounted for 9.9% of our total aid.



Aid granted by type of help (2021)

Construction and reconstruction (\Rightarrow p. 24)Image: Construction (\Rightarrow p. 24)Mass stipends (\Rightarrow p. 18)Image: Construction of priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 20)Image: Construction of priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 20)Subsistence help for religious (\Rightarrow p. 22)Image: Construction of priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 22)Image: Construction of priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 22)Subsistence help for religious (\Rightarrow p. 22)Image: Construction of priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 22)Image: Construction of priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 22)Means of transport for pastoral care (\Rightarrow p. 25)Image: Construction of priests and religious priests and religious (\Rightarrow p. 23)Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (\Rightarrow p. 28)Image: Construction of priests and religious priests and pri

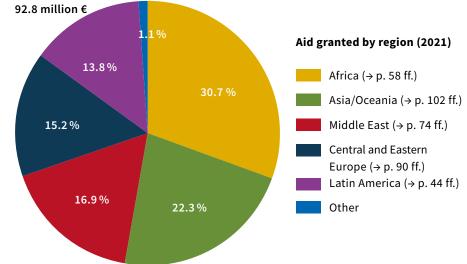
» Our relief measures start with close dialogue with the local churches «

Receiving 30.7% of the funding, Africa was again the priority region for our aid projects in 2021. The situation is particularly dramatic in places where Islamist terror is spreading and Christians are victims of persecution and displacement, such as in Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. The coronavirus pandemic has further aggravated the situation of the Church.

Our aid to Asia increased to 22.3% in 2021, as the continent continued to be severely affected by the pandemic. The situation was particularly dramatic in India, where our aid helped priests and religious to continue their pastoral work.

Central and Eastern Europe received 15.2% of the funds. Here, too, many priests and religious continued to suffer existential hardships as a result of the pandemic. Our funding volume for the Middle East was 16.9% of our total aid, with Syria and Lebanon as focal points in 2021. The aim of our emergency aid was to ensure the survival of Christian communities and to counteract the massive exodus of Christians.

Latin America accounted for 13.8% of our total aid. In 2021, the continent continued to be one of the epicentres of the pandemic, further heightening poverty within the population and causing priests to face increasing existential hardships due to the lack of collections.





Our task areas

Regardless of whether we are providing subsistence aid for priests and religious, Mass stipends, training of seminarians, emergency relief aid during war and natural catastrophes or publicity work for the propagation of the faith, Aid to the Church in Need's task areas are as diverse as they are urgent. We lend assistance and fund activities where Christians are persecuted and the Church suffers hardships.



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» Putting the plight of the people before God is part of our mission.« Father Martin Barta, International

Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation

Helping persecuted and needy Christians is of the utmost priority to Aid to the Church in Need. Whether through Mass stipends, the funding of priestly formation, existential help for religious members or the formation of faith among the laity we sponsor thousands of brothers and sisters every year so that they, in turn, can support the faithful.



Father Juan Pablo Contempomi celebrates Holy Mass in Cruz Del Eje, Argentina.



Christening in Dori Cathedral, Burkina Faso.



• In many regions today, the faithful 🖌 are so poor that they cannot support their priests. Even the bishops often lack the financial means to provide their priests with a regular wage. In these areas, Mass stipends are often their only means of material support. Mass stipends are monetary donations connected with the request to celebrate Holy Mass for the deceased and the sick or other concerns of the benefactors.

In 2021, a total of 2,095,677 Holy Masses were celebrated in the intentions of our benefactors. In this way, we were able to support a total of 52,879 priests on average, about every eighth priest worldwide.

The distribution of the Mass stipends reflects the conditions of poverty on the continents. In the reporting year, 29.8% of the Mass stipends went to Africa, 36.5% to Asia and to the Near and Middle East, 16.3% to Latin America and 17.4% to Central and Eastern Europe.

» For some priests, Mass stipends are the only source of income. «

By focusing Mass prayers on deceased or sick relatives, on people who are experiencing life crises or on certain issues our donors may be facing, they take part in the Eucharistic celebration in a very special way. With this kind of donation, many of our benefactors recognise the profound spiritual purpose of uniting their charity with Church prayers. On average, a Holy Mass is held every 15 seconds for the intentions of ACN benefactors somewhere in the world.

Most of the priests not only use Mass stipends for their own subsistence, but are also able to cover some of the costs of their pastoral activities with them. In this way, Mass stipends are intended to secure the immediate livelihood of priests and their parishes. As a basic principle, 100% of the Mass stipends are forwarded to the intended recipients.



Mass stipends secure the livelihood of priests in Haiti.



and religious

The theological training and qualification of seminarians has always been an important focus of our aid. After all, future priests will ultimately be spiritual pillars and safeguard sacramental life. Therefore, our educational assistance mainly flows into countries where the suitable and continuous training of future priests is endangered or is not adequately ensured due to poverty, war or persecution. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we were able to fund a total of 13,381 seminarians in 2021. The continuing education of God's servants is also an important concern to us. In the reporting year, we sponsored the continuing education of 549 priests who themselves will train seminarians and thus maintain the qualitative level of priestly formation in their home countries over the long term.

» Scholarships are the seed which we hope will yield ripe fruit for the Church. «



Nigerian seminarian during class.

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In 2021, we were also able to award 222 scholarships to priests who, for example, are pursuing a doctorate or an additional course of study. In terms of continental distribution, 33.8% of our scholarship holders came from Asia, 46.8% from Africa, 15.8% from Latin America and 3.6% from Eastern Europe.

A seminarian playing football with children in La Guaira, Venezuela.

Safeguarding

ACN supports the Church in its abuse prevention efforts. For example, ACN sponsors courses around the world on the topic of safeguarding, in which priests and religious are trained to recognise and prevent sexual abuse and other forms of abuse of minors and wards.

ACN works closely with the leading Institute of Anthropology - Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care (IADC) at the Gregorian University in Rome, among others, to offer safeguarding courses. A main focus of these courses is the detection of abuse, so that it can be identified as early as possible. As a precondition for competent care, the devastating consequences of abuse on victims are taught. The aim is to learn effective measures, both in the prevention of abuse cases and in the treatment of suspected cases, e.g. in order to avoid a cover-up of abuse.

Our project partners only receive aid from ACN after submitting a written commitment to safeguarding. This aid is withdrawn if possible or actual cases of abuse are not adequately pursued. Safeguarding requirements also apply to ACN's own employees, who are required to comply with ACN's safeguarding guidelines and also receive regular training on them.

The full safeguarding policy can be viewed at www.acninternational.org/ safeguarding.



» We are working worldwide to improve the protection of minors and other wards. « Regina Lynch.

S. << Regina Lynch, Project Director



Children of needy families in Lebanon with Sister Antoinette.



Existence help for religious



Sister Mariam plays with a child in Ashotsk, the coldest city in Armenia. Particularly in areas with a great shortage of priests, religious sisters literally take care of all in the name of God: children and adults, orphans, the sick and the dying, failures and seekers, as well as the traumatised. These sisters often work under the most difficult conditions. Through their constant prayers and daily devotions, cloistered contemplative sisters provide great help to the suffering Church aswell.

In 2021 alone, we supported 18,473 religious sisters from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America in their valuable work.

» We recognise a successful aid project when people are once again free to live their faith. « Regina Lynch, Director of Projects



Faith formation of laity

There is a lack of priests in many of 0 the world's poorest countries. Here, the formation of the laity to serve as catechists is an essential element of preserving faith in daily life. On the completion of a basic cause in theology, women and men are empowered to share their faith and to prepare the faithful for the reception of the sacraments.

With our help, more than 37,745 laypersons were supported in their faith formation in 2021.



Worshippers in the Armenian Catholic Cathedral in Gyumri.

» It is our duty to support our brothers and sisters in faith. « Dolores Soroa Suárez de Tangil,

benefactress, Spain



Supporting the local Church in its pastoral care efforts for the faithful is the key task of Aid to the Church in Need. This includes supporting the construction, reconstruction or maintenance of church buildings so that the church can carry out its mission. We also finance vehicles for priests, sisters and catechists so that they can reach the faithful even in the most isolated areas. Wherever believers are victims of displacement, violence and persecution, we provide emergency relief to alleviate the worst suffering.

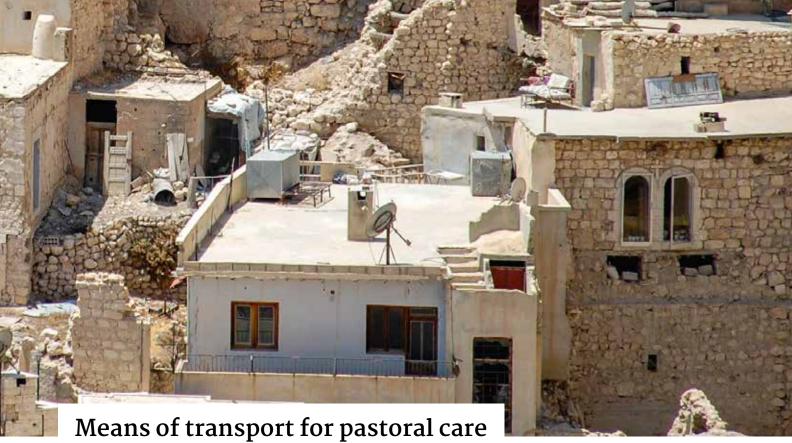


Construction and reconstruction of church facilities

Especially in crisis areas, churches and ecclesiastical institutions are often destroyed by violence. We support reconstruction in these areas, as the Church is the centre of the life of faith and a sign of hope.

Where the Church is growing, e.g. in Africa, Asia and Latin America, help is often needed to build up a new infrastructure. Therefore, Aid to the Church in Need provides assistance for the construction and reconstruction of churches, monasteries, pastoral centres and mission stations, thereby safeguarding and promoting the pastoral work of the Catholic Church worldwide. From more than 70 years of experience, we know that in slums, even the smallest chapel can give people a spiritual home.

949 such buildings were constructed or repaired with our help in 2021 alone.



As early as the 1950s, ACN sent \bigcirc chapel trucks as mobile churches to displaced persons. Today, ensuring that assistance and pastoral care are available to areas in need continues to be an important concern of Aid to the Church in Need.

We receive applications to fund vehicular purchases from every continent. Applications include requests for the purchase of trucks, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, boats, or in particularly difficult mountain regions, mules. In 2021 alone, 547 motor vehicles, 245 motorcycles, 539 bicycles and 7 boats were financed.







» For us, the greatest conceivable catastrophe would be not to act. <</p>
Guido Gröning, Director Finance and Administration





Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes

Emergency assistance for refugees is deeply rooted in the history of our relief organisation. Already in the 1950s, ACN carried out pioneering work in supporting displaced persons.

northern Nigeria, where Islamist terrorist groups are perpetrating acts of violence against the Christian minority, we stand by those who have not been able to save

The bitter truth is that there are more refugees worldwide than ever before. 84 million people are currently fleeing war and violence around the world; of these, 16 million alone are in the Middle East.

Our great financial commitment to refugees and displaced persons in the Middle East is not only a response to their pressing need, but also a contribution to stop the wave of Christian emigration and thus ensure the continuity of Christianity in the region (for more information, see the Middle East chapter starting on page 74).

But we support Christians who have been persecuted and expelled for their beliefs in many other parts of the world as well: whether in Mindanao in the Philippines or in anything but their bare lives.



Religious sisters of the Ukrainian Archeparchy of Ivano-Frankivsk in action against the coronavirus pandemic.



Sook that they can get hold of.
Fr. Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation



Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media

Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation," Jesus said. Aid to the Church in Need takes this assignment literally. For instance, since 1979, our organisation has been a publisher and global supplier of the Child's Bible, which has been translated into 193 languages and has already been distributed more than 51.4 million times. Often in poor countries, the Child's Bible is the first book that children receive in their own language; frequently, it is the only picture book that the little ones can get hold of in their entire lives.

In 2021 alone, 565,500 religious books were produced and distributed with the help of ACN.

In addition, Aid to the Church in Need promotes YOUCAT, the illustrated Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is now available in 70 languages. Since 2016, our foundation has also been the publisher of DOCAT, an up-to-date summary of the social teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church. You can find more information about YOUCAT and DOCAT on pages 38 to 39.



» We give persecuted Christians a voice. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

In line with our guiding principle "Prayer, Information, Action", our communications work gives a voice to those who often no longer have one. We present the pressing issues of the Church locally and advocate for the rights of persecuted Christians before other bodies, produce the Religious Freedom Report and also PR reports for print media, audiovisual products and social media.

This material is made available to National Offices for distribution to local media, including radio and television stations. With information campaigns, publications, events and conferences, the 23 National Offices advocate the welfare of the Church around the world.

As an advocate for Christians, we raise our voice for the disadvantaged and persecuted among them in many urgent cases. We have already been able to raise the attention of some very important leaders with our plea for more humanity and charity. A large part of our advocacy work is made possible by maintaining contacts during visits by project partner delegations, as well as by providing high-quality information. As a result, we have earned a great degree of trust and also a good reputation among EU politicians and other policymakers over the past few years, which helps us to initiate projects more easily and to win fellow campaigners.



With donations of 133 million euros, ACN is able to support many projects of the suffering Church around the world. However, money alone cannot solve many problems. It is therefore also important to inform and motivate governmental and transnational bodies so that they can influence local governments. In this way, ACN serves as an advocate for brotherly love and for Christians in need, or as our foundation likes to say: "We give persecuted Christians a voice."

ACN does not accept government funding, but can bring together governments that want to advocate for religious freedom and suffering Christians with reliable partners on the ground. In this way, we often succeed in sensitising political decision-makers to the increasing persecution of Christians around the globe and in explaining the background behind the issues. Our activities as an advocate for Christians were – as in the previous year – partially hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. As a result, we were forced to focus specifically on a few countries and topics through selected political decision-makers in Brussels and EU capitals, as well as in the USA. Despite the restrictions, important events did take place. Some of these were conducted digitally.

The publication of the Religious Freedom Report 2021 in April gave us the opportunity to make online presentations to several government agencies, universities, think tanks, specialist groups and other audiences. This has helped in maintaining awareness of the relevance of these issues in the media and through various "influencers" to governments. Consequently, the persecution of Christians and violations of religious freedom in Pakistan, Nigeria and Mozambique, the situation in Lebanon and the continuation of reconstruction in Iraq became more prominent in parliamentary resolutions and government communications. This resulted in significant government donations from Hungary and Portugal to local Church institutions in need.

ACN also participated in EU and UN webinars on human rights violations. These particularly dealt with abductions and sexual violence against Christian women and girls, as well as against members of other religious minorities in Pakistan.

In all our activities, we always concern ourselves with achieving synergy and reaching multipliers in order to inform opinion leaders about the plight of Christians and to mobilise them for dialogue and action.





Meeting on the occasion of #RedWednesday with the representatives of ACN UK.



Pope Francis at the launch of the Religious Freedom Report.



Panel at the International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington.



The Prince of Wales with the Director of ACN UK and the Chair of the FoRB Forum.



At the National Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) in Pakistan.

January-February

In the run-up to the Pope's visit to Iraq, ACN's information material reminded policymakers of the many continuing needs of Iraqi Christians and encouraged member states to continue to participate in rebuilding the infrastructure. Close cooperation with French Dominican Father Olivier Poquillon enabled ACN to take up contact with the French government. This culminated in a visit by President Macron to Iraq and the handover of 1.5 million euros for the reconstruction of the Church infrastructure in Mosul.

April

The month was marked by the publication of the Religious Freedom Report 2021 and the subsequent presentation of the publication and findings at various events and platforms initiated by the ACN national offices. The publications generated unprecedented media coverage and reached a potential readership of over 1.2 billion people. Over 50 presentations were made via webinars and in-person conferences to media, policy, legal and advocacy groups worldwide.

July

In Washington DC, an international gathering of policymakers, stakeholders and victims of religious persecution took place at the International Religious Freedom Summit in July with some 800 participants. This was convened by the former U.S. Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback. ACN was represented by Father Joseph Fidelis from Maiduguri, Nigeria, whose testimony was heard in two panels. ACN also organised bilateral meetings for him with international and US religious freedom groups and other stakeholders.

August

The Apostolic Nuncio in Germany receives the

Religious Freedom Report from the ACN President.

During the annual conference of the International Catholic Legislators Network (Frascati, Italy), a gathering of over 200 international politicians and experts, ACN took the lead in briefing the working group on persecuted Christians in Nigeria. Mark von Riedemann and Marcela Szymanski were also able to present the Religious Freedom Report 2021 to Pope Francis at a special meeting for the ICLN at the Vatican.

October

Due to pandemic restrictions, a face-toface visit by Cardinal Joseph Coutts of Pakistan with EU representatives was cancelled, and was instead transformed into a series of online meetings.

November-December

On the occasion of Red Wednesday in Prague, ACN took the opportunity to meet with the Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. The current foreign minister and leading members of the Christian Democratic Party also attended the meeting. The aim was to take action on the trade agreement with Pakistan and the appointment of a special ambassador for religious freedom.



Faith needs freedom: The Religious Freedom Report

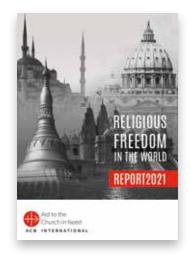
ACN Italy published the first Religious Freedom Report in 1999. The report records whether religious freedom is granted with regard to the world's religions and how the situation has developed in each of the last two years.

The report examines 196 countries, comprises almost 800 pages and is published in six languages. It is one of four reports on the state of global religious freedom. The other three are published by the American Pew Research Center, the U.S. State Department and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The ACN report is the only European non-governmental report that takes Catholic social teaching into account.

In November 2020, the ACN report "Religious Freedom in the World" would have been published for the 15th time. However, due to the pandemic, the publication date was postponed until 20 April 2021. The sad conclusion: Since the last report, the situation of religious freedom has not improved. On the contrary, it has worsened around the world. The rise of ethno-religious nationalism in countries such as Sri Lanka and India and the increased persecution of Christians and Muslims by extremist Islamic groups are highlighted as worrying developments in the report, as is the use of facial recognition technology in China, which is also being used to restrict religious freedom.

www.religious-freedom-report.org







Public relations

Whether media work, world meetings, conferences or campaigns – every year ACN puts the concerns of the suffering Church in the public eye. Unfortunately, many events had to be cancelled in 2021 due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, we are proud that together with our project partners we were able to conduct a few events, which were organised by the ACN central office or by some of the 23 national offices and which we would like to present here.

Presentation of the **Religious Freedom Report** by ACN at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin.



» It is important for our brothers and sisters in need to express their gratitude to you personally. <</p> Father Martin Barta



"Benefactors' Day"

In 2021, "Benefactors' Day" was celebrated for the first time. This will take place every year on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 2021, this fell on Friday, 11 June. Our many thousands of project partners worldwide – priests, religious sisters and brothers – were invited to pray on this day for the intentions of the benefactors of all 23 national offices of the aid organisation and to celebrate Holy Mass. For time, and again, our benefactors also entrust us with their own needs, worries and problems. Many of our project partners have promised us that they will participate in this day of gratitude, thereby offering something back to the people who have helped them.

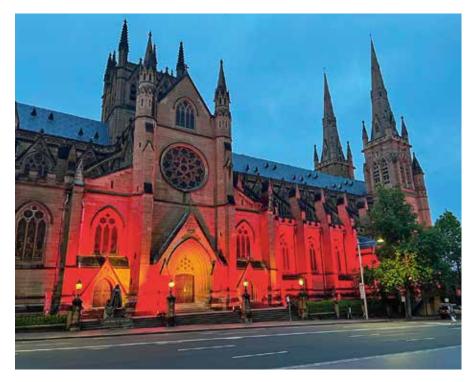


Dear friends and benefactors,

You often receive mail from the staff of the ACN Pontifical Foundation: the Echo of Love, letters, e-mails, news, reports. These missives usually contain a request for help and prayers for the suffering and persecuted Church. Your generous donations arrive every day in our national offices, starting in Australia, through the Philippines and South Korea, in 15 countries in Europe and four countries in Latin America, the USA and Canada, which we then pass on to the poor and suffering worldwide. Without your gifts, we would not be able to do much of anything. For years, many of you have been loyal donors, and for this we and all those who benefit from your help would like to say a heartfelt THANK YOU with this letter. Gratitude is part of love and it draws God's gifts of grace down to us. Even if most of you would like to remain anonymous and do not expect this gratitude, it is very important to us and to our brothers and sisters in need to express our thanks to you personally. [...]



Letter from Father Martin Barta, ACN International's Ecclesiastical Assistant, to our benefactors.



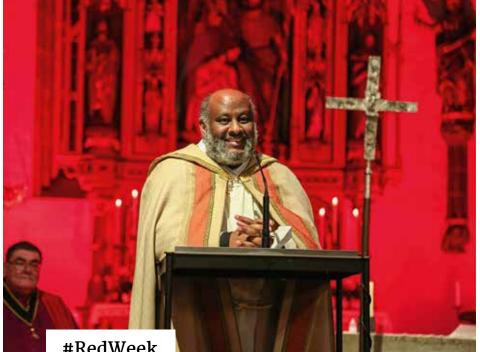




"Hear Her Cries"

The thematic focus of Red Week 2021 was the situation of young girls and women from Christian minority communities who are particularly affected by sexual violence and abuse. On this occasion, the ACN national office in the United Kingdom published the report "Hear Her Cries". The 52-page publication presents first-hand cases and accounts from victims, including three women from Egypt, two from Iraq, one from Mozambique, three from Nigeria and three from Pakistan. The report was launched at events in the Scottish Parliament and London's Westminster Cathedral, and at a service presided over by Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh in Ireland.

ACN UK has also launched a petition calling on the United Nations and UK authorities to take more effective action to tackle the "epidemic" of sexual violence against women and girls who are members of Christian and other religious minorities.



#RedWeek

#RedWeek, also called "Red Wednesday" in some countries, is an initiative that was launched by ACN in 2015 to draw public attention to the plight of persecuted and disadvantaged Christians. Around 250 million Christians around the world live in an environment in which they are violently persecuted, discriminated against or prevented from freely practising their faith.

A highlight of #RedWeek 2021 was the red lighting of the Maronite Cathedral of Saint Elijah in Aleppo, Syria, where representatives of various Christian denominations gathered for a service in memory of the suffering Church around the world. The Cathedral of Saint Elijah had been severely damaged during the Syrian war and was rebuilt with the support of ACN.

For the first time, Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina also joined the initiative. The Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Resurrection in Kyiv and the Cathedral in Sarajevo were lit up in red.

In Austria, as well, #RedWednesday found great public and governmental support. This year, in addition to more than 100 churches, monasteries and monuments, at least three large public buildings were illuminated in red, including the Parliament, the Federal

Chancellery and the Ministry of the Interior.

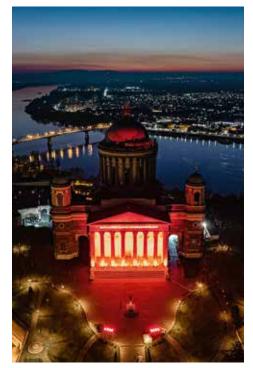
In Germany, more than 120 churches took part in the campaign. At various events, Christians from Eritrea, Egypt and Niger gave testimony of persecution and reconciliation, including Father Pierluigi Maccalli, an Italian missionary who was held by jihadists in Mali for more than two years.

In Paris, the Sacré-Coeur de Montmartre Basilica was bathed in red light. A prayer vigil was also held, which was broadcast live on Catholic television.

With 190 buildings lit up in red, the number of institutions participating in the action for religious freedom in the Czech Republic this year was higher than ever before. The programme in Prague included a conference at Charles University and a televised benefit concert at the Academy of Music.

In Portugal, in addition to churches, many landmarks were illuminated, such as the statue of Christ the King looking down on Lisbon from across the Tagus River.

Buildings and churches in many places in Poland were also illuminated



in red and various actions were held, including a silent march for persecuted Christians.

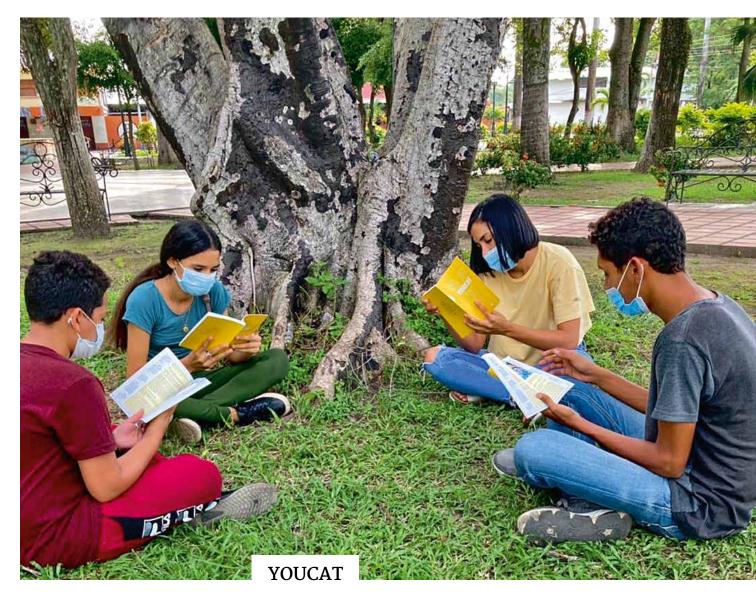
In Slovakia, at least 40 buildings were illuminated, including Bratislava Castle and several important cathedrals in the country. Many churches organised prayers for persecuted Christians.

Hungary participated in the initiative at an international level by illuminating its foreign embassies in red. Commemorations in the country were held with ecumenical participation. The Reformed Great Church in Debrecen and Esztergom Basilica were ablaze in red light.

In Canada, six dioceses participated in #RedWeek.

In Australia, three cathedrals – in Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart were illuminated in red. The places of worship also hosted liturgical celebrations with testimonies from persecuted Christians.

In addition to the illuminations of various buildings and commemorations, a Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians was organised in many countries, with many schools participating.



The YOUCAT series stands for the new evangelisation through catechetical means. It is published by YOUCAT Foundation gGmbH, a subsidiary of ACN. Last year, despite difficulties resulting from Covid-19, another 500,000 or so copies were used. The Catholic Youth Catechism has now been around for 10 years and we are pleased that the YOUCAT series has meanwhile reached a circulation of 10 million. With Vietnamese and Korean editions, for example, two more translations were recently launched, so that there are now over 70 translations.

In addition to the book series, YOUCAT also supports the ever more crucial dissemination of the Church's teaching content through free digital offers. In the YOUCAT Daily App, for example, users receive a daily impulse on their smartphone or computer on the daily Gospel from YOUCAT ("What we believe") or on the social teaching from DOCAT ("What we do"). In 2021 alone, YOUCAT Daily was accessed over 6.4 million times.

Further digital offerings can be found on the YOUCAT.org homepage. Catechetical articles on frequently requested topics of faith, interpretations of the Sunday Gospels or study material for prayer and study groups are enjoying increasing demand. In 2021, the YOUCAT homepage was called up 1.8 million times.

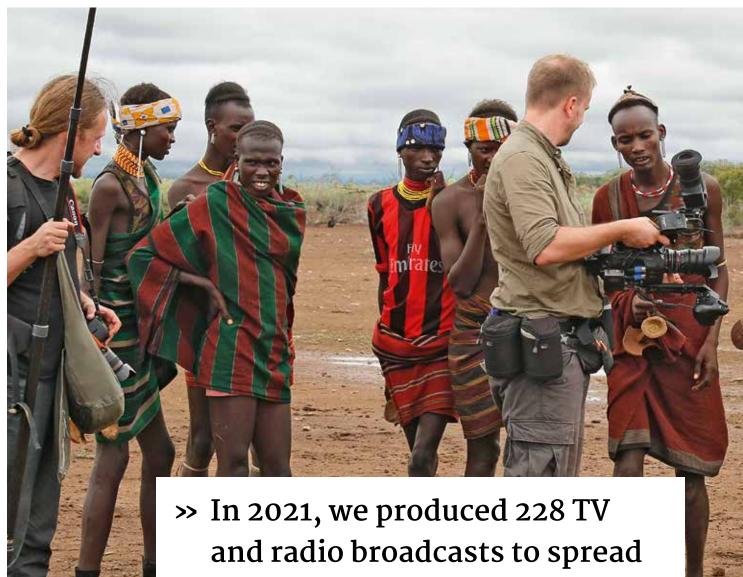
We are also grateful for having been able to relaunch two new evangelisation initiatives in 2021. After it was not possible in 2020, a small team of YOUCAT missionaries was once again on site at the request of the Lourdes pilgrimage site. And the programme to train young catechists, YOUNG Missio, could also be continued in 2021.

The new YOUCAT Faith Course complements the YOUCAT and encourages reflection and discussion about faith.



» I entrust you with the YOUCAT for Kids. Never grow tired of asking questions and talking about your faith. « Pope Francis





the faith. << Mark von Riedemann, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

Behind the Catholic Radio & Television Network (CRTN) is a modern production studio specialising in reports and documentaries on the Catholic Church in remote areas. The broadcasts primarily serve to support evangelisation efforts and promote solidarity with the suffering Church. Additionally, they further publicise the work of Aid to the Church in Need. Through our network, we are able to provide productions to TV and radio stations around the world. In 2021, the studio produced 228 TV and radio programmes in all language versions, which were then broadcast on 171 TV and 475 radio stations. In addition to documentaries and interview programmes such

as "Where God Weeps" and "Donde Dios Llora", we were able to produce a significant number of short films for special ACN fundraising events.

The significance of spreading the Gospel through radio and television takes on an important role, especially in non-Christian areas. The best example is in the Middle East, where there are more than 600 Muslim television channels, but only two Christian ones. Aid to the Church in Need oversees the establishment of Catholic radio and television stations here and supports the required training of staff members, thereby ensuring that they are professionally qualified.

CRTN is a production and media service that is globally unique in the Church.

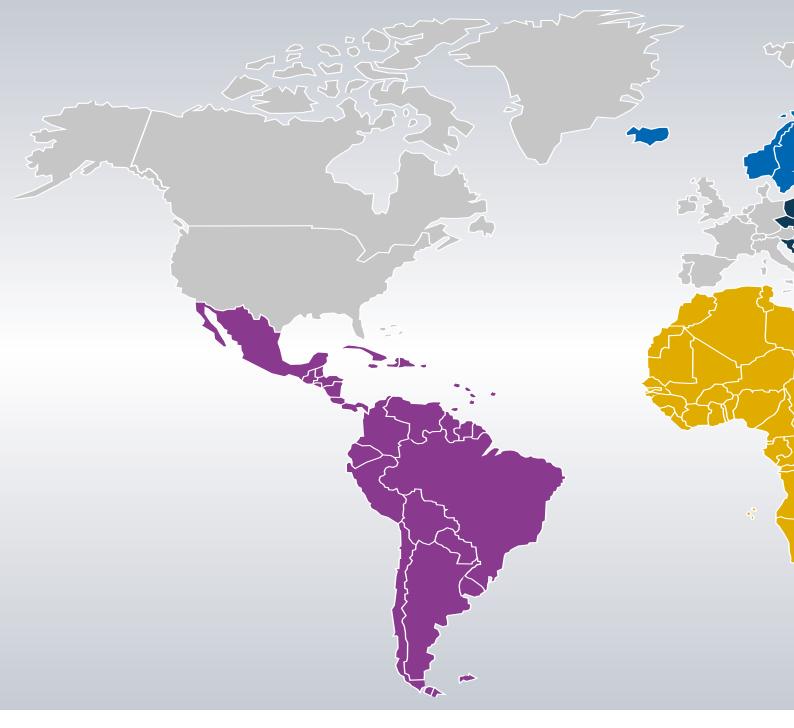
CRTN achieved record distribution in 2021 with documentaries alone; programmes were transmitted by 171 television stations worldwide. The short film "Lord, Grant Us Peace", which portrays the situation in Nicaragua from the point of view of young Catholics, was honoured with the "Award of Merit" in the short film competition "Best Shorts Competition". The film was directed by Francisco Alday.

Every day, broadcasts reach tens of millions worldwide. In addition to production and distribution, CRTN also supports a number of worldwide TV distribution initiatives through consulting and programming services. What's more, CRTN established the global Catholic television resource network crtn.org 20 years ago, giving Catholic producers and television stations the opportunity to facilitate the presentation, exchange and distribution of Catholic programmes worldwide.

In addition, we have compiled a web catalogue containing 507 productions. In 2021 322 producers and 175 television stations used this service, which is unique in the Church. A CRTN newsletter, a CRTN Facebook page with 12,500 followers and the CRTN YouTube channel round off our media service.

The CRTN YouTube Channel has had just 2.8 million views.







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рр. 46–47	Cuba
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pp. 50–51	Nicaragua
рр. 52–53	Venezuela
рр. 54–55	Brazil
pp. 56–57	Peru



p. 58 Africa

Burkina Faso
Barkina raso
Nigeria
Camerun
Äthiopien
Democratic Republic of Congo
Mozambique
Zimbabwe

Our regional activities in 2021

ACN receives around 6,700 aid project applications annually from 132 countries. In the following pages, we would like to provide you with an overview of our regional funding priorities in 2021. Once again we focused our efforts on the African continent where Christians suffer great hardships as a result of Islamic fundamentalist violence and extreme, persistent poverty, a situation which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.



p. 74 Middle East

pp. 76–79 Lebanon pp. 80–85 Syria pp. 86–89 Pope Francis' trip to Iraq



pp. 92–93 Northern Europe pp. 94–95 Belarus pp. 96–97 Ukraine pp. 98–99 Albania pp. 100–101 Russia



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pp. 104–105	Armenia
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pp. 108–111	India
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pp. 118–119	Papua New Guinea





Latin America

Although more and more sects are spreading in Latin America, it is still considered the "Catholic continent". With 500 million Catholics, 44% of the world's Catholic population lives here. But the Church in Latin America faces great challenges. Poverty, social inequality, low wages, high levels of violence and the consequences of the pandemic make the lives of the faithful and the work of the Church difficult in many places. In 2021, ACN was able to support the Catholic Church in Latin America with a total volume of 12,8 million euros.

In 2021, the Latin American continent – and with it, the Church – continued to be adversely affected by the pandemic. Numerous bishops, priests, religious and catechists died as a result of COVID-19. Nevertheless, the Church continued its mission of accompanying the sick and comforting the suffering faithful. The problem of rural exodus remains omnipresent on the continent. Due to poverty in rural areas, many move to the cities in search of better employment opportunities.

» Where the Church is underrepresented, aggressive sects spread. «

As a result, cities are growing rapidly, along with the number of believers in the urban areas. Here, due to a lack of funds, the Church is often unable to establish new parishes quickly enough to meet the growing need for spiritual and pastoral care. The Church is also concerned about the high number of emigrations, especially from Venezuela and Cuba, leading to great challenges in the destination countries.



Also, due to a frequent lack of mobility and the large expansion of dioceses, pastoral care for the people is a problem in some Latin American countries. In places in which there is a shortage of priests and the Catholic Church is under-represented, aggressive evangelical groups and sects are spreading. In order to secure pastoral care, the training of priests, religious and catechists is therefore an important concern for ACN. A missionary sister from Guasimal, Cuba, caring for children.



75 😽 85 Project Funded applications projects

Type of projects

<u>/</u> 10 0 9 Construction/ Means of reconstruction transport

2 🚫 Emergency aid

Media help 21

help

Training of priests

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Formation of faith

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stipends

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Bibles &

books

Head of Section Veronica Katz



For foreign tourists, Cuba - the island state in the Caribbean - is considered a holiday paradise. But the

economy in the country, which has been ruled by socialists for decades, has been in a very poor state for years, and the Church has also suffered. The majority of Cuba's 11.5 million inhabitants live in poverty. Lack of prospects and growing despair are omnipresent. Hundreds of thousands already live abroad. ACN will not abandon the Church in this crisis.

Due to the economic crisis and political stalemate, hundreds of clergy and lay people sharply criticised Cuba's communist state and social system at the beginning of February 2021 and called for a fundamental renewal. In their appeal, they expressed their hope for a "national dialogue leading to political change".

However, most Cubans have long since given up faith in their life improving. The pandemic has further aggravated the situation. Many lack the most basic necessities. This makes it all the more important for the Church to proclaim the faith and work for those in need, so





Sisters from the "Siervas de María" Convent renovating the roof.

» Most Cuban families cannot afford what is necessary for a dignified life. «

Sister Maria Isabel



A sister from Corralillo cares for a sick person.

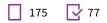
that the faithful feel supported and are able to draw new courage. However, the Church faces great problems in fulfilling its apostolate, as well as in pastoral care. Although about 70% of the inhabitants are baptised, only very few actively participate in Church life. The Archbishop of Santiago estimates that only about 1% of those baptised attend Holy Mass. ACN is supporting the Church in Cuba so that it can fulfil its mission under these difficult conditions. In the year under review, it supported the training of priests, for example, as well as the renovation of churches and the repair of vehicles. In addition, numerous sisters regularly receive material support.



» Servants of Mary « help the poor and the sick

In Cuba, the sisters of the Congregation of the "Servants of Mary" primarily devote themselves to caring for the sick in hospitals and to home care services. In addition, more than 30 desperate people, including those with no income, substance abuse problems and mental health issues, ask for help in the convent every day. The pandemic has made the sisters' work even more difficult, as precautions are necessary to protect the patients and the sisters themselves from infection. ACN regularly supports the sisters so that they can continue to help those who depend on their assistance.





Type of projects

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Head of Section Veronica Katz



Located in the Caribbean, south-east of Cuba, the island nation of Haiti is considered the poorest country in

the western hemisphere. Natural disasters, such as Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and the devastating earthquakes of 2010 and 2021, have repeatedly left severe devastation in their wake. In addition, corruption and mismanagement abound, as well as a high level of violence, under which the Church also suffers. ACN has been active in Haiti for many years and continues to support the Church following the 2021 earthquake.

Earthquakes have repeatedly hit Haiti hard, most recently on 14 August 2021. Natural disasters like these have pushed the country into even more extreme poverty. The Church has also been severely affected. Numerous church buildings and facilities were partially damaged or completely destroyed. About 70 parishes had to buy and set up emergency shelters, such as tents, so that they could continue their work. Thanks to a quick inventory of the affected dioceses, ACN was able to launch an initial emergency aid package immediately after the earthquake.



Praying the rosary in the grotto of the shrine "Our Lady of Lourdes" in the Diocese of Port-de-Paix.

» I am moved by your closeness, especially in this difficult time after the earthquake. <</p> Cardinal Chibly Langlois,

Cardinal Chibly Langlois, Bishop of the Diocese of Les Cayes



Street scene in Haiti.

In addition to natural disasters, growing insecurity and violence are causing serious problems for the population. For two to three years, various gangs have been controlling the cities and streets; there are frequent robberies and kidnappings. Nor has the Church been spared. On 11 April 2021, five priests, three sisters and three lay people were kidnapped on their way to the inauguration of a pastor and were not released until the beginning of May. Already in the previous year, a priest and a sister had been victims of kidnapping. Insecurity and fear of violence have further intensified in the wake of the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July of this year.

Emergency aid for the Diocese of Jérémie

Some areas in Haiti were particularly hard hit by the earthquake on 14 August. These include the Diocese of Jérémie, located on the southern headland. As a result of the destruction of church buildings and facilities, the infra-

structure was severely affected after the earthquake. ACN was able to provide 100,000 euros in emergency aid, including tents, food, drinking water and medicine for priests, religious and pastoral workers and their families in 16 parishes.



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Head of Section Veronica Katz

Nicaragua



The people in the "land of a thousand volcanoes" have always lived with the risk that the earth could

open up or erupt at any moment. This also applies in a figurative sense to the political and social situation in Nicaragua, which has led to a tense atmosphere between the government and the Church for years. ACN supports the Nicaraguan Church in numerous projects, allowing it to navigate through these difficult times.

The country is going through a difficult period of political and social tensions that have escalated to the point of violent confrontations. The local Church has taken on the role of mediator in order to promote reconciliation in the country. In this context, there have been repeated conflicts between the government and the Catholic Church in recent years. Representatives of the Archdiocese of Managua, for example, raised their voices against the systematic violation of political and constitutional rights, as well as against the persecution of opponents of the authoritarian government. In the November elections, President



Seminarians in the San Luis Gonzaga Seminary.



The Church is trying to stop the escalation of violence and is campaigning for reconciliation between the parties in the conflict.

Daniel Ortega was re-elected. Church representatives continue to complain of threats against the Catholic Church, insults to its priests and bishops, visa and residence restrictions on foreign priests, as well as harassment and intimidation attempts.

Moreover, Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. Often it is only the Church that stands up for the poorest people. ACN's courageous commitment to the socially marginalised and vulnerable gives many renewed hope for improved circumstances.

ACN is aware of the social role the Church plays in Nicaragua alongside its pastoral mission and continues to support it, for example, in the training of priests. The seminaries do not currently have any recruitment problems, but providing for young candidates for the priesthood is a major challenge. In addition, ACN provides construction and vehicle assistance and supports the priests through Mass stipends.

» The Church plays an important social role in Nicaragua as a peace mediator. «



A new car for the remote Sangre de Cristo Parish, Llano de la Tejera.





Type of projects

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Head of Section Luis Vildoso



Once rich Venezuela has been experiencing an unprecedented crisis since 2013, which has now

led to famine. Almost 80% of about 33 million Venezuelans suffer from extreme poverty. Added to this are galloping inflation, the spread of organised crime and the consequences of the pandemic. More than five million Venezuelans have already left the country. ACN is standing by the Church in this grave crisis. Under Maduro's regime, Venezuela's economic decline is falling into a bottomless abyss. The lack of public services, such as energy, water, gas and fuel, means that people no longer have access to essential goods, making survival nearly impossible in many regions of the country. People are desperate and the suicide rate is high. Many depend on money transfers from relatives abroad or finance their livelihoods through illegal businesses, which in turn allows organised crime and drug trafficking to continue to grow.

» The crisis has brought many people closer to the Church. «

Bishop Raul Biord of La Guaira

» The lack of public services makes survival almost impossible in many regions of the country. «



In the streets of La Guaira.



The pandemic has also hit Venezuela hard. Most COVID-19 patients are on their own, as medical care in hospitals was already catastrophic before the pandemic. Among the thousands of victims of the pandemic are also numerous priests and religious, as well as two bishops: the Archbishop Emeritus of Caracas, Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino, and Bishop Cástor Oswaldo Azuaje Pérez of Trujillo. Both were long-time project partners and friends of ACN.

In Venezuela, the Church is practically the only force standing by the suffering population. Therefore, our aid serves above all to enable the Church to continue to fulfil its mission and to save people from despair. In the year under review, for example, ACN ensured that priests and religious were able to continue their ministry, above all by providing Mass stipends and material aid.





Type of projects

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Head of Section Rafael d'Aqui



Of Brazil's approximately 213 million inhabitants, 64% are Catholic. At the same time,

the number of believers continues to decline. Twenty years ago, Catholics still made up 75% of the population here. The difficult situation in the country, which is marked by corruption, unemployment, economic crisis and environmental destruction, makes many open to the deceptive



promises of salvation made by sects. These are extremely active in Brazil and, unlike the local Church, have a good deal of money at their disposal. ACN therefore promotes the Church to the best of its ability.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Brazil hard and claimed many lives. At the same time, poverty increased dramatically during the pandemic. The Catholic Church continues to face the great challenge of accompanying people pastorally during this difficult time and, if possible, also providing them with concrete assistance. Furthermore, we know from experience that the presence of the Church is the best protection against the further spread of sects. ACN therefore particularly supports the training of future priests, religious and lay workers in order to strengthen the proclamation of the faith and pastoral care and to ensure this in the future.

In addition to supporting the training of priests, it is also important to secure the required infrastructure. For example,

ACN supports

diocesan and religious priests in Cametá.

» The pandemic is an accelerator of the already crippling poverty in the country. «



Pastoral visit to the riverside parishes of the Diocese of Ponta de Pedras.

we were able to provide catechetical material for evangelisation work in many dioceses. Other funds have been used to purchase vehicles to maintain pastoral care in the mostly widespread parishes. The challenges are particularly huge in the Amazon region. The area is rich in resources, but the local population suffers great hardship. The Church plays a key role in helping the poorest and most neglected.

Ensuring reliable mobility for Church representatives is often one of the biggest challenges, as many villages in the jungle can only be reached by water. The dangerous journeys usually take many hours or even days. Here, ACN provided efficient boats and fuel so that priests and religious can reach their faithful quickly and safely.

One of the old boats of St John the Baptist Parish in Curralinho.







Type of projects

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Head of Section Luis Vildoso



Peru is the third largest country in South America in terms of surface area. Its geographical diversity

ranges from the Amazon rainforest to the highlands of the Andes. The majority of its 33 million inhabitants are of



First Communion children in the parish of Corpus Christi, Massiapo. indigenous descent, and 76% profess the Catholic faith. The economic crisis, the pandemic and the influx of refugees from Venezuela have further divided society, while at the same time the Church is campaigning for more solidarity and prudence. ACN supports the local Church with a focus on education.

» The social crisis in Peru has reached a new peak. «

Peru is the country in Latin America that has been most affected by COV-ID-19 in relation to the size of its population. Nor has the local Church been spared the scourge of the coronavirus – many priests and religious have died. The consequences of the pandemic have exacerbated the economic crisis and already existing social tensions. Poverty in the countryside is growing rapidly, and many young people are

Marian procession in Nuestra Señora de Chapi Province.



migrating to the cities, where they hope for a better future. But the rural exodus also has its dark side, as problems like social uprooting, drug addiction and broken families continue to increase in the cities. The influx of refugees from Venezuela is also a social challenge. More than one million Venezuelan citizens have already come to Peru legally, and another 500,000 immigrants have applied for refugee status.

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Peru's independence, the bishops spoke of "perhaps the most serious crisis in our life as a republic". Meanwhile, the Church is attempting to promote solidarity among the country's people. In August 2021, for example, the Bishops' Conference raised its voice against divisions in society, having already called for calm and prudence in June in the wake of the parliamentary elections. ACN is aware of the enormous challenges facing the Church in Peru. This year, we again supported the local Church



Blessing a believer.

with Mass stipends for priests and material aid for sisters. Another focus of our support was the training of priests and catechists to ensure pastoral care in the future.





In addition to poverty, drought and political unrest, the African population suffers in many places from growing Islamist violence. Especially in the Sahel, jihadists have further consolidated their presence. Terrorism is also increasingly threatening the Church. In 2021, Africa was once again the continent with the highest number of murdered priests, religious and dedicated lay people. With aid projects totalling around 28.5 million euros, Africa remains a priority region for ACN.

The Sahel has become a haven for over two dozen Islamist groups, including offshoots of IS and Al-Qaeda, which were previously predominantly active in the Middle East. They spread fear and terror and are extremely violent. In numerous countries, such as Mali, Nigeria and the Congo, the abduction of priests and religious has become popular among the extremists. Priests and religious are often abducted for years. One bright spot was the release in October 2021 of Gloria Cecilia Narváez, a Colombian sister abducted in Mali in 2017, but many Church representatives do not survive these abductions.

» Africa has become the new epicentre of Islamist extremism. « Bishop Oliver Dashe D

 Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme, Maiduguri, Nigeria



For all its challenges, however, Africa remains a continent of hope for the Church. Almost one in five Catholics in the world lives in Africa. The Church is young and growing. Nearly one in eight priests, one in eight sisters and more than a quarter of all seminarians worldwide live in Africa. ACN focuses on the education and training of priests, religious and lay people, helps to purchase vehicles suitable for off-road use and supports the construction of churches and chapels. In regions severely affected by the pandemic, we also helped the Church to purchase protective equipment.

Father Charlemagne Sawadogo from Burkina Faso blesses a mother and child.



75 102 Project ap-Funded projects plications

Type of projects

<u>/</u> 11 (() 12 Construction/ Means of reconstruction transport

Mass stipends

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Bibles &

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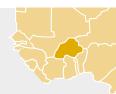
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Head of Section

François-Xavier Pons

Pilgrims praying at the shrine of "Notre Dame de Yagma", Ouagadougou.

Burkina Faso



The West African nation of Burkina Faso has long been considered an example of peaceful coexistence

between religions. About a quarter of the population is Christian, and just over 60% of the 21 million inhabitants are Muslims. Since the end of 2015, however, the northern and eastern parts of the country have become hotspots for violent extremists. ACN mainly helps the Church to provide pastoral care for the many people traumatised by terror.

Burkina Faso is now the main theatre of jihadist terror in the Sahel. In the year under review, the situation deteriorated even further. As a result, more than one million people are on the run, entire towns resemble ghost towns, countless parishes have been deserted and more than 1,000 schools have been closed. Many children are being forcibly recruited as child soldiers by the "warriors of God". On 4 June 2021, jihadists carried out their worst attack to date near the village of Solhan in the border region between Burkina Faso and Niger. Almost 160 people

» The spectre of terrorism has Burkina Faso firmly in its grip. « The Burkina Faso

Bishops' Conference



A woman in a camp for internally displaced people in Koudougou.



were killed and numerous houses burned down. The Bishops' Conference spoke of a "night of horror".

Christians and their churches have been increasingly targeted since 2019. Currently, six of the country's fifteen Catholic dioceses are affected by religiously-motivated terror. Project partners have told us about kidnappings and murders. In addition, the terrorists are said to control several transport routes, which means that the population's freedom of movement is severely restricted. The Diocese of Dori, which is affected by violence, is in danger of being cut off from the rest of the country. ACN supports the Catholic Church in Burkina Faso in helping those affected by Islamist violence and displacement to find a way back into normal life. In particular, projects designed to heal trauma are supported. Funding has also been offered to various radio projects that provide communication, information and pastoral care in areas where the majority of the population has fled.



Children in the Konean camp.



A priest producing a programme for the displaced in the Diocese of Ouahigouya.

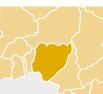


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Head of Section Kinga von Schierstaedt



With approximately 206 million inhabitants, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa.

Christians and Muslims each make up just less than half of the population. In the north and increasingly in the "central belt", Christians and moderate Muslims suffer from the terror of militant Islamist groups, such as Boko Haram and the radicalising and heavily armed Muslim Fulani livestock herders. Nigeria is now the country in which the highest number of Christians are killed. Among other things, ACN is helping to fund a therapy centre for traumatised Christians.

Bishop Wilfred Anagbe of Makurdi speaks of a "creeping genocide" against



Stations of the Cross with Bishop Oliver Dashe Doeme at the Holy Mountain of the Cross in the Diocese of Maiduguri (see also above).



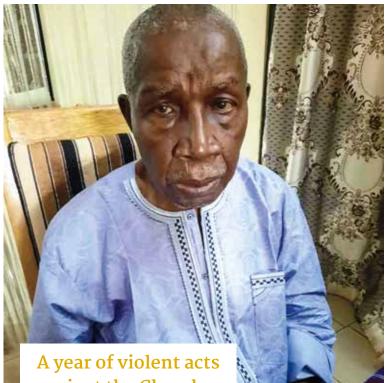
Self-built emergency shelters at an unofficial camp near Ichwa, north of Makurdi.

Christians. The aim of the jihadists is "to Islamise all majority Christian regions". In order to provide professional help to Christians who have witnessed bestial acts of violence at close range, ACN is helping to finance the construction of the "Human Resources and Skill Acquisition Centre for Trauma Healing" in the Diocese of Maiduguri, where traumatised people will be able to receive therapeutic and pastoral care.

» Nowhere in the world are so many innocent people murdered without any **CONSEQUENCES.** << Bishop Matthew Hassan

Kukah from Sokoto

Despite the challenges facing the Church in Nigeria, the faith of most Christians remains unbroken. The high number of priestly vocations is particularly encouraging. In 2021, ACN focused on promoting the training of future priests and also supported needy priests through Mass stipends. Nigeria's priests are the first and immediate caregivers for the suffering population.



against the Church

In 2021, violence against the Church in Nigeria reached a new zenith. On 21 May, 75-year-old priest Joseph Keke was kidnapped in the early hours of the morning in the northern Nigerian Parish of St Vincent Ferrer, along with his successor, Father Alphonsus Bello. Father Joseph Keke was released a few days later, but the younger priest was found murdered the following day. Three priests were killed in further attacks, including 38-year-old priest Luke Adeleke, who was murdered after Christmas Eve Mass.





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Head of Section François-Xavier Pons



For a long time, the central African country of Cameroon, with its nearly 26 million inhabitants, was

considered relatively stable politically. In 2016, however, there were protest marches by English-speaking groups of the population who feel oppressed by the francophone government and who are now demanding their independence. In the meantime, an armed conflict has erupted out of the protests, which has already claimed thousands of victims. The Church is often the last refuge for many traumatised people.

The escalation of violence between the separatists in the English-speaking provinces and the central government has not only claimed many lives, but has also driven more than 700,000 people to flee. The anglophone independence representatives boycott all central government structures, including schools. A large number of schools there have been closed for four years.

In the violent riots in anglophone provinces, it is not uncommon for Church representatives to be traumatised by witnessing violence against others at close range. We therefore

Holy Mass in a village chapel of the Parish of St Benedict of Dengue.



Children pray the rosary at the Piarist Formation House in Bamenda.





support, among other things, a workshop for traumatised sisters. In this course, the sisters learn how to overcome their own trauma and how to enable this experience to flow into their pastoral work with other affected persons, so that they are better able to help them.

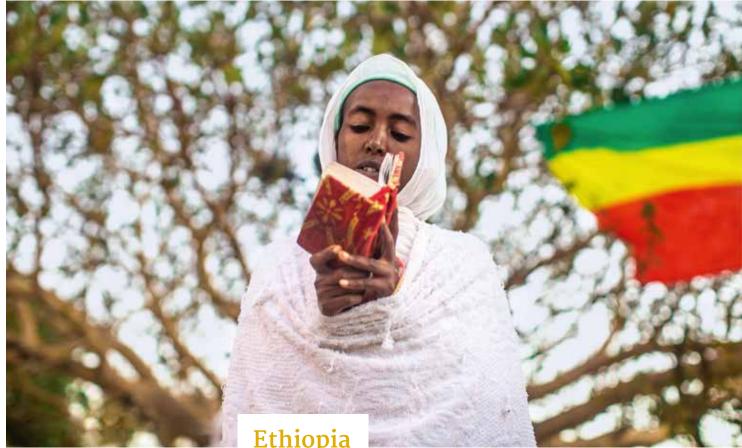
Other focal points in the year under review were support for priestly formation, the promotion of pastoral care for marriage and the family, the granting of material aid for sisters and Mass stipends for priests. In addition, we fund a two-year continuing education course for trainers working in seminaries and in the vocational ministry, in order to optimise the quality of formation of priests. Blessing to mark the beginning of the roofing of the multi-purpose hall of St John the Baptist in Nkwen, Bamenda.

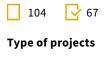
» The country has gone through a spiral of violence for two years. «



Carmelite sisters in Sasse, Diocese of Buea working in the garden. Bishop Barthélémy Yaouda Hourgo on his way to the next parish.



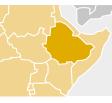




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Head of Section Toni Zender

Ethiopia



The country on the Horn of Africa is a land of many contrasts. Despite strong economic growth, great

poverty exists in many areas. In some regions, Islam has become increasingly radicalised in recent years. In addition, the conflict between the government and the insurgents in the Tigray region has been intensifying for two years. Church representatives are also said to have been killed in the process. ACN supports the Catholic Church, which is in the minority in Ethiopia, to the best of its ability.

Around 100 ethnic groups live in Ethiopia. Almost 58% of the 113 million inhabitants are Orthodox Christians. The proportion of Muslims currently stands at 34%. Catholics make up only about 1% of the country's population. Nevertheless, the Church runs many schools, kindergartens and social institutions. There are many baptisms, especially in areas where people still belong to traditional tribal religions.

Since November 2020, the central government in northern Ethiopia has been fighting against regional militias of the "Tigray People's Liberation Front". In 2021, the conflict spread to other parts



The faithful collect money for the construction of a new chapel in Awaye.

A Meskel celebration (Feast of the Finding of the Cross) in Nekemte.



of the country. Priests and religious are also said to have been killed. However, after fears in November that the rebels might even march into the capital Addis Ababa, government troops managed to push back the insurgents. There is no end to the conflict in sight.

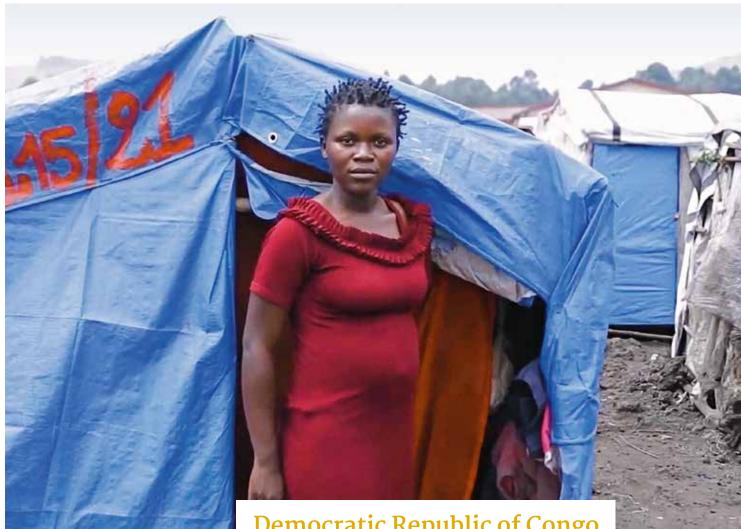
In early 2022, the Catholic bishops raised their voices against mass rape used as a weapon of war.

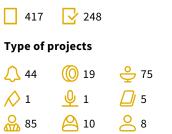
For ACN, proclamation of the faith was once again the top priority in Ethiopia in 2021. We supported numerous projects for the education and training of priests, religious and lay people, as well as the implementation of pastoral programmes. Priority is given to youth pastoral care, which supports young people who want to work for a better future in their homeland instead of leaving the country. In the year under review, we were also able to support the construction of churches and chapels and help finance vehicles for pastoral care.

» Rape is used as a weapon of war. «



The Church is greatly concerned about the Tigray conflict. They fear further casualties and they also consider Ethiopia's rich Christian heritage to be at risk in the disputed areas. The city of Lalibela is home to the famous rock-hewn churches, for example, or there is the Ark of the Covenant in Axum, in which, according to tradition, the stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments were stored.





Head of Section Maxime François-Marsal

Democratic Republic of Congo



The Democratic Republic of Congo is four times the size of France in area and has a wealth of mineral

resources, including gold, diamonds, ores and oil. Even so, a large segment of the country's 89.5 million inhabitants lives in deep poverty. Several parts of the country are scenes of armed conflicts involving continually changing rebel groups - including Islamist terrorist militias. The Church stands by the suffering population in this crisis and raises its voice against the government's inaction.

According to human rights organisations, the longest-running humanitarian crisis in Africa is taking place in eastern Congo. The situation is particularly dramatic in the province of Kivu, which has been plagued by radical Islamic militias and criminal gangs. It is estimated that there are now thousands dead, three million internally displaced persons and at least 7,500 abducted persons. Among the latter are Church representatives. One of them was Sister Francine, who was abducted in Goma on 8 July, but was fortunately released a week later. On 8 April, the Congolese Bishops' Conference published a communiqué

Aspiring priest Jean-Claude Barack Abiritseni Fiston talks to parishioners in Goma (right).





» We have been experiencing the Stations of the Cross for years. «

Bishop Melchisédech Sikuli Paluku of Butembo-Beni



People fleeing after the eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano.

in which it called on political representatives to take action. The bishops particularly deplore the absence of any state authority.

The representatives of the local Church are concerned about the increasing Islamisation of the region and the numbers of new mosques being built. People who fall into the hands of Islamist terrorists are often forced to convert to Islam under threat of death. Despite all these challenges, the number of priestly vocations is encouragingly high. ACN regularly supports numerous projects in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially to promote priestly formation and for the benefit of sisters who assist the often traumatised people. In addition, our foundation launched an emergency aid programme to care for families who were particularly badly affected by the eruption of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano near the megacity of Goma on 22 May 2021. The John Paul II Seminary with its 29 seminarians also had to be evacuated.



Carmelite sisters at the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus in Malole making hosts.





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Head of Section Ulrich Kny



Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world. Between 1977 and 1992, civil war

nearly destroyed this south-east African country. The consequences can still be felt today. Nevertheless, it was still peaceful here - until recently. Since 2017, there has been a massive increase in jihadist attackes, many leaving various Church facilities severely damaged or destroyed. ACN supports the local Church, primarily through emergency aid, and helps it provide pastoral and psychosocial support to refugees.

56.7% of Mozambigue's approximately 32 million inhabitants are Christians; 17.5% are Muslims. However, in the northernmost province, Cabo Delgado, Muslims make up the majority of the population. A jihadist group called "Al Shabaab" has been active there since October 2017 and has modern weapons at its disposal. In total, more than 1,090 jihadist attacks have been recorded in Mozambique since 2017. The

» No one is asking for martyrdom, but it can happen at any time. «

> Bishop Antonio Juliasse, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Pemba

Sleeping child in the camp for internally displaced persons in Cabo Delgado Province.





armed conflict between rebels and government troops has since claimed thousands of lives; entire swathes of land have been devastated and more than 750,000 people have been forced to flee.

The Church is also increasingly a target of terror. Several churches have already been completely destroyed and several parishes in the Diocese of Pemba are now deserted. Most priests and sisters in the embattled regions have fled with their faithful. Where they are able to find refuge, they try to continue pastoral care among the refugees from their parishes. Representatives of the local Church report catastrophic humanitarian conditions, which are further aggravated by the Covid-19 crisis. They also complain about unimaginable atrocities and numerous abductions, especially of children and young people. In addition to building grants and support for priests, religious and seminarians, ACN was able to support the Church in Mozambique in 2021 with over 580,000 euros for refugee work alone. To alleviate the most urgent need, we have provided an emergency grant of 110,000 euros in order to offer shelter for refugee families.

Francisco Faustino in front of his shop, which he was able to open thanks to a microcredit financed by ACN.



Just as important as the construction of emergency shelters for internally displaced persons in Mozambique is the psychosocial and pastoral care of the people, most of whom have been severely traumatised by the terror. With our help, more than 120 pastoral

workers and volunteers in the Diocese of Pemba have received psychological training. We were also able to support the neighbouring dioceses of Nampula, Nacala and Lichinga in conducting training courses on psychosocial support.



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Head of Section Ulrich Kny



Since the fall of dictator Robert Mugabe in 2017, Zimbabwe's roughly 16.5 million inhabitants

have been hoping for an improvement in their living conditions. But the country in south-east Africa is suffering from a severe economic downturn that has now turned into a humanitarian crisis. In addition, the pandemic has hit the population particularly hard, causing a rapid increase in poverty. ACN supports the local Church primarily with material support to alleviate the greatest need.

In early 2021, disaster was brewing in some southern African countries as the second wave of the pandemic took on increasingly devastating proportions through the spread of the South African mutant virus. In Zimbabwe, as well, the pandemic claimed countless lives; bishops, priests, sisters, catechists and other lay church workers were also among the victims. Observers on the ground also complain that the pandemic is being used by the government as a pretext for political reprisals.

Apart from the consequences of the pandemic, the population of Zimbabwe is suffering above all from the ongoing



Vaccination of a priest at Jubilee Hall in Harare.

The medical staff of St Joseph's Mission Hospital.



economic crisis. At times, the country has recorded an inflation rate of well over 700%. More than a third of the population was already dependent on food aid in 2020. The crisis had worsened in recent years, especially after Cyclone Idai severely devastated the country in 2019, putting the population's capacity to withstand suffering to a severe test.

In order for the local Church to maintain its pastoral work during this wave of the pandemic, protective equipment was urgently needed, in addition to material support for sisters and priests. Only in this way could priests and sisters continue safely to visit the sick, dying and those most in need, who were particularly dependent on spiritual support during the lonely hours of lockdown. ACN has therefore supported all dioceses across the country in purchasing protective equipment.

> Archbishop Paolo Rudelli, Apostolic Nuncio to Zimbabwe, disinfecting his hands.



» Material aid is increasingly turning into survival aid here. «

Ulrich Kny, Head of Section





Middle East

Civil war, economic crisis, political instability and the pandemic have ravaged the population in the Middle East. Many no longer see any prospects for the future, and hundreds of thousands have fled abroad or live wretched lives as internally displaced persons. The region remains a priority for ACN. The primary objective of our aid is to give hope to Christians there and to support them in remaining in their homeland, the cradle of Christianity.

Many Christians in the Middle East are still suffering from the consequences of war and IS terror. The economic and political situation does not instil confidence in the people either, so many continue to think about seeking a better future abroad. Meanwhile, total despair often prevails. Project partners report that during the war, people in Syria at least held out hope that things would get better in the years that followed. Now, however, they see no future for themselves at all.

« If the West remains inactive, the decimation of Christians in the Middle East is imminent. »

> The Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III Younan of Antioch

A ray of hope for Christians in the Middle East was the Pope's trip to Iraq in March 2021. The visit encouraged the faithful and offered them new



self-confidence - not only in Iraq itself, but throughout the Middle East. Giving Christians new hope is also our goal in the region. Thus, we were able to provide project aid at a volume of more than 10.8 million euros in the priority countries of Syria and Lebanon in 2021. This included emergency aid for food and medicine, support for senior citizens and students, material aid for sisters, Mass stipends for priests and funds for the reconstruction of pastoral structures, as well as emergency aid for church schools and hospitals.

One of many destroyed Syrian cities.



79

Funded

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93 Project applications

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Head of Section Reinhard Backes



The country once considered the "Switzerland of the Orient" has been suffering from economic

decline and political crises for the past three years. Added to this were the strains caused by the pandemic in 2020 and the huge explosion in the port of the capital Beirut, which also severely damaged numerous churches and church facilities. Here the Church faces a Herculean task, but ACN did not abandon it in 2021.

Lebanon has often been praised as a model for the entire Middle East, not least due to the comparatively stable coexistence of religions. Lebanon was once the only country in the Middle East with a Christian majority, but today only 34% of the inhabitants are Christians. Of the young people under 25, only a quarter



View over the city of Zahlé. are Christian. Due to the severe economic crisis and the increasing loss of confidence in political system, more and more Christians are leaving the country. Yet Lebanese Christians enjoy a high level of respect, and Christian schools are highly valued by people of all faiths. They form a bridge of tolerance between the different religious communities in the country.

The cooperation of the Christian churches in Lebanon is of crucial importance. They are contact points for the suffering population and a place of refuge for many fleeing from Syria and Iraq. The war in neighbouring Syria alone has brought more than 1.5 million refugees into the country, which until that point had only four million inhabitants. The situation came to a head when a severe economic and political crisis hit the country in 2019. Unemployment is now dramatically high. According to the United Nations, three quarters of the Lebanese population now live below the poverty line. This is compounded by the devaluation of the Lebanese currency which has led to a spike in food prices. Many can barely cover their basic needs. Added to this is the failure of the national electricity supply. Even in the capital Beirut, many inhabitants only have power for one hour a day. After sunset, the city falls into darkness, as most residents cannot afford batteries. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation worse, and the country is even threatened with famine.

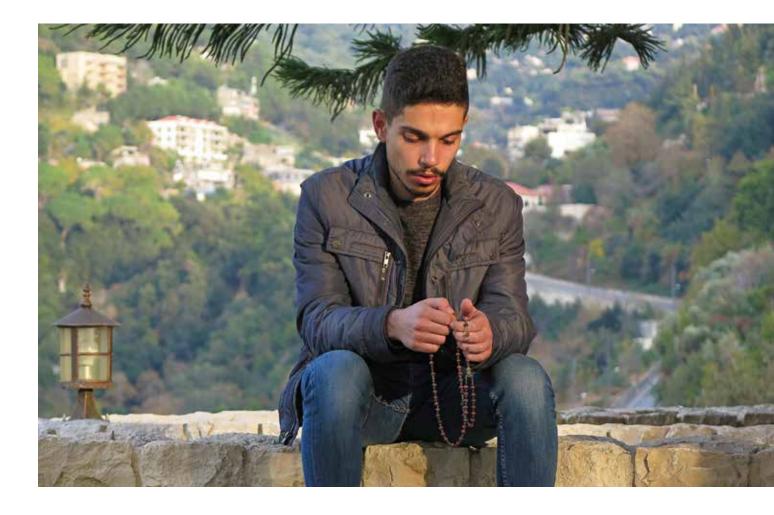


« Lebanon is a last refuge for many people displaced by war. »

Seminarian during Holy Mass in Baalbek.

Care in the psychiatric hospital of the Franciscan Sisters of the Cross in Beirut.





« I am grateful for organisations like ACN that show solidarity with the needs of the churches. » Maronite Arch

Maronite Archbishop Emeritus Chucrallah-Nabil El-Hage of Tyros A lasting trauma for many Lebanese to this day is the devastating explosion in Beirut harbour in August 2020. The disaster has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the country. A total of 100,000 buildings were destroyed and several hundred thousand people were left homeless. It was one of the most severe non-nuclear explosions in human history. The Lebanese capital has been brought to its knees - and with it, the entire country. Around 80% of the buildings in the Christian district of Achrafieh were damaged by the explosion, including Catholic hospitals,

churches and monasteries. Thousands of Christian families lost their homes and livelihoods.

The desperate situation in Lebanon led ACN to significantly increase its aid to the country in 2021. Whereas previously most of the funding for Lebanon was to support Syrian refugees, it is now the Lebanese themselves who need help. Projects we supported in Lebanon in 2021 included food parcels for needy families, heating materials to help people get through the harsh winter and Mass stipends to support the clergy. Restoration and reconstruction work, as



Seminarians sing at the Maronite Patriarchate Seminary in Ghazir.

The tomb of St Charbel in the Monastery of St Maron in Annaya.



well as educational projects, were also supported. For example, ACN funded Catholic schools in need as a result of the crisis, reflecting the importance of schooling and faith formation for young Christians.

Aid for Syrian refugees in Lebanon also continued. In the year under review, we contributed to heating costs and were able to provide funds to cover school fees. We also continued to support "the St John the Merciful Table", a facility in Zahlé not far from the Syrian border, which provides a hot meal daily to about 1,500 Syrian refugees, as well as local needy people. The relief kitchen additionally delivers food to disabled, frail and sick people, who also receive spiritual comfort and human attention from the staff. The project was launched in 2015 by the Melkite Greek Catholic Church and is supported by ACN. We were able to support the facility with 700,000 euros in 2021.





A deserted section of downtown Beirut.

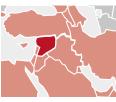




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Head of Section Reinhard Backes



Syrian Christians have suffered greatly from the effects of the civil war.

Today, it is estimated that only one third of the 1.5 million Christians who lived in Syria before the war remain. In Aleppo, the numbers are even more dramatic. According to the local churches, there were about 180,000 Christians there before the war. Of these, no more than 30,000 remain. For ACN, one of the most important tasks is therefore to encourage Christians in the region once again to seek a viable future in their homeland.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the war, ACN presented a report documenting the aid provided until that point. The conclusion: Between March 2011 and March 2021, our aid organisation provided 41.8 million euros for Syria. Of this, more than 33 million euros were

The Greek Melkite Church of St George in Maaloula, damaged by the Al-Nusra terrorist organisation.







A Christmas performance in Aleppo.

spent on aid projects in the areas of subsistence, medical care and hygiene, food, clothing and education. In coordination with the local churches, a total of 418 initiatives benefited the residents of the cities most affected by the war, including Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, Marmarita and Tartus, where most Syrian Christians live. Despite the many aid projects, the civilian population in Syria continues to suffer great hardship ten years after the war began. The continuing economic sanctions, for example, affect ordinary people in particular. They often have to queue for hours for food or heating oil – frequently without success. Many cannot heat their homes. The energy supply is still severely restricted; power cuts of twelve hours per

day are not uncommon. Due to the foreign currency restrictions, people are also no longer able to take out loans. "The sanctions have no other consequence than to plunge people further into suffering and misery," complain ACN project partners. Added to this are the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have further increased hardships. Many Christians live on less than one dollar a day.

At the rebuilt St Vincent de Paul Retirement Home in Aleppo.

« Help is still needed so that the Christian Church in Syria is not bled dry. »





After a Holy Mass in Homs.



Christians in Syria belong to different denominations. In addition to various Catholic rites, there are also several Orthodox churches. Most of our aid projects here benefit Christians of all denominations, including the Greek Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox Archdioceses, as well as the Armenian Apostolic Church in Aleppo. Our project aid is as varied as the needs of the people in this war-torn country. In the year under review, it included food programmes for the elderly, the provision of fuel for the heating of a dormitory for female students and medication assistance, as well as subsidies for the daily living costs of families and many other initiatives, including scholarships for students.

In addition, with our help, 30,000 sets of clothing (one pair of jeans and one shirt or blouse each) were distributed to needy children in Aleppo,

Distribution of anoraks to children and young people in Damascus.





Thanksgiving service in Homs for ACN and its benefactors.

Damascus, Homs and other cities at Christmas. The clothes were made directly in garment factories in Aleppo thanks to the initiative of Sister Annie Demerjian, a long-time project partner of ACN. These large orders have given many people the opportunity to earn a living for their families for several months in the midst of high unemployment and poor economic conditions.

« Syria is like a person who needs to recover after a serious operation. » Sister Annie

Demerjian





Impressions from Aleppo.



A large number of elderly Syrians have been left behind alone because the young see no future for themselves in their homeland. Many of them have already left the country or are planning to emigrate. But without young families, the country has no future. Among our many aid projects, one special project therefore aims at supporting young married couples.

Retirement home in Aleppo.







Praying the rosary at the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Aleppo.

« The bishops are particularly concerned about young people in Syria. »

They received one-time financial support to rent and furnish a home, as many young couples do not get married in the first place and put off starting a family for years because they simply cannot afford to furnish a flat. In the year under review, ACN was able to support a total of 152 young married couples in renting and furnishing their first flat together.



Hope Centre in Damascus

The newly founded Christian Hope Centre in Damascus is a micro-credit initiative set up by the Catholic Church and young Syrians. Under the programme, families receive financial aid to start their own businesses or resume professional projects that were interrupted during the war years. The new centre in the capital Damascus is under the spiritual direction of the Latin Bishop of Syria, Monseigneur Georges Abou Khazen. ACN is pleased to be among the first supporters of the new centre.



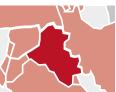
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Head of Section Reinhard Backes

From 5 to 8 March,



Pope Francis became the first Pope ever to visit Iraq. In addition to meetings with state delegates and representatives of other religions, the visit was particu-

larly aimed at the country's Christian

minority. We are pleased that Regina

Lynch, Head of Projects at ACN Inter-

national, was able to accompany the

Pope on his trip. ACN has been active in Iraq for many years. Following liberation from the Islamic State (IS), for example, we were able to support Christians with more than 48 million euros to rebuild their homes destroyed by IS.

Regina Lynch, Head of Projects at ACN International, accompanied the Pope on his trip as the official ROACO delegate. ROACO is the association of





The Pope talking to **Regina Lynch during** the flight to Iraq.

Eastern Church relief agencies under the direction of the Vatican Congregation for the Eastern Churches. In her report, Lynch provides a positive assessment: "The Holy Father's trip to Iraq was a real sign of encouragement, a message of hope for Iraqi Christians who have been tested in their faith through the centuries. As a minority, one can feel abandoned, but the fact that Pope Francis came to their country at such a difficult time gave hope to Iraqi Christians."

The Pope's visit has also changed the way other faith communities in Iraq look at Christians, she pointed out. They understood that Christians are not guests from the West, but a real part of the country and the region. "This is what Cardinal Sako, Patriarch of the Chaldean Church, assured me. We hope that this new attention will be maintained," explains Regina Lynch. She now hopes that the Pope's visit will lead to further steps towards improving the situation of Christians in Iraq: "Of particular importance were inter-religious meetings. Especially the meeting with the head of the Shiites in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, was important. After all, he has influence on large sections of the Shiites in the country. These were very positive steps."





Children in the Syriac Catholic Church Al-Tahira during the Pope's visit to Qaraqosh.

« We Christians are not guests, but original inhabitants of the

COUNTRY. >> The Chaldean Catholic Archbishop

of Erbil, Bashar Warda

Arrival of the Pope at Franso Hariri Stadium, Erbil.





We hope that the visit will raise awareness for us Christians in Iraq. >>

The Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Warda

According to Lynch, the emotional highlight of the trip was the Pope's visit to the majority Christian town of Qaraqosh, or Bakhdida as the Christians call it. Prior to the IS militia invasion, it was the largest Christian town in Iraq. After Iraqi forces and their allies recaptured these areas in October 2016, tens of thousands of displaced Christians returned to their homes. According to the latest data from ACN, which has been instrumental in rebuilding these homes, 43% of the Christian families who lived in Bakhdida before the invasion have now returned. Regina Lynch describes her impressions as follows: "The joy of the people was contagious. I saw nuns dancing. Thousands lined the streets as the Pope drove by. These were the people who had been forced to leave their homes because of IS terrorist militias, but had come back. The Pope really saw the living stones of the Church in Iraq here."

She said she was particularly moved by the testimony given to the Pope by a



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A boy waits for the Pope in Qaraqosh. During Holy Mass at Franso Hariri Stadium, Erbil.





Christian woman whose son had been killed by IS. "Her faith moved her to forgive the perpetrators. That was a very powerful moment." She mentioned that the Pope had made it clear in various speeches that this was precisely the mission of Christians in Iraq. "They are to be instruments of peace and reconciliation. This is the testimony they offer to society as a whole in the country. This does not depend on size. A mustard seed is enough," Lynch stresses. Now, she says, it is important to take advantage of the attention being given to the country by the Pope's visit. "The global interest in the visit was huge. There was a lot of international media coverage. I hope this motivates the international community to provide assistance in Iraq. Because the challenges remain great."

During the Pope's visit to Qaraqosh.





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Where it represents a minority in Eastern European countries, the Catholic Church continues to rely on help from abroad. Due to the pandemic, many religious communities are in need of even more support than in normal times. In addition, the economic situation has worsened due to Covid and many people have become unemployed. The Church has also suffered economic losses. In 2021, ACN was able to support the local churches, predominantly with material aid.

The Covid pandemic has hit the countries of Eastern and Central Europe hard. Although the official number of those infected is comparatively low, this is frequently due to the fact that those who are sick do not officially register and are therefore not recorded.

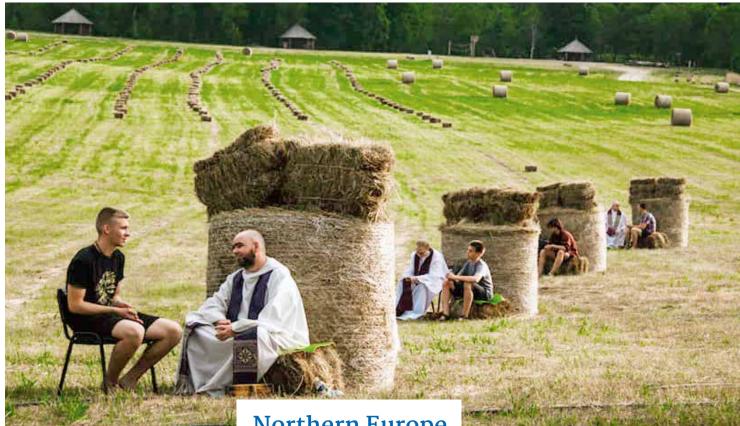
» In Ukraine alone, our relief organisation was able to support 365 projects in 2021. «

> We have focused our aid in the region on contemplative monasteries, which mainly produce hosts, candles or liturgical vestments for their livelihood. As a result of lockdowns and restricted services, the need for these items has plummeted. We were also able to help with the purchase of vehicles to sustain the mobility of priests and religious sisters in what are often sprawling parishes in Eastern Europe.



In 2021, among European countries, Ukraine once again received the most aid. What's more, we were able to implement numerous projects in Russia and Belarus, and we also helped the Church in south-eastern European countries such as Romania, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Central Europe, we supported the Church in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Northern Europe, our aid was mainly directed to the Baltic States, as well as countries such as Iceland and Norway, where the Catholic Church is characterised by a diaspora situation.

A religious sister from the Congregation of Mary Immaculate Oueen in Ukraine works on vestments.





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2 2 Formation of faith

Head of Section Marco Mencaglia

Northern Europe



In Northern Europe, the Catholic Church only has a historically established presence in Lithuania. There,

Catholics form the majority at 80% of the population, but the Church is poor and still depends on aid. In countries like Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden, on the other hand, most Catholics come from abroad and are often scattered widely across the country. Although these are predominantly

rich countries, the diaspora situation means that the local churches find it difficult to fulfil their tasks on their own. This is where ACN contributes by strengthening pastoral care and spiritual welfare in these countries.

As Catholics represent the minority in most Northern European countries, they have a difficult time. Nevertheless, the faithful are full of hope. Take Iceland, for example: Only 13,500 Catholics live on the island, almost all of whom are immigrants and speak more than



Children and young people at a church summer camp in Lithuania.



Chapel in Iceland.

100 different native languages. Of Iceland's approximately 357,000 inhabitants, they form a minority of 3.8%. But due to the increasing number of immigrants, the number of believers is steadily growing. Just 50 years ago, only about 1,000 Catholics lived on the island.

One focus of our aid for the Church in the Northern European countries in 2021 was the procurement of vehicles for pastoral care. For many priests and religious sisters, pastoral work is arduous because the parishes often cover huge areas. In addition, the climate and long hours of darkness in winter are hard on the priests and religious sisters, most of whom come from abroad. One focus of our aid for Northern Europe in the year under review was on the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Here too, we helped by providing vehicles while supporting religious sisters with material aid. We also funded a Christian youth holiday camp so that young people could deepen their faith. » The needs of local churches in Northern Europe must not be lost sight of. «

In the monastery of the Congregation of the Eucharist in Livani, Lithuania.







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Head of Section Magda Kaczmarek

Belarus



Of the 9.4 million inhabitants of Belarus, nearly 80% are Christians. most of them of the Orthodox

faith. Catholics form a minority of around 10%. Life in Belarus in 2021 continued to be marked by a severe political and economic crisis, the effects of which were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to their pastoral mission, Christian churches are also committed to social peace in the country. ACN predom-



inantly supports the local Church in training the next generation of priests.

Ever since the disputed presidential election of 2020, a climate of fear and resignation has overtaken the country. The economic crisis is advancing and liberal democratic rights in what was once known as "White Russia" are severely restricted under the authoritarian regime of President Lukashenko. Both Christian Churches have repeatedly called for dialogue to solve the social problems. The Catholic Church



Seminarians at the seminary of the Diocese of Grodno.

» Pope Francis is concerned about the situation in the country. « Bishop Aleh Butkevich of Vitebsk,

Bishop Aleh Butkevich of Vitebsk, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Belarus

The Capuchin Church of St Francis of Assisi in Minsk, which is not yet completely finished.



offers spiritual, psychological and material support to believers who are suffering particularly great hardships during this difficult time. To ensure that it can continue to fulfil this mission, ACN supports the Church in the training of future priests. Though most priests at work here come from Belarus, the local Church cannot function without the help of priests from abroad – especially from Poland.

In the year under review, we were also able to provide the Belarusian Church with emergency aid and Mass stipends for priests, as well as subsistence aid for religious sisters. And in those places where parishes extend over several villages, we once again helped purchase vehicles in 2021.



St Anthony's parish relies on ACN's aid

In the Catholic Parish of St Anthony in Mogilev, located in eastern Belarus, more and more people are attending Holy Mass. Many of the faithful are actively involved in the life of the parish. There are various prayer groups and other activities. With the support of ACN, a church with a parish centre is now under construction, allowing enough space for church services, group meetings and other events.



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Head of Section Magda Kaczmarek

Ukraine



Ukraine was already a country in crisis before the pandemic. Corruption, lack of prospects, eco-

nomic crisis and the war in the east of the country have caused many younger and well-educated people to leave the country in recent years. The pandemic only exacerbated the hardship, which also affects the Church. ACN has there-



Students at the Greek Catholic Seminary in Kyiv. fore increasingly supported the local Church with Covid-19 aid. Even now, in the war that has been raging since February 2022, we will not abandon the priests and religious and thus the people of Ukraine.

Catholics form a minority of just under 10% of Ukraine's total population of around 44 million. The Catholic Church is represented here by two rites: the Roman Catholic and the Greek Catholic. ACN has been able to help many religious communities in need with material aid as a result of the pandemic. This support was indispensable because, in addition to its apostolate, the Church also provides an important service to society, with religious caring for those seeking advice, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities and neglected children, thereby giving new hope to many people.

In addition, our organisation was once again able to help many priests with Mass stipends and also provide funds for the purchase of new vehicles. In the year under review, funding was also provided

» Only the Church helps us. «



ACN supports the old and sick sisters of the Basilian Sisters of St Josaphat.

for construction and renovation work on church buildings as well as for training in numerous seminaries and monasteries, as the number of vocations to the priesthood and religious orders in Ukraine remains gratifyingly high. Further funds flowed into support for the Catholic media in 2021, which play an important role for many believers, especially in the time of the pandemic. But funds also reach seekers who have had little or no contact with the faith and the Church.





Covid subsistence aid for religious sisters

In the diocese of Kyiv-Zhytomyr, 138 sisters from 22 different communities are active in parishes, hospitals, orphanages and kindergartens. The consequences of the pandemic have left many of them in great need. Before the Covid crisis, they were still able to earn their own living, but now they no longer receive a salary. At the same time, the communities have to pay heating costs, the costs of maintaining their buildings and much more. To make matters worse, many of the sisters came down with Covid-19 themselves. In order to secure their livelihood and to ensure they can continue to help others, we support the religious sisters with subsistence aid.





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Head of Section Marco Mencaglia



With a share of 10% of Albania's approximately 3 million inhabitants, the Catholic Church is a

minority in the country. The majority of the population is Muslim. Even today, the majority of priests and religious come from abroad. Local vocations are still far from sufficient. However, training the next gener-



ation of priests is only one of many challenges. ACN supports the Church in all six dioceses of the country.

In the communist era, all religions in Albania were persecuted even more cruelly than in most other communist-ruled countries. In 1967, Albania declared itself the "first atheist country in the world". Since the political winds of change in the former Eastern Bloc countries, freedom of religion prevails again, but there is much to be done to socialise new generations in the faith. This is a difficult task against the backdrop of the deep economic crisis that the country is currently experiencing and from which the Church is also suffering.

Even before the pandemic, Albania was one of the poorest countries in Europe. The younger generation, in particular, sees hardly any prospects here. Deep mistrust of state authorities, corruption, the ongoing financial crisis and, last but not least, the pandemic have all triggered

Children in front of the church in Bardhaj, which was renovated with ACN support.



a massive wave of migration. The dramatic consequences of the exodus are as obvious for the country's growth as they are for the Church.

The local Church is dependent on help from abroad. Congregations not only lack local staff, but also the necessary resources to provide pastoral care.

ACN therefore supports the training of future priests, provides renovation aid and vehicles for pastoral care, and assists priests with Mass stipends and religious sisters with subsistence aid. Particularly close to our hearts is the Church's support for youth pastoral care, because it gives young people, who often have no prospects, the opportunity to become better acquainted with their faith and put their own lives on a solid foundation.

» The Church urgently needs support for youth work. «

Baptism in the "Famullia Shen Luka Ungjilltar" Parish, Korçë.







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Head of Section Peter Humeniuk

*including project applications from the previous year.



Russia was again severely affected by the pandemic in 2021. This meant that 2021 was a difficult

year with great challenges - also for the numerically small local Catholic Church, which we continue strongly to support. For 30 years, ACN has also been committed to dialogue with the **Orthodox Church. This commitment** was entrusted to ACN in 1992 by Pope John Paul II, who has since been canonised. Despite the war in Ukraine, we hope to continue the dialogue between the two Churches.

ACN's first priority is to help the Catholic Church, which forms a small minority in Russia and is dependent on help from

abroad. One challenge here is that the faithful are spread over a huge area. The Diocese of St. Joseph alone, with its base in Irkutsk, is larger than the USA with an area spread over 10 million square kilometres. In order to care for the widely scattered faithful, priests and religious sisters need our support. In 2021 we were once again able to provide vehicles, building and renovation aid, to support the training of priests, religious and lay people and to assist priests with Mass stipends. An important Church institution is Russia's only Catholic seminary in Saint Petersburg, which is supported by ACN. The seminary trains aspiring local priests and has become an important platform for exchanging experience, as well as cooperation between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Field Mass in the Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk.





Sisters with the statue of St Joseph in a church in Irkutsk.



» Success is when dialogue leads to concrete assistance. «

The historic meeting between Pope Francis and the Moscow Patriarch in 2016 gave further impetus to ACN's commitment. An ecumenical working group initiated by us then translated important topics from the joint declaration of the Church leaders into concrete projects. These include, for example, aid projects for Christians in the Middle East and improving pastoral care and guidance for the psychologically ill, mothers in critical situations and addicts, as well as hospice work with terminally ill children.



Support for drug addicts

The Orthodox priest Sergij Belkov is a "pioneer" of Church aid for drug addicts in Russia. In 1996, he founded a rehabilitation centre in Sapjornoe that also recognises people in their spiritual dimension. ACN has supported this project from the very start. Through prayer, work, a family community and pastoral support, most young people succeed in overcoming their addictions and no longer relapse. As the number of people seeking help increases, ACN 2021 has supported the expansion of the centre.





In large parts of Asia and Oceania, poverty and natural disasters are making life difficult for the population. Across the area, rural exodus and migration are major issues. Communist totalitarianism, radical Islamism and religious nationalism are among the greatest threats to religious freedom in much of this vast region. Added to this are the burdens caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which are also of great concern to the Church. ACN was able to offer aid totalling 20.7 million euros for the area in the year under review.

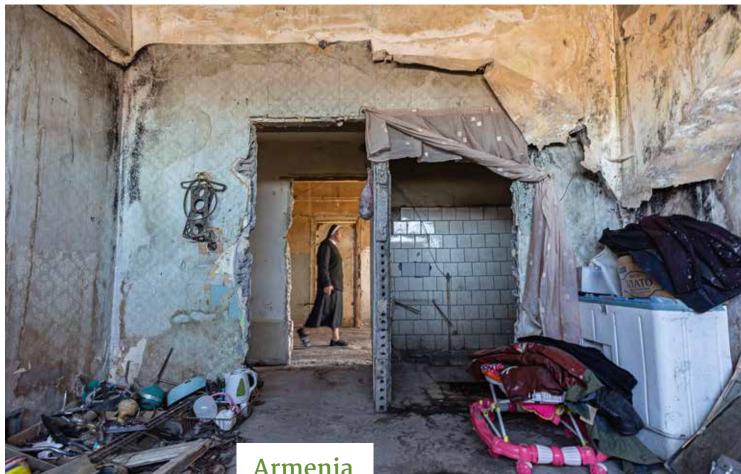
The challenges facing the Church in Asia and Oceania are multifaceted and vary greatly from region to region. In some Asian countries, Christianity is seen as a harmful influence from abroad, threatening the political leadership or the perceived religious cohesion of the nation. In many places, social discrimination against Christians has worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Funeral of a priest who died of COVID-19 in India.

» Christianity is perceived in many places as a threat from abroad. «

ACN helps local churches carry out their diverse tasks and supports them, for example, in building and maintaining their infrastructure and also in training their priests and staff. Often, the Church has been at the forefront of the response to the pandemic, without any regard to the religious affiliation of those seeking help. In some places, religious communities have even made their houses available as quarantine shelters. During the pandemic, our attention was therefore particularly focused on securing the livelihoods of priests and religious so that they could continue their ministry to those in need. Protective materials were also provided to ensure that pastoral care would be able to continue.



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Head of Section Marco Mencaglia

Armenia



Armenia, located in the Near Eastern Caucasus region, has been in an armed

conflict with Azerbaijan for decades over control in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. In 2020, fighting broke out again. Thousands of soldiers have already died and over 90,000 people have been forced to flee. ACN was able to support the local Church in 2021 with a large emergency aid project for suffering families.

» When the state does not help, the only option left for the needy is the Church. «





A family on their way to a funeral near Gyumri (left).

A mother cries at her son's grave near Yerevan (right).

90-year-old Petik lives alone in his house.



Armenia was the world's first Christian state. Most Armenians are proud of the fact that Christianity was declared the state religion of their country as early as 301. Almost 95% of the country's nearly three million inhabitants belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church, which, like the Coptic Church, is one of the ancient Eastern Churches. Additionally, however, there is the Armenian Catholic Church, which also holds its services according to the Armenian rite, but is subordinate to the Pope.

The Church often stands alone when it comes to helping the suffering population in the conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Government aid is not forthcoming and many aid organisations have meanwhile withdrawn from the country. At the end of 2021, more than 20,000 people were still on the run. Most of the refugees are stranded in Armenia and are struggling to survive there. As is often the case, it is the Catholic Church that provides spiritual and psychological support to help people overcome their trauma, and looks after war invalids in need of barrier-free housing, for example. Families living in poor housing conditions are also helped.



for needy families

ACN helped the Church in Armenia in the year under review by covering the cost of an emergency aid package for 150 families in the town of Goris in Syunik Province, near the border to Nagorno-Karabakh. Our support will initially run for 15 months and includes aid for housing, securing livelihoods and psychological and pastoral care.





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Head of Section Reinhard Backes



In the Islamic **Republic of Pa**kistan, where 96.4% of the 208 million inhabitants

are Muslims, religious minorities often suffer massive discrimination.



Particularly worrying is the rise in cases of abduction, forced marriage and forced conversion of Christian and Hindu girls. In addition to classic aid projects, ACN therefore especially supports measures of the local Church that protect girls at risk.

At least 1,000 Christian and Hindu women and girls between the ages of 12 and 25 are abducted, raped, forcibly married and forced to convert to Islam in Pakistan every year, and it is assumed there is also a high number of unreported cases. The perpetrators usually go unpunished. This phenomenon is not new, but it has increased considerably in the recent past. There is a range of reasons for this. On the one hand, there are no adequate laws against these crimes, and on the other, existing precautions to protect underage girls and women belonging to religious minorities are simply ignored or not implemented.

Archbishop Joseph Arshad of Islamabad-Rawalpindi distributing food to the needy in Chakwal.

» Where the state fails, the Church becomes an advocate for religious minorities to protect them from discrimination and violence. «



A faith capacity building seminar for Catholic students.

ACN is aware of the difficult minority situation that young Christian women face in Pakistan. That is why we support the campaign to protect and safeguard the rights of vulnerable girls from religious minorities of the National Catholic Justice and Peace Commission in Lahore. The campaign includes consulting with politicians, promoting social awareness of the problem and providing legal aid to victims. In addition, ACN is sponsoring a programme to support young Christian women living in extremely difficult circumstances. We were able to provide further funds to the Pakistani Catholic Church in the year under review for COVID emergency aid, training aid for candidates for the priesthood, religious and lay people, as well as for building projects and the procurement of vehicles.



Christian girls from rural areas at a Bible study class in Faisalabad Diocese.





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Head of Section Véronique Vogel Reinhard Backes



With almost 1.4 billion inhabitants, the country of India has the second largest

population in the world. Religious minorities such as Muslims (14.5%) and Christians (4.9%) are often discriminated against by the Hindu majority population. Church representatives have repeatedly called on the government to protect Christians and other religious minorities from attacks. ACN continued to support the local Church with numerous aid projects in 2021 so that it can continue to meet a range of severe challenges.



Bishop Michael Akasius Toppo at the funeral of a priest who died of COVID-19.

» It is a blessing that ACN is supporting us with emergency aid in this dramatic situation. « Bishop BI

Bishop Bhagyaiah Chinnabathini of Guntur



Violent attacks against Christians have increased at an alarming rate in many parts of the country. More than 300 anti-Christian incidents were reported in 2021. Strict anti-conversion laws are in place in several states, requiring any change of religion to be declared and authorised by the authorities. In October, for example, two Catholic sisters were accused of illegal conversions and forcibly dragged to a police station by angry mobs.

ACN is extremely concerned about the increasing violence against Christians. A major burden in 2021 was also the pandemic, which continues to have a firm grip on India. The second wave of infections hit the country with full force, and the existing infrastructure was unable to cope with it. There was a shortage of everything: hospital beds, oxygen, protective materials and vaccines. The Church fearlessly stood by those who suffered. At the same time, the Church itself was forced to mourn many victims. In the first half of the year alone, at least 520 priests and religious died of COVID-19 in India.

Burial of a COVID-19 victim in Idukki.



Children and young people at a field service in Bara Durgapur.



The economic consequences of the pandemic are also serious – for the Church as well. Thousands of priests had to forego collections during the lockdown, which are often vital for survival. ACN therefore supported more than 14,800 priests in need in some 100 dioceses in India during the second wave of the pandemic with Mass stipends totalling more than 4.6 million euros. In addition, we were able to provide protective materials such as masks, disinfectant gel, gloves and protective visors for priests, religious sisters and catechists.

Construction of the village church of St Joseph in Ayinapuram.



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Construction work at Mission St Francis D'Assisi in Sohphoh in Shillong Diocese.



» More than 14,800 priests in need were supported with Mass stipends during the second wave of the pandemic. «

Medical products and masks for the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in Jharkhand.



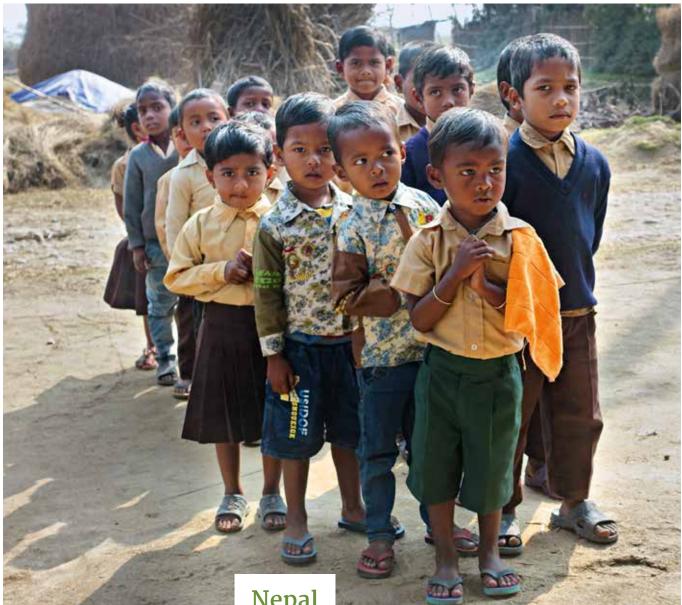
In the year under review, we also continued our long-standing aid in the poor north and north-east of India. The believers there usually belong to disadvantaged ethnic minorities. ACN mainly supports priests and religious with material aid and training assistance, provides vehicles for pastoral care in expansive areas that are difficult to reach, and helps with the renovation and construction of church buildings.





ACN mourns the death of Father Swamy

On 5 July 2021, the 84-yearold Jesuit priest Stan Swamy died in Mumbai. He had been in prison since 8 October 2020, accused by the Indian authorities of maintaining contact with Maoist and militant groups. The priest had spent decades working for disadvantaged people and reconciliation in tribal conflicts. "Father Swamy, an intrepid advocate for the poor and a passionate Catholic priest, has died," said ACN Executive President Dr Thomas Heine-Geldern. "The martyrdom he endured in his final months is unimaginable."





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Head of Section Véronique Vogel

Nepal



Nepal is marked by its geographical location in the Himalayan mountains. The popula-

tion is made up of many different ethnic groups. The majority of the 30 million inhabitants is Hindus. About 8,000 Catholics form only a tiny minority in the country. The local Church is poor and dependent on aid from abroad. The pandemic has made their plight even worse. ACN mainly provides material aid to Church representatives.



The Korean Sister Martha distributes meals in the slums of Pokhara.

Father Benjamin celebrating Holy Mass.



» Our vicariate is not able to support the priests regularly. Therefore, we are very grateful to ACN. <</p> Bishop Paul Simick, Vicar Apostolic of Nepal

Despite its minority situation, the Catholic Church in Nepal is still active. But it faces great challenges, for as in its neighbouring country India, the pandemic has also hit Nepal very hard. Even in normal times it is difficult for the local Church to make ends meet financially, but the pandemic has made the situation even worse. Requesting help, the Vicar Apostolic of Nepal, Bishop Paul Simick, wrote to us: "Mass stipends are currently the only means by which our priests are supported in their personal and medical needs and with which they can sometimes carry out small pastoral projects in their parishes. Therefore, if you could help us with Mass stipends, it would be a real blessing."

In 2021, ACN in Nepal was able to transfer Mass stipends totalling 24,000 euros to 31 priests of the vicariate so that they can continue to fulfil their mission in these difficult times. In the year under review, we also helped needy religious sisters and catechists with special aid.



Bishop Paul Simick in the chapel of Don Bosco Parish.



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Head of Section Véronique Vogel



In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation with 272 million inhabitants, rions has been

the coexistence of religions has been largely peaceful until now. However, recently there have been increased attacks by conservative and sometimes violent Islamist groups. Institutions of the Catholic Church have also been the target of attacks. In addition, the local Church is struggling with the consequences of the pandemic. In the year under review, ACN was able to assist with the basic security of priests and religious and with the maintenance of the religious infrastructure.

Since the military victory over the militias of the "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq, there have been repeated attacks in Indonesia in recent years. The most



Sisters in the rice fields in Ratedao.

» Terrorist attacks, natural disasters and the pandemic put enormous strain on the local Church. «

Construction of a chapel and an assembly hall for the Catholic University on Sumba.



recent Islamist riots also terrified the Church. For example, on 28 March 2021 in the Indonesian Sulawesi Selatan Province, a suicide attack was carried out on the Makassar Cathedral during the celebration of the Palm Sunday liturgy. Twenty worshippers were injured, and the two attackers were killed. The terrorists were allegedly members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), a splinter group of the Islamic State (IS). The same group carried out suicide attacks on three churches in Surabaya in East Java in 2018, killing 28 people.

The Church in Indonesia has also been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. From January to September 2021 alone, more than 120 Catholic religious here died as a result of COVID-19. Most became infected while providing pastoral care to the faithful, serving the poor or caring for the sick. Natural disasters – including tropical cyclone Seroja, which hit several islands in April – also increased people's need. Here as well, priests and religious stood by the suffering population. In the year under review, ACN supported priests and religious sisters through subsistence aid and Mass stipends, promoted the training of aspiring religious and provided assistance for building and maintaining the Church infrastructure.

> During the ordination of deacons at St Peter Ritapiret Seminary in Maumere.





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Head of Section Reinhard Backes

Philippines



The Philippines is the only majority Christian country in Asia. More than 80% of the archipela-

go's 109 million inhabitants are Catholic. In 2021, the Church celebrated the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Gospel. For its part, the local Church is very concerned about social inequality and human rights violations in the country, as well as Islamist violence on the Mindanao archipelago - grievanc-

es against which it regularly raises its voice. ACN supports the Church to the best of its ability, and in 2021 especially in the family apostolate.

The Mindanao archipelago, where many Muslims live, takes on a special position in the island state. For years, various Islamist terrorist groups have been active here in efforts to establish an Islamic state. There have repeatedly been attacks. Radicalisation and violence are increasing noticeably. The Church seeks above all dialogue with "moderate" Muslims. In



Filipino child praying the digital rosary.

» The Philippine Church raises its voice against social grievances. «



addition, the Church continues to raise its voice in the Philippine public sphere on issues that bring it into conflict with the government, for example, when it comes to respect for human rights and human dignity, including for prisoners, drug addicts and drug dealers. The latter are frequently executed without trial on the orders of President Rodrigo Duterte.

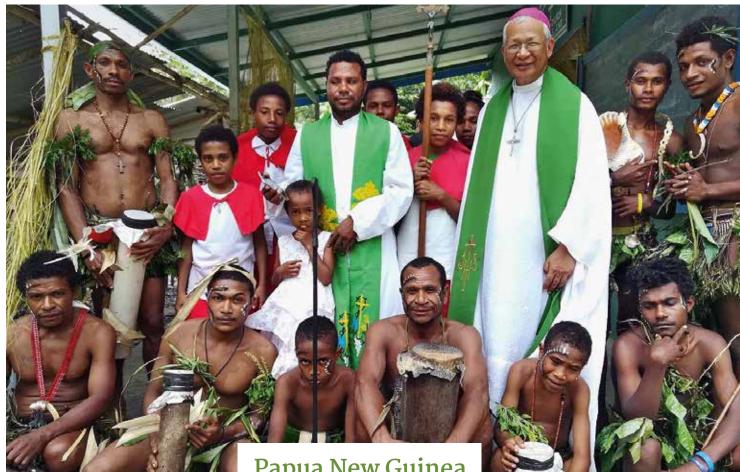
The Philippine bishops have published a prayer for the upcoming national and local elections in 2022. In addition, the Church calls on the faithful to exercise their right to vote responsibly and to follow their own conscience. It warns against vote buying and also spoke out against the reintroduction of the death penalty in 2021. Social inequality and increasing materialism necessitate a deepening of faith. For this reason, ACN increasingly supported the family apostolate in the year under review. In the poorer dioceses of the country, ACN also promotes priestly formation, supports priests with Mass stipends and provides vehicles for pastoral care.

Meeting with believers at the ACN-supported Camillian Sisters in Antipolo City.



ACN supports inter-religious training centre

The Emmaus college of theology was founded by Father Sebastiano D'Ambra in Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao. Catholic leaders and religious teachers are trained in this state-recognised institution; in the future, they will work primarily for dialogue between Christians and Muslims. ACN regularly supports the work of the centre, where thousands have already been trained for inter-religious dialogue.



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Head of Section Irene Eschmann

Papua New Guinea



Papua New Guinea is the third largest island nation in the world. In some parts of

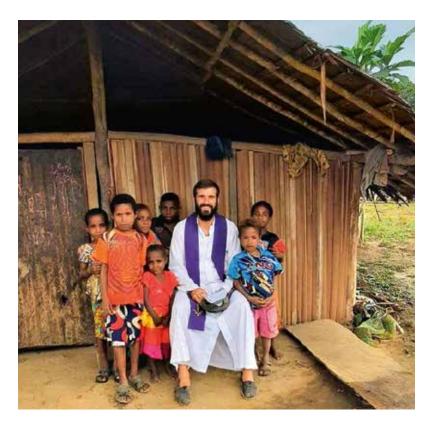
the country, the Catholic Church has only been present for a few generations. Nevertheless, more than a quarter of the approximately eight million inhabitants are Catholic today. In addition to its pastoral tasks, the Church is primarily concerned with the social and spiritual needs of the faithful because many feel torn between tradition and modernity and are searching for identity.

The challenges facing the Church in Papua New Guinea are great: The rugged land is extremely rough, and there are few roads. To make matters worse, a myriad of different languages is spoken. Poverty in the population is alarmingly high, as many areas of the country are still severely underdeveloped today. At the





Sweets for children in the jungle of Sandaun Province.



» The Church gives people orientation in their search for a new identity. «

Priest with children in front of a church in the jungle of Sandaun Province.

same time, technical progress, digitalisation and globalisation have also reached Papua New Guinea – however, many feel overrun by the rapid development and socially disadvantaged. Here, the Church provides orientation to the people and supports them in all their needs.

The Church in Papua New Guinea is confronted with immense social and pastoral problems. Therefore, not only priests and religious are indispensable for pastoral care, but also well-trained lay people. For example, ACN has supported a programme that enables young people to acquire skills as group leaders for youth groups, as well as in family pastoral care and child protection. Funds were also provided for the training of prospective priests and the continuing education of priests in the year under review. Furthermore, we were able to assist in the purchase of new vehicles for pastoral care, as most of the parishes on the island are extremely vast and impassable.



The ministry of priests in Papua New Guinea is often difficult and exhausting. Their parishes cover huge areas, often even spread across several islands. This means hours of arduous journeys by sea or land to minister to the faithful. Periods of spiritual recovery become all the more important. With the support of ACN, the 24 priests and the bishop of Wewak Diocese were able to take part in a six-day retreat. A letter from Bishop Józef Roszyński reached us with the words: "We were able to recharge our spiritual batteries through joint prayer, fraternal sharing and lectures. Thank you, ACN!"



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>> For the love of Christ urges us on. << 2 Corinthians 5:14</pre>

Our mission

As a Catholic charity, we support the faithful wherever they are persecuted, oppressed or in need, through prayer, information and action.

Our vision

A world in which Christianity can thrive everywhere.

Our guidelines

- We are loyal to the Holy Father. As a Pontifical Foundation, we participate in the universal mission of the Church.
- 2. We serve the cause of evangelisation. We respond courageously to the challenges of the time following the teachings of the Church.
- **3.** We are committed to the persecuted Church. By sharing testimonies of faith, we build a bridge of charity between our benefactors and beneficiaries.
- 4. We are custodians of our benefactors' generosity. We run modern, transparent and effective fundraising and administration.



Our values

开 Faith and Christian love

The foundation of all our activities is Christian faith and love. This includes our fidelity to the Holy Father and the adherence to both the teachings and institutions of the Catholic Church.

凉, Prayer

Regular prayer, personal and common, animates our daily work and strengthens our missionary spirit. It moves us to offer assistance to those who are suffering because of their loyalty to Christ and His Church - on whose prayers we rely as well.

🐼 Pastoral commitment

We strive to proclaim the Gospel, be it "welcome or unwelcome" (2 Timothy 4:2), responding courageously to the challenges of the time. We do this when engaging our benefactors and by financing pastoral projects with their contributions.

Unity

Conceived as a "bridge of love" from its origins, ACN serves for unity and reconciliation. We create communion with and between both our benefactors and beneficiaries through prayer, providing information and expressing gratitude.

Service

We fulfil our mission through mercy and humble service, listening carefully to the needs of our partners. We aspire to be a personal source of comfort and strength to our beneficiaries and benefactors.

Openness

Through our support of the Universal Church we promote a respectful dialogue with many cultures around the world. We live this openness ourselves in our manifold encounters both within and outside the Catholic Church.



Accountability

We handle the funds we receive with the highest care, seeking efficiency and measuring impact both in our funding activities and within our internal organization. We work transparently, showing the sources, uses and achievements of the funds we receive.

C Trust

Our unshakeable trust in Divine Providence guides us into the future and enables us to place trust in others and, in turn, to be trusted by them. Consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima we are filled with hope and confidence.



» It is our moral duty to

use donations in a

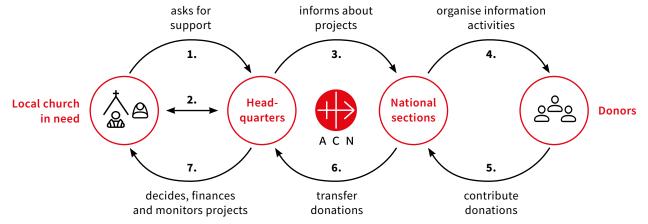
responsible manner. «

This is how donations become concrete aid for Christians in need.

For more than 70 years, Aid to the Church in Need has supported churches in need, as well as Christians suffering from discrimination and persecution around the globe. From the very beginning, we have been guided by values such as professionalism, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency. These are values that we have stood by uncompromisingly in the past and continue to do so today, ensuring that our benefactors' donations have the best possible effect precisely where they are most urgently needed: among local churches in need.

Clear organisational structures between our headquarters, our global national offices and our project partners ensure that the entire process, extending from project application and needs assessment to project approval and funds provision, can be designed conscientiously and efficiently. As a rule, only three months elapse between the time that an aid application has been received and our decision to approve or reject it. It is our moral duty to channel the donations we receive with the utmost care. For it is our mission to promote ecclesial and spiritual communion between those who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ and those who possess a compassionate and generous heart. And we will remain faithful to this credo in the future. The following diagram provides an overview of how the donation cycle at ACN works.





1. The need for project aid arises in a place where the Church suffers from poverty or persecution. The diocese or parish forwards the project to ACN (Aid to the Church in Need) headquarters in Königstein, Germany, with a recommendation from the local bishop or supervisor.

2. The head of section for the region analyses the project. If necessary, he or she then asks for further information. Within a maximum of three months, ACN headquarters confirms whether the project has been approved or not.

3. ACN headquarters informs the national offices about local fundraising projects and financing through benefactors.

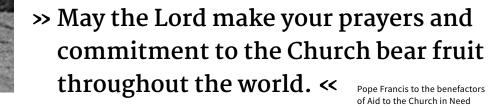
4. The offices organise information and awareness-raising measures so that donors support the projects.

5. Benefactors feel called on to join in and donate.

6. ACN's national offices transfer the charitable contributions to ACN headquarters.

7. ACN decides on projects and their funding, tracks and monitors their implementation.

Between one and six months after the approval of the project has been granted, ACN assumes the costs for the approved project. In emergencies, ACN headquarters provides immediate funds.



Ever since its earliest days, ACN has been geared towards charity and reconciliation, providing assistance to Christians in need. With the support of our bene-

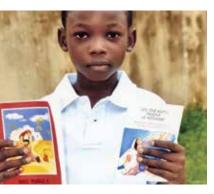
- **1947** At Pope Pius XII's request, Father Werenfried van Straaten founds ACN (then "Aid to the Eastern Priests") at the Premonstratensian monastery in Tongerlo, Belgium. In a unique reconciliation campaign, donations are collected in Belgium and the Netherlands for displaced Germans, including 3,000 priests.
- **1950** To provide pastoral care to displaced Germans, 35 buses and trucks are converted into "chapels on wheels" as part of the highly original "chapel truck campaign".
- 1952 ACN comes to the aid of persecuted Christians behind the "Iron Curtain". The projects range from helping to renovate churches and train priests to funding radio broadcasts and the book apostolate.
- 1956 After the bloody suppression of the Hungarian uprising against the Stalinist system, ACN helps the local Church get through the crisis.
- 1961 We launch our aid projects for the beleaguered Church in Asia. Following this, the first meeting between Father Werenfried and Mother Teresa takes place in the Home for the Dying in Calcutta.
- 1962 We step up our aid for persecuted and threatened Catholics in the "Catholic continent" of Latin America.

factors, we will remain true to this spirit in future with a view to helping the Church where its believers are threatened most by persecution, discrimination and poverty.

- **1965** Petitions also reach us from the Church in Africa, which we proceed to assist with the same commitment as on other continents.
- **1966** ACN is consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima. The following year, a large international pilgrimage takes place to mark the 50th anniversary of the apparitions.
- **1970** We launch our aid campaign to assist the Church in Haiti, one of the world's poorest countries.
- 1975 ACN relocates its international headquarters from Rome to Königstein/Taunus.
- 1979 With the Children's Bible, we launch a major project for boosting evangelisation efforts worldwide. To date, the book has been translated into 191 languages and printed and distributed over 51 million times.
- Stalinist system, ACN helps the local1984ACN is recognised by the Holy SeeChurch get through the crisis.as a Universal Public Association ofWe lough our aid projects forPontifical Right.
 - **1989** Following the political turning point in Eastern Europe, ACN provides aid for reconstruction and new evangelisation in the former Eastern bloc countries.
 - **1992** By order of Pope John Paul II, our aid organisation begins to work towards a dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church.









- **1997** The 50th anniversary of ACN's efforts on behalf of the Church in need worldwide – an occasion that is celebrated fittingly.
- 2003 Father Werenfried van Straaten, founder of our aid organisation, dies on 31 January at the age of 90 in his place of residence, Bad Soden/Taunus.
- 2007 The Middle East conflict causes more and more difficulties for the Church in the region, prompting Pope Benedict XVI to ask ACN to intensify its activities for Christians in the Middle East.
- 2011 An eventful year for ACN: our aid organisation is re-founded as a Foundation of Pontifical Right by Pope Benedict XVI and subsequently restructured. When the Syrian war breaks out, ACN begins extensive aid and solidarity campaigns, including the "Light a Candle for Peace in Syria" initiative.
- 2014 ACN initiates an emergency campaign to allow Christians in Iraq to remain in their homeland. The project is still going strong to this day, with more than 5,000 houses having already been renovated. ACN also becomes the sole shareholder of the YOUCAT Foundation and therefore its publisher. The work is very popular in Catholic youth work all over the world, with translations into no fewer than 58 languages. ACN opens its first Asian office in South Korea. This is followed by further offices in Mexico, Malta, Colombia, Slovakia and the Philippines up until 2019.

- 2017 To mark the 70th anniversary of our aid organisation, ACN invites benefactors from all over the world on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Fatima in Portugal. In the same year, Aid to the Church in Need assumes responsibility for the annual One Million Children Praying the Rosary campaign.
- 2019 With the Safeguarding project, ACN is helping the church to introduce measures to prevent abuse and is encouraging safeguarding courses for priests and religious worldwide.
- 2020 Our foundation helps the Church worldwide in their efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic and grants special assistance to cushion the impact of the coronavirus crisis for local churches. Following the explosion in Beirut's harbour, ACN is launching a major aid campaign for Lebanon.

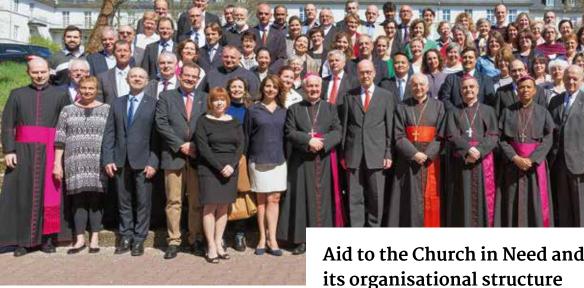






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П



Mauro Cardinal Piacenza President

Thomas

Heine-Geldern

Executive President



The Superior Council, under the chairmanship of its President, is responsible for the basic content and guidelines of the charity.

On behalf of the Superior Council and under the chairmanship of the Executive President, the Administrative Council ensures the statutory management of the charity.

of the 23 National Sections advise the foundation and vote on all the significant decisions of the Superior Council.

Assistants of the National Sections, the **International Ecclesiastical Assistant** is responsible for the spiritual life of the foundation.



Father Martin Barta International **Ecclesiastical Assistant**

Philipp Ozores Secretary General

Guido Gröning

Director Finance

and Administration



The General Secretariat in Königstein/Ts. centrally manages the entire funding activities and the financial, technical and administrative needs of the foundation. It supports the National Sections in providing media material and produces press and social media content and sound and video productions.



The 23 National Sections inform the benefactors and the public on the situation and needs of suffering Christians. They initiate prayer campaigns, acquire new donors and are responsible for the foundation's relations with its benefactors.



Regina Lynch **Director of Projects**



Mark von Riedemann Director for Public Affairs and Religious Freedom



In the General Council, the presidents

In cooperation with the Ecclesiastical

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