



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



»» Because faith
gives hope. ««

Activity Report 2022

PONTIFICAL
FOUNDATION



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ACN Aid to the Church in Need International

Title: Easter preparations of the Brotherhood
“Mères de Marie” in Mazraat es-Siyad, Lebanon.



Dear friends,

“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68). These words are addressed to the Lord by the Apostle Peter, and we also make these words our own when we observe the situation in this world.

2022 was a year that was once again marked by numerous crosses: the war in Ukraine with its incalculable consequences for the entire world, the further spread of jihadist violence in many African countries, hardship, violence and persecution of Christians around the world ... If not to Christ, then to whom shall we turn?

When we turn to him we learn to stand by his suffering Church and wounded humanity with ever-growing love. We also draw solace for ourselves from his compassionate heart.

Despite so many ordeals, we were privileged this year, once again, to be astonished witnesses to the miracles of Divine Providence. For this year, the response from you, our generous benefactors, to the plea for assistance from those in dis-

tre was unprecedentedly immense. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to bring comfort and hope to 128 countries this year.

By the way, 2022 was a special year for ACN, as we celebrated the 75th anniversary of our aid organisation. We express gratitude to God for continuously opening hearts to love in a genuinely Gospel manner, prompting individuals to hasten to the aid of those who are on the verge of collapsing under the weight of their arduous trials.

With all my heart, I bestow blessings upon you, my dear friends, and entrust you, your families, your aspirations and your entire lives to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Kind regards,

Mauro Card. Piacenza



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





**>> I cordially
bless you all. <<**

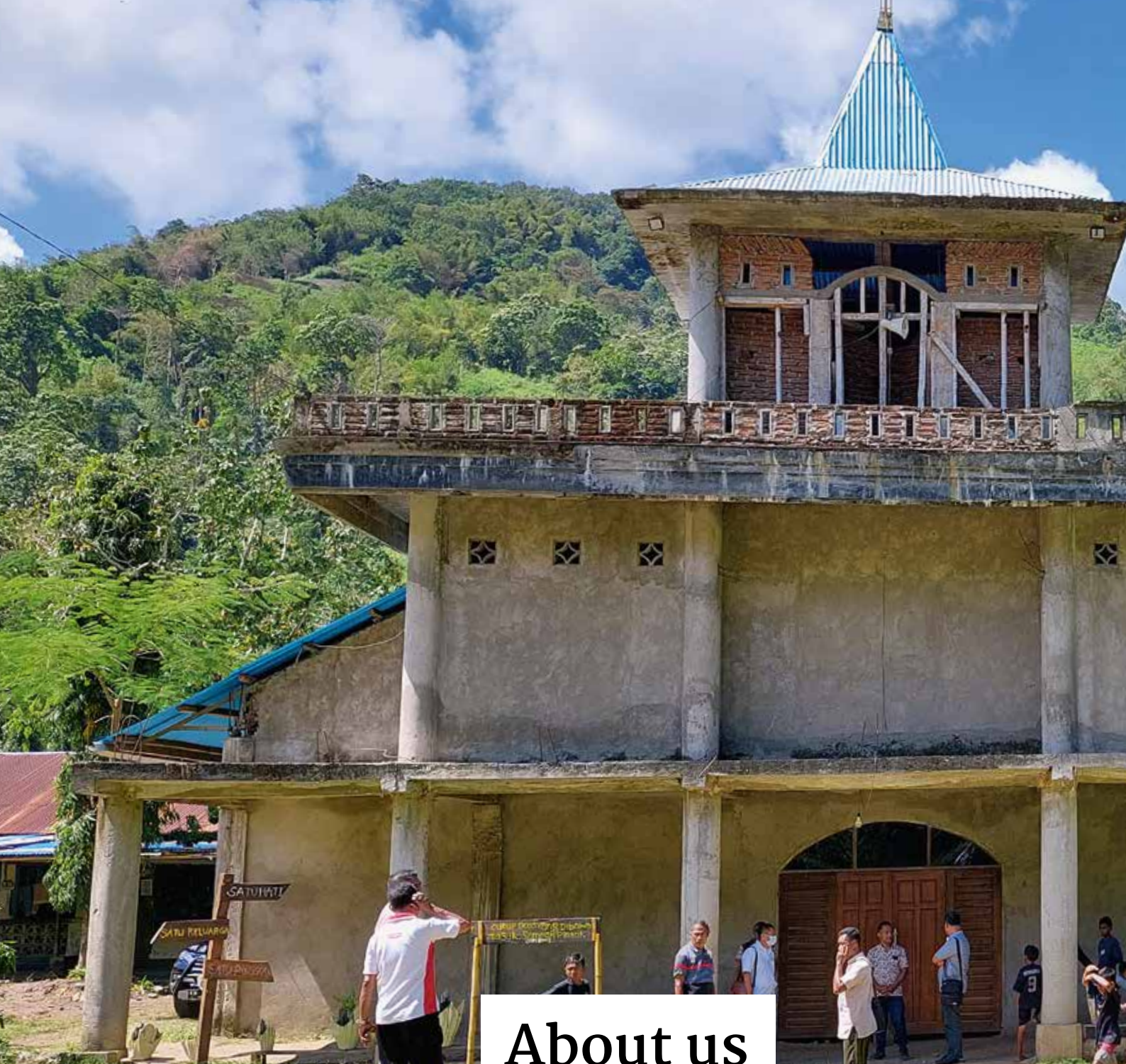
Dear friends, may the Lord make your prayers and your commitment to the mission of the Church always nurture more fruit throughout the world, especially where it is suffering from spiritual and material needs or is discriminated against and persecuted.

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.





About us

**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 2022.**



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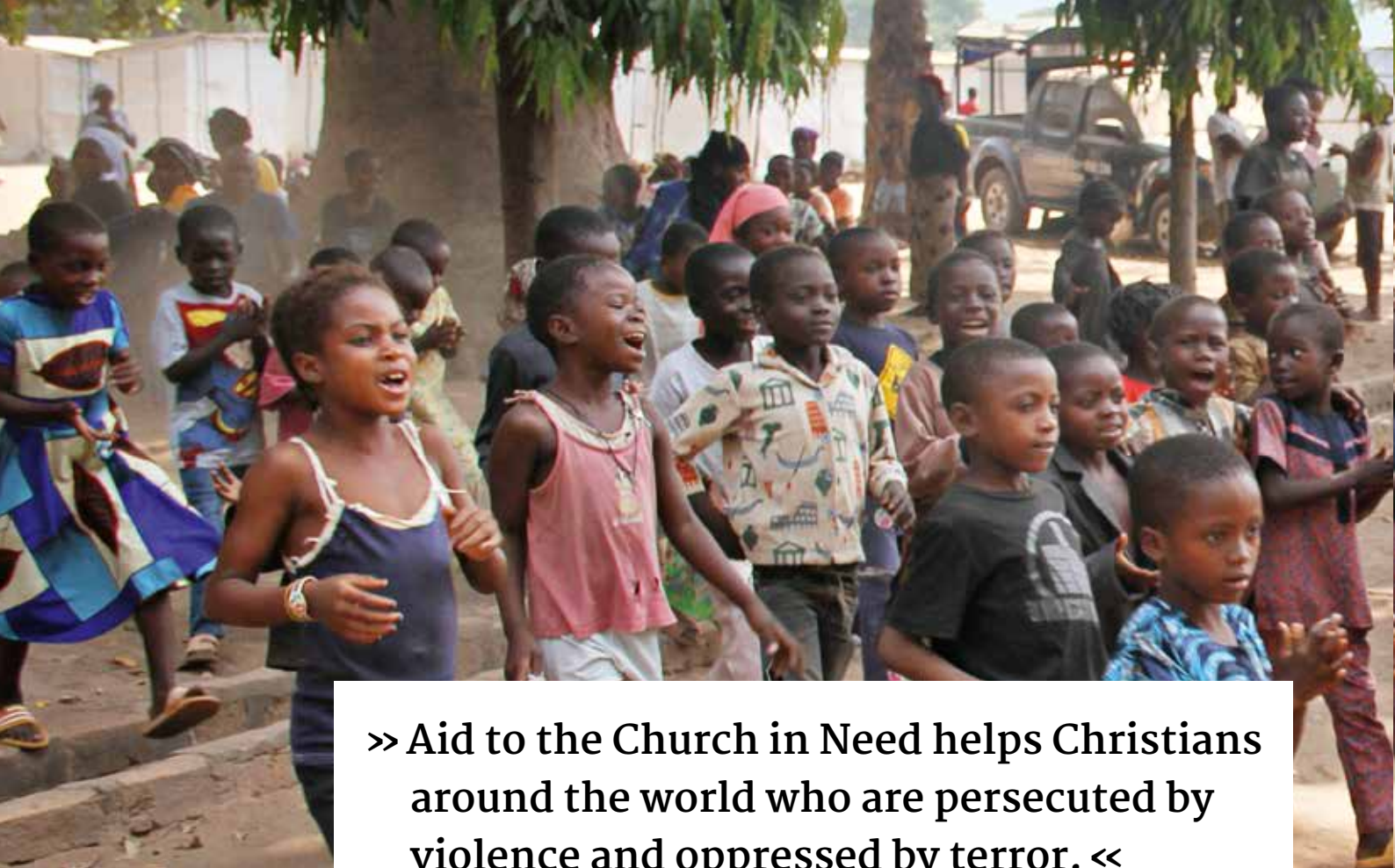
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Cover back Aid to the Church in Need – contacts worldwide



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

Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President



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

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.

» 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













Church in Need – our name says it all

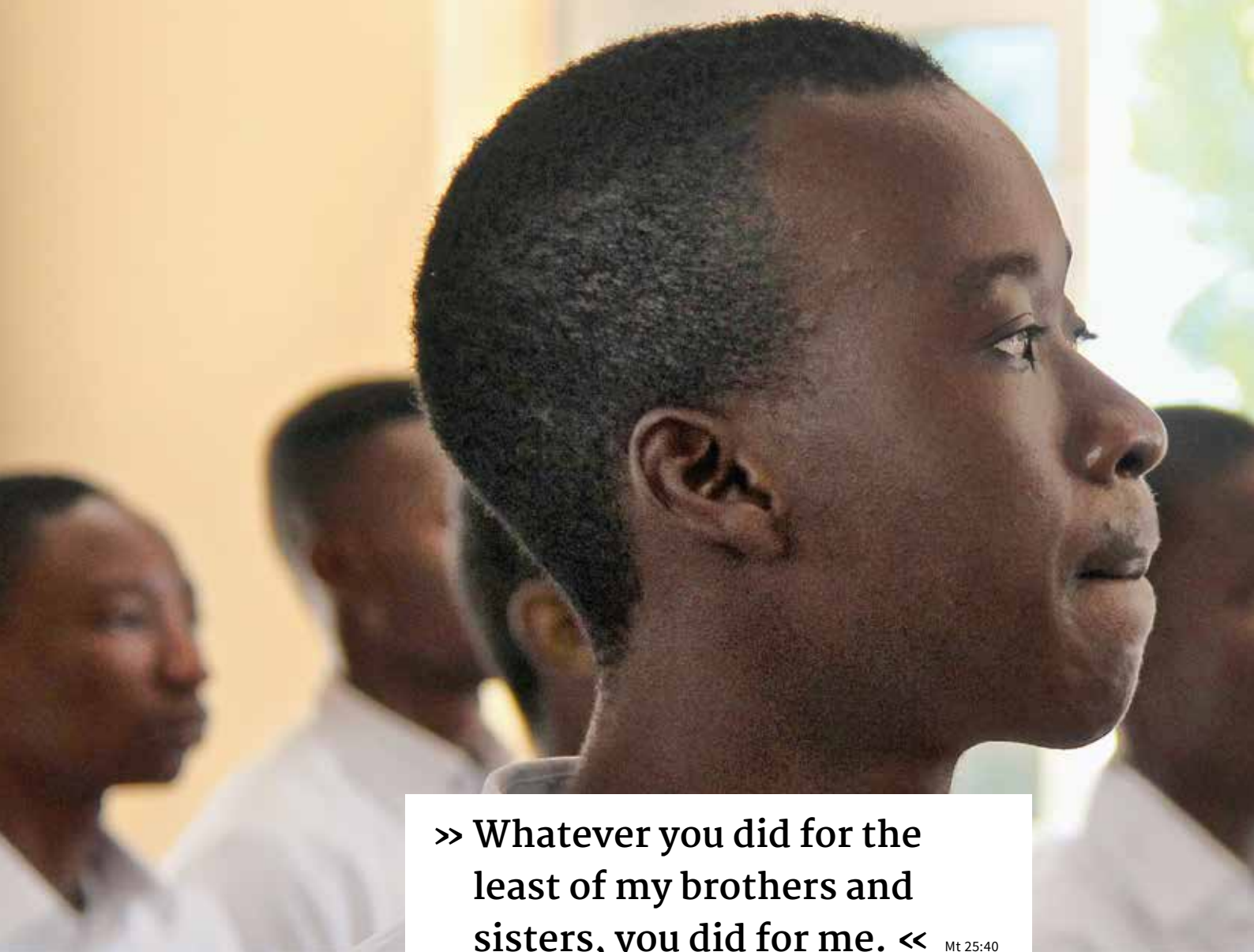
Over the 75 years since its foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has developed into an aid organisation with a broad range of tasks. Today, we can rightly claim that our name says it all. We now support some 5,700 Catholic projects each year in 128 countries – many of these over the long term. In this 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 364,000 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. 21)
-  Training of priests and religious (→ p. 22)
-  Subsistence aid for religious (→ p. 24)
-  Faith formation of laity (→ p. 25)
-  Construction and reconstruction of church facilities (→ p. 26)
-  Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 27)
-  Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes (→ p. 29)
-  Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 31)
-  Advocacy (→ p. 33)
-  Media support for the propagation of faith (→ p. 42)





**>> Whatever you did for the
least of my brothers and
sisters, you did for me. <<**

Mt 25:40

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 German-speaking 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 lived faith

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 146 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



ACN mourns the death of Benedict XVI



Greeting the Pope on one of his many trips – here in Luanda, Angola in 2009.



In 2007 in Brazil, the Pope distributes the ten millionth copy of the portuguese ACN Children's Bible.

Deeply moved and with great appreciation, ACN bid farewell to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (1927–2022), who was closely associated with our aid organisation for many years. During his pontificate, he elevated ACN to the status of Pontifical Foundation and provided us with valuable inspiration for our work. We have lost a passionate preacher of altruism and a great friend and supporter of our foundation.

Joseph Ratzinger appreciated and promoted ACN, not only during his term as Pope (2005–2013), but also during his time as Cardinal and Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. As early as 2002, he declared; “I support Aid to the Church in Need because I know that real service to the faith is being accomplished there.” ACN President Mauro Cardinal Piacenza paid tribute to the deceased as “a great friend and supporter of ACN” and stressed; “The fact that

Pope Benedict XVI dedicated his first encyclical ‘Deus Caritas Est’ to charity is very valuable for ACN.” In doing so, he strengthened the mission of the foundation, which “by virtue of its founding charism, is entirely devoted to charity in order to help the suffering Church.”

Cardinal Piacenza also recalled that it was this Pope who had elevated ACN to the rank of Pontifical Foundation in 2011 and initiated a comprehensive modernisation process at ACN. With this transformation, our aid organisation took on the form it still has today. In his letter of confirmation, the Pope praised ACN “as a relief agency that has accompanied the Church for 65 years in those places where it lacks financial resources or where violations of religious freedom occur.”

Many encounters with Benedict XVI remain unforgettable. During some of his



trips abroad, he was able to personally witness our dedication to Christians who are suffering and in distress. For example, during an Apostolic Journey to Brazil in 2007, he visited the drug rehabilitation centre “Fazenda da Esperança” (farm of hope), which is supported by ACN.

A conference in Castel Gandolfo from 13 to 16 September 2007 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of ACN will also remain unforgettable. Pope Benedict XVI received a delegation from ACN in his summer residence and presented us with a statue of the Virgin Mary, which found a worthy place in ACN’s international headquarters.

ACN Executive President Thomas Heine-Geldern also recalled how much Pope Benedict XVI cared about young people; “He entrusted this important concern to us through the supervision,

dissemination and further development of the youth catechism YOUCAT.” In the preface to YOUCAT, Pope Benedict addressed young people directly; “You must be much more profoundly rooted in the faith than the generation of your parents, to be able to resist forcefully and with determination the challenges and temptations of this time.”

In January 2019, Jan Probst, Director of the Swiss national office of ACN, was the last ACN representative to visit the Pope Emeritus at his retirement home in the Vatican. Probst recalls; “It was an impressive encounter. Although physically weak, his mind was clear and his charisma remained unchanged. Benedict said; ‘I assure you that you and ACN are included in my prayers.’”

Our foundation remembers the late Pope with gratitude and remains committed to his legacy.



Benedict XVI presents Father J. Allende with a gift of a Madonna statue on the 60th anniversary of ACN’s founding in 2007.



Benedict XVI, Archbishop G. Gänswein and Swiss ACN Director J. Probst in 2019.



Charity with efficiency and transparency.

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.





Each year, we screen up to 7,500 aid project requests from at least 128 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 up to 7,500 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 more than 128 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



>> We were able to support 5,702 projects around the world in 2022. <<

In 2022, we received 7,571 applications for aid from all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we collected record donations of 146 million euros, enabling us with €2.7 million in reserves from previous years to fund activities amounting to 148.7 million euros. In line with the three pillars of our work, “prayer, information, action”, by far the largest share of our expenditure, 82.6%, was devoted to mission-related expenses, i.e. concrete project work, information and prayer activities.

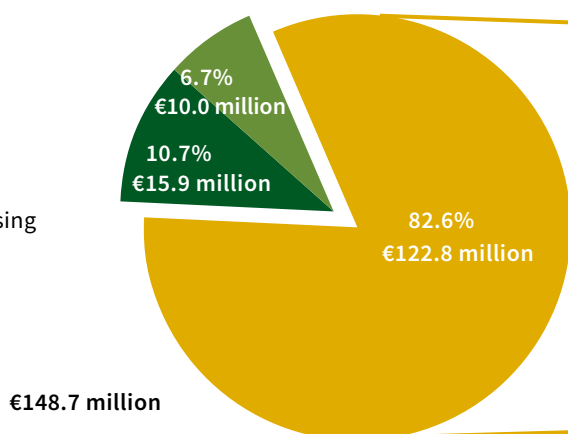
The proportion of necessary expenditures for administration and fundraising was, as always, very low at 6.7% and 10.7%, respectively, so that as many funds as possible could reach local Christians.

In 2022, we supported a total of 5,702 projects in 128 countries with approximately 107.1 million euros. A further 15.7 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 2022 at 27.4 million euros, or 18.8% 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.

Detailed use of funds (2022)

- Mission-related expenditure
- Administration
- Donor relations and fundraising





Facts and figures*

Offices in **23** countries

364,695 donors worldwide

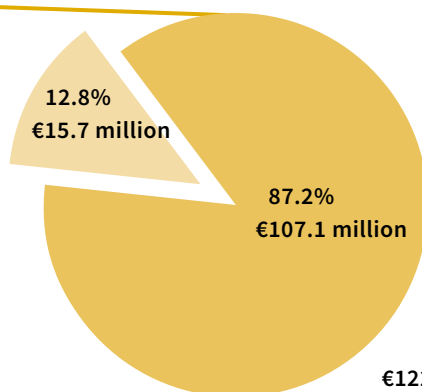
145,995,491 euros in donations and legacies

Project partners in **128** countries

5,702 projects supported worldwide

82.6 % of the funds used are allocated to mission-related expenses

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



Mission-related expenditure (2022)

- Project work (→ p. 18ff.)
- Information, proclamation of faith and advocacy for discriminated and persecuted Christians (→ p. 32ff.)

€122.8 million

*Valid as of 2022



» Building projects, training aid, Mass stipends and subsistence help were our focal points in 2022. «









We further amplified our aid for the formation of priests, religious and the laity, which has always been one of our priorities. In 2022, we were able to increase our budget for this to one-quarter of our total aid.

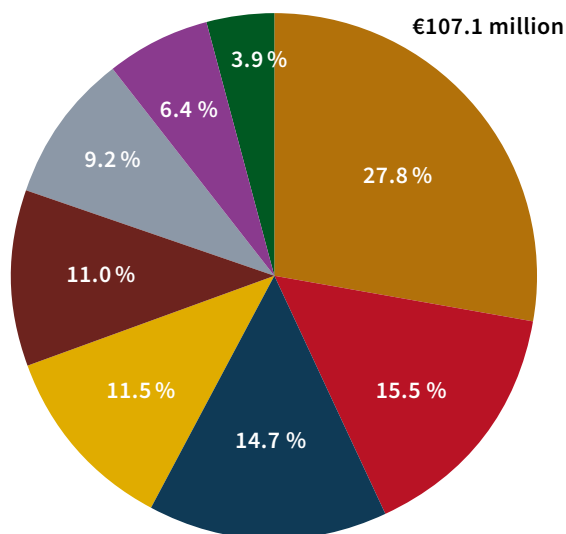
We are pleased that in 2022 we were once again able to contribute to securing the livelihoods of religious sisters and priests through subsistence help and mass stipends, respectively. A total of 21.9% of our funding was earmarked for these projects.

At 27.8%, projects for the construction, reconstruction or renovation of churches and church buildings took up almost one-third of our funding in the year under review.

In addition, we are active in acute crises with emergency aid measures for people in need. In 2022, such emergency aid in areas where Christians are threatened by violence and displacement accounted for 11.5% of our total aid.

Aid granted by type of help (2022)

Construction and reconstruction (→ p. 26)	
Mass stipends (→ p. 20)	
Training of priests and religious (→ p. 22)	
Emergency assistance (→ p. 28)	
Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 27)	
Faith formation of laity (→ p. 25)	
Subsistence help for religious sisters (→ p. 24)	
Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 30)	





» The starting point for our aid is a close dialogue with local churches. «

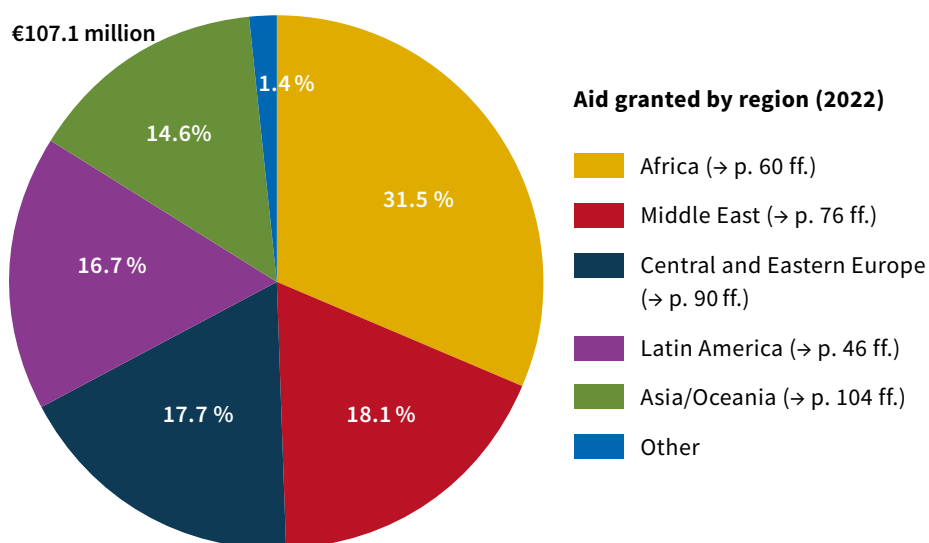
At 31.5%, Africa was once again the priority region for our aid projects in 2022. The situation is particularly dramatic in places where Islamist terror is spreading and Christians are victims of persecution and displacement, such as in Mozambique, Burkina Faso and Nigeria.

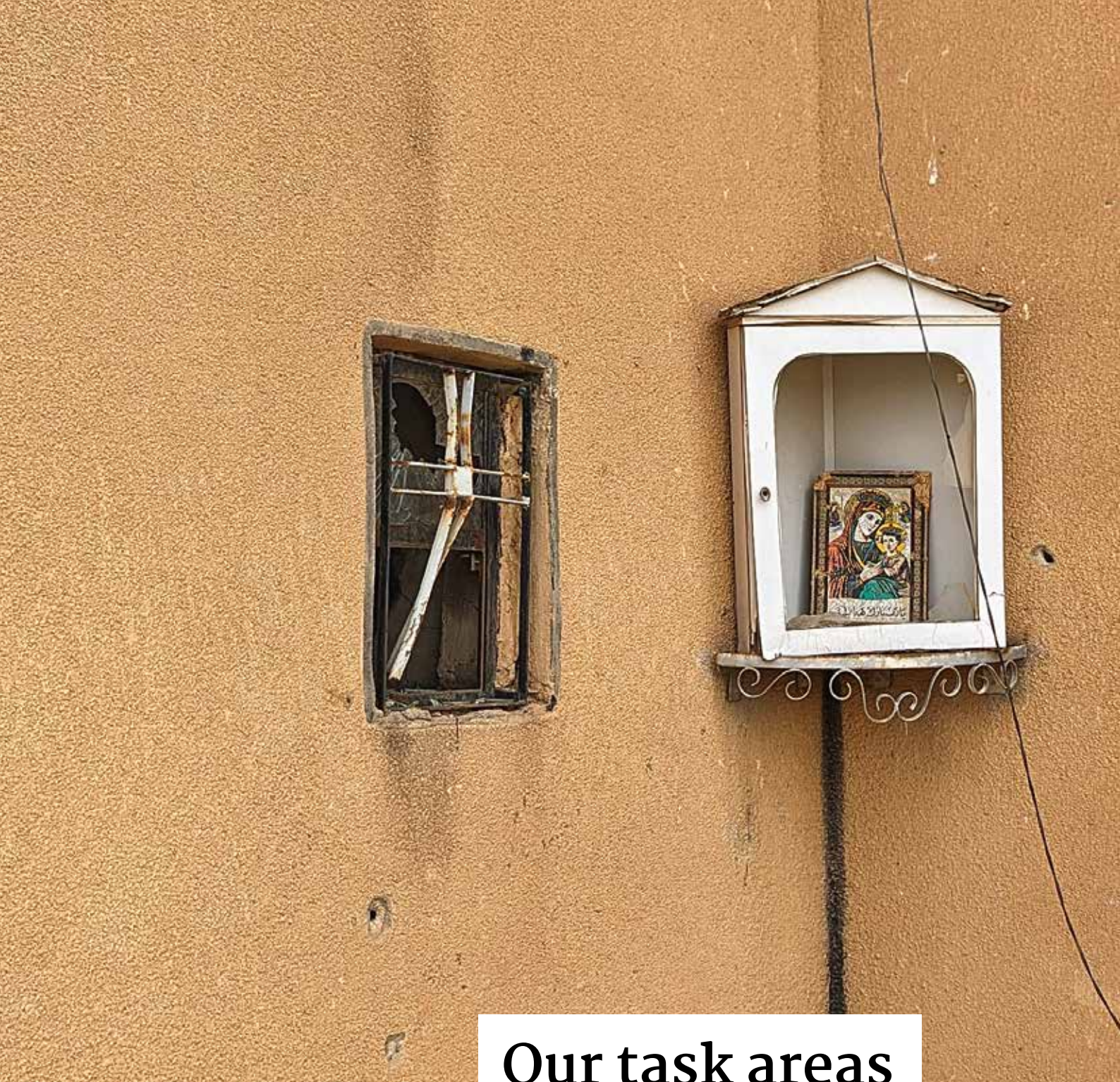
In 2022, we received a particularly large number of requests for support from Ukraine, where the Church, in the midst of war, is trying to alleviate the spiritual, psychological and material needs of those who have fled their homes and are in need. Therefore, in 2022, 10% of our funds went to Ukraine. Our aid for Central and Eastern Europe thus increased to 17.7%.

The funding volume for the Middle East represented 18.1% of our total aid. The focal points in 2022 were Syria and Lebanon. 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 16.7% of our total aid. Here, rural exodus, migration, drug cartels, sects and anticlerical governments continue to be among the major challenges faced by the Church.

14.6% of our total budget in the year under review was devoted to Asia (including 0.7% for Oceania), where Christians in most countries form a minority that is discriminated against or even persecuted.





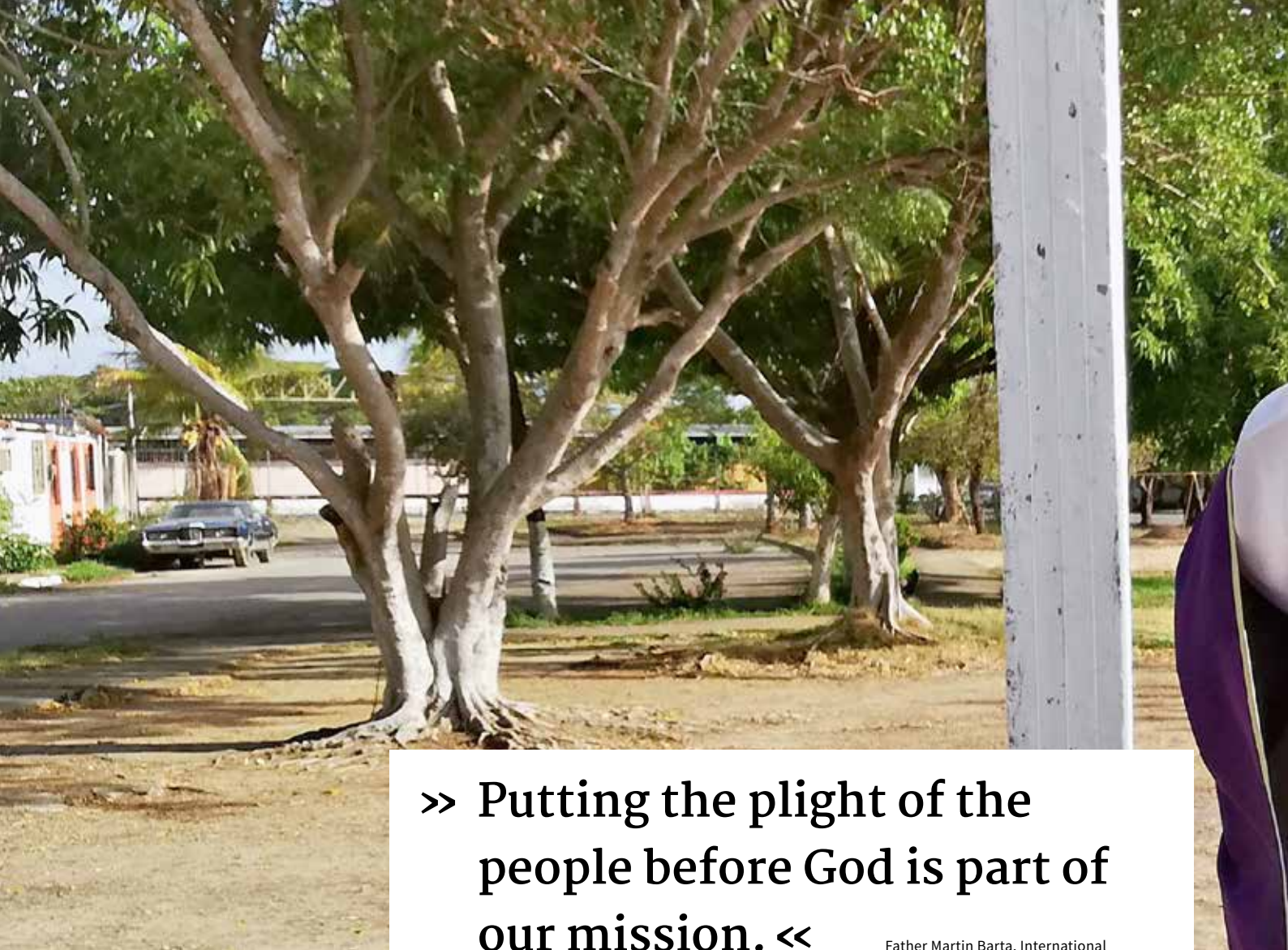
Our task areas

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.



The burnt down catechetical centre in Jazirah, Syria.

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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, subsistence 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.



Mass stipends



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 2022, a total of 1,872,240 Holy Masses were celebrated in the intentions of our benefactors. In this way, we were able to support a total of 40,730 priests, on average, about every tenth priest worldwide.

The distribution of the Mass stipends reflects the conditions of poverty on the continents. In the reporting year, 39.4% of the Mass stipends went to Africa, 30% to Asia and to the Near and Middle East, 17% to Latin America and 13.6% to Central and Eastern Europe.

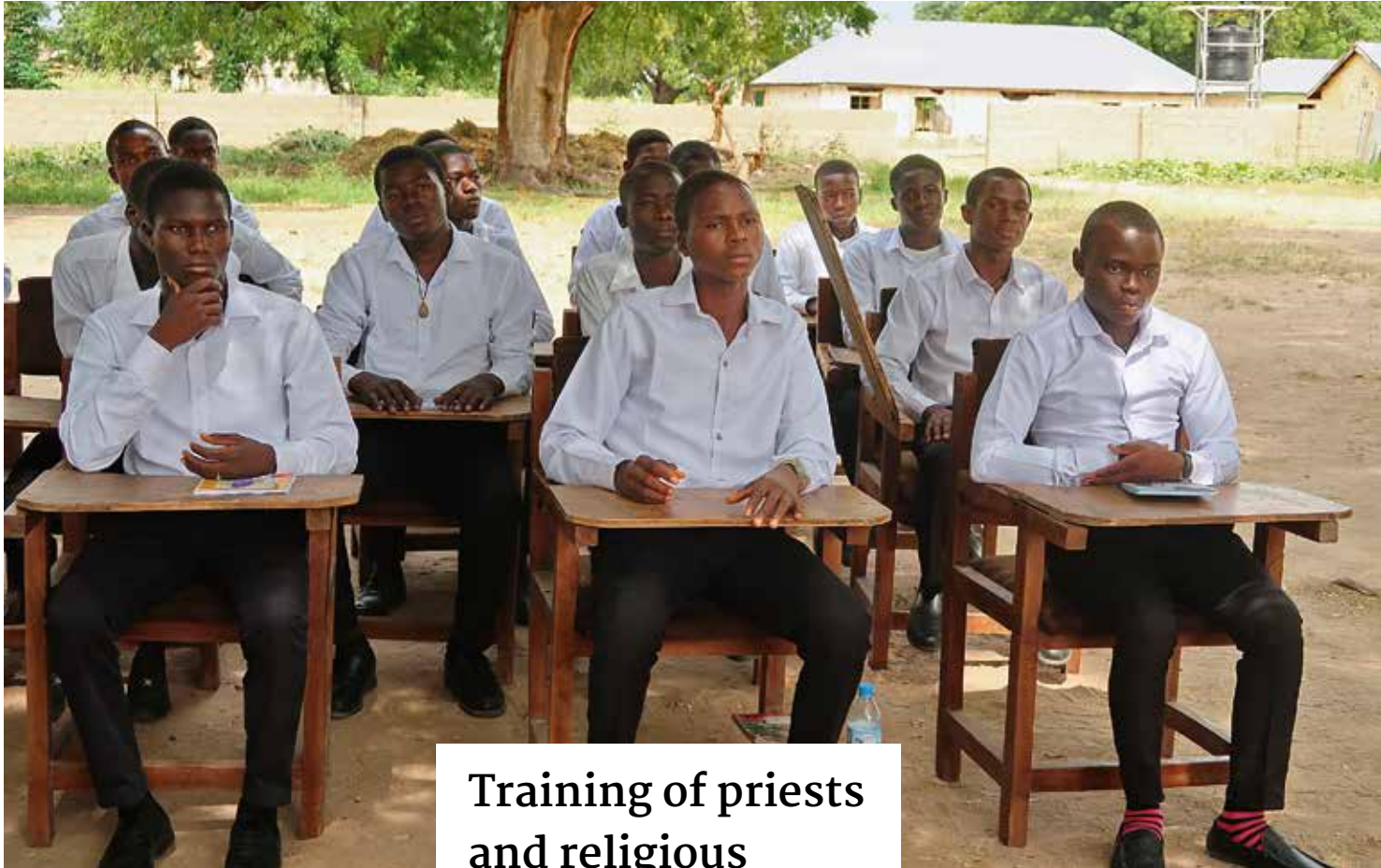
>> For some priests, Mass stipends are the only source of income. <<

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 17 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.



Training of priests 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 13,836 seminarians in 2022. The continuing education of God's servants is also an important concern to us. In the reporting year, we sponsored the continuing education of 202 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. «



Carmelite nuns in Kfarmashoun, Lebanon.

In 2022, we were also able to award 213 scholarships to priests who, for example, are pursuing a doctorate or an additional course of study. In terms of continental distribution, 36.5% of our scholarship holders came from Asia, 45.2% from Africa, 16.0% from Latin America and 2.3% from Eastern Europe.



Service with
Bishop S. Mamza
in Yola, Nigeria.

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, for example 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,
Project Director



Young missionaries in
Santo Amaro, Brazil.



Subsistence aid for religious



Poor Clares in San
Damián, Mexico.



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 also provide great help to the suffering Church.

In 2022 alone, we supported 20,909 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 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 course 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 33,821 laypersons were supported in their faith formation in 2022.



At the mission centre
in Adigrat, Ethiopia.

» It is our duty to support
our brothers and sisters in
faith. «

Dolores Soroa Suárez de Tangil,
benefactress, Spain



» Faith and a good organisation together can move mountains. «

Philipp Ozores, Secretary General

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.

Renovation of a church in Maliapota, India.



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, for example 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. Through 75 years of experience, we know that in slums, even the smallest chapel can give people a spiritual home.

972 such buildings were constructed or repaired with our help in 2022 alone.



Means of transport for pastoral care

 As early as the 1950s, ACN sent 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 2022 alone, 579 motor vehicles, 252 motorcycles, 406 bicycles and 16 boats were financed.



Engine repair in Yerevan, Armenia.



ACN is helping to replace canoes with motor boats in the Amazon to facilitate pastoral care.

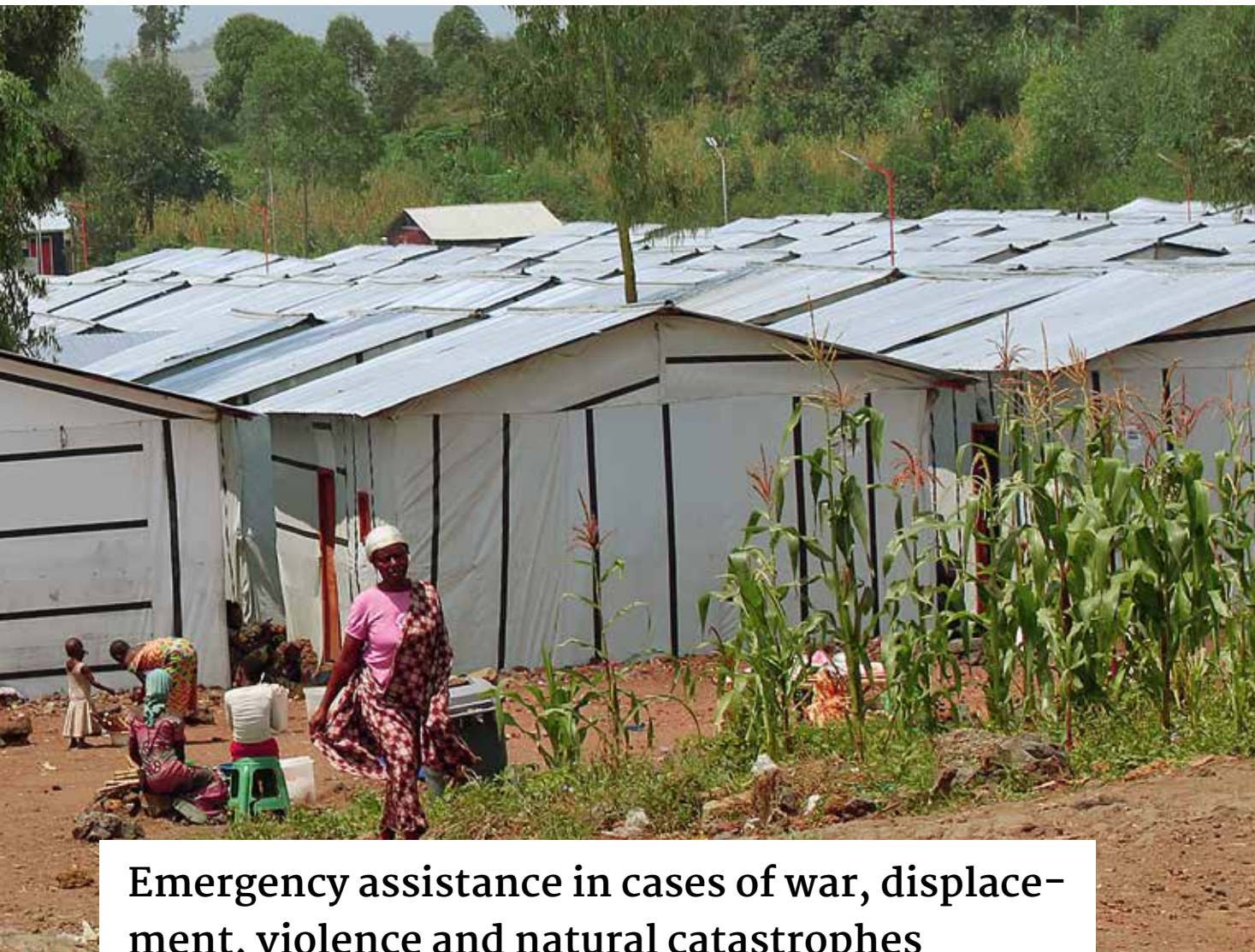


Camp for the victims
of the volcanic eruption
in Goma, Congo.

**>> For us, the greatest conceivable catastrophe
would be not to act. <<**

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 anything but their bare lives.

The bitter truth is that there are more refugees worldwide than ever before. 103 million people are currently fleeing war and violence around the world, several million of them in the Middle East alone.

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 76).

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



Refugee aid in the monastery of the Benedictine nuns in Solonka, Ukraine.

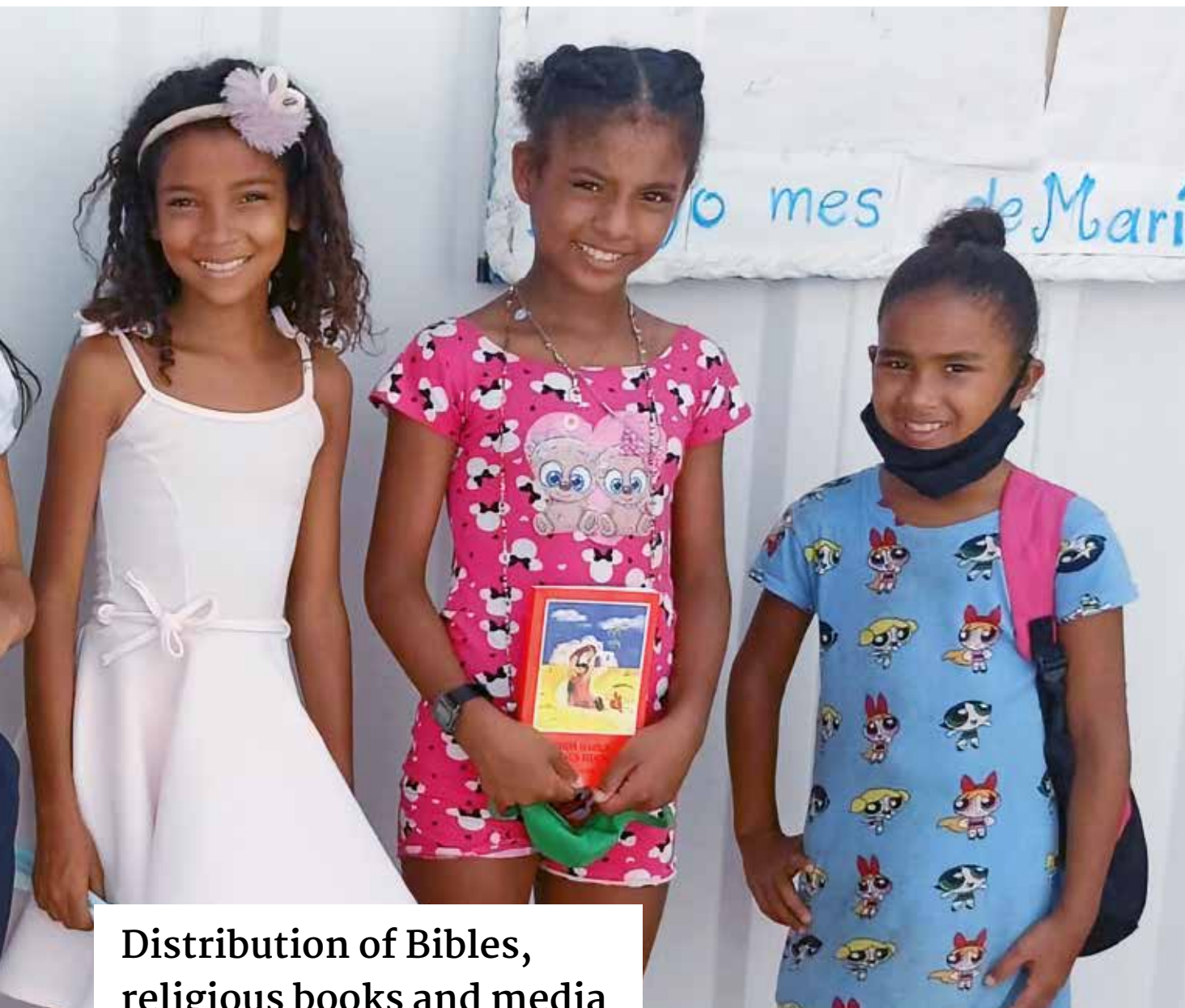


» For some children the Child's Bible is the only picture book that they can get hold of. «


Fr. Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation



A girl from Ndebele, Zimbabwe.



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 51.6 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 2022 alone, 1,290,363 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 40 to 41.

Children in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, reading the Bible.





Internally displaced people in Guma, Nigeria.

» We give persecuted Christians a voice. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

In line with our guiding principle to “inform, pray and act”, 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. We also produce the Religious Freedom Report and PR reports for print media, audiovisual products and social media.

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

As an advocate for Christians, we raise our voice for the disadvantaged and persecuted in many urgent cases. Our appeal for more humanity and charity

has already succeeded in galvanising awareness among some important political figures. 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. In this way, we have built a strong reputation and earned the trust of EU officials and other politicians over the past few years. This has made it easier for us to launch projects and gain supporters.



Advocate for persecuted Christians



Through global project work, ACN reaches millions of Christians all over the world. However, more is needed to improve their political environment. One means of leverage is to inform and motivate transnational and public bodies to influence local governments. In this way, ACN acts as an advocate for altruism and for Christians in need.

ACN operates independently of any government funding or influence. However, our foundation can bring together governments, that would like to advocate for religious freedom and Christians in need, with reliable local partners. 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 commitment in 2022 was primarily focused on advocating for persecuted Christians in two countries: Nigeria and Pakistan. Nigeria is now one of the countries where the most Christians are killed worldwide. The government in Abuja remains silent, as do many political leaders in the West. Moreover, for the first time in ten years, the Biden administration removed Nigeria from the USA's list of "Countries of Concern" without stating a reason.

The Diocese of Makurdi in Benue State, led by Bishop Wilfred Anagbe, is a hot-spot of violence in Nigeria. About two million of the state's five million inhabitants have been displaced. During the reporting year, to draw more attention to the violence in Nigeria, we focused our efforts on bringing increased awareness to these issues by highlighting them at various international gatherings.

In Pakistan, too, religious minorities suffer. Christians and Hindus, in particular, continue to be victims of human rights violations there. These include abuse of the blasphemy laws, sexual violence, forced conversion and forced marriage, to which young girls and women are often subjected. Discrimination against religious minorities in Pakistan is also evident in the violation of the freedom of education, which is severely restricted through the Islamic-based "Single National Curriculum". In cooperation with project partners in Pakistan, ACN has been able to draw attention to the ongoing violations of religious freedom and the persecution of Christians, particularly at EU level.

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



Bishop Anagbe of Makurdi, Nigeria, in front of the European Parliament.



F. Ripka, ACN Germany, and M. Clark with Prof. M. Grütters MdB in the German Bundestag.



Bishop B. Meier, Augsburg, with Bishop W. Anagbe, Nigeria, at a prayer meeting.



Iraqi, Syrian and English representatives of the Church in the British Parliament discussing the situation in the Middle East.



ACN RedWeek press conference in the Czech capital, Prague.

June

In Strasbourg, ACN gave a seminar to members of the European People's Party who have been campaigning for the protection of Christians for years. The representatives had asked our foundation to organise a seminar on the topic "How to respond to Christian persecution and document abuses".

September

In a letter to the President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, 40 delegates of the European Parliament called for the appointment of an EU Special Representative for Freedom of Religion and Belief. Information from ACN was also cited. Together with other Catholic organisations, ACN was invited to the U.S. Mission to the Holy See in Rome for a meeting with the U.S. Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs. Increasing violence and numerous kidnappings, especially those involving priests and religious sisters, were the impetus behind the meeting. ACN arranged a Zoom speech by project partner Sister Nkiru from Nigeria.

October

ACN organised the visit of a Nigerian delegation including Bishop Wilfred Anagbe of Makurdi and other Nigerian representatives to the three bodies of the EU: Parliament, Commission and Member States. During this meeting, the near-daily assaults on Christians, the plight of internally displaced persons and the looming threat of famine were discussed. Another topic was the establishment of

an election observation commission in view of the national elections in Nigeria in February 2023. The aim was to involve the Catholic Church in this commission, as it has experience in monitoring electoral transparency.

During a government meeting in the Slovakian capital Bratislava on religious freedom, Nigerian Bishop Wilfred Anagbe met with national government representatives for religious freedom from Great Britain, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania and Austria. The Bishop received pledges of support for his requests. All participants were able to send messages to their respective foreign ministers. The Slovakian Parliament then passed a resolution denouncing violations of religious freedom. The resolution also cited ACN's Religious Freedom Report.

November

ACN participated in the first meeting of the G20 Engagement Group on religion, in Bali, which consisted of 60 people from different countries and religions. Strategic planning for the future of religious freedom was discussed.

December

At a meeting with the European External Action Service on the topic "Violation of religious freedom in Pakistan", ACN presented documents motivating delegates to advocate for greater religious freedom.



Persecuted and forgotten?

On 16 November, ACN globally launched the book *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2020–22*.

The *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report is prepared by ACN's UK national office. It documents the most striking developments in 24 key countries where Christians suffer persecution and discrimination, including Nigeria, Syria and Pakistan. The new edition sadly concludes that during the period under review, oppression or persecution of Christians increased in 75% of the 24 countries surveyed. Particularly Africa has seen an increase in violence.

Persecuted and Forgotten? also reports that in countries as diverse as Egypt and Pakistan, Christian girls are regularly subjected to systematic abduction and rape.

The intensification of oppression in Asia can be attributed to the rise of state authoritarianism. The situation is worst in North Korea, where religious belief and practice are routinely and systematically suppressed.

John Pontifex, one of the authors of the report, said: “*Persecuted and Forgotten?* provides first-hand testimonies and case studies that prove Christians experience persecution in many countries. Let us do all we can to show that they are not forgotten.”

acnuk.org/resource/persecuted-forgotten-2022/



Janada M., whose father was murdered in front of her by Boko Haram, at the Maiduguri Trauma Centre, Nigeria.





Public relations

Diocesan Radio in
La Guaira, Venezuela.

Whether media work, world meetings, conferences or campaigns, every year ACN puts the concerns of the suffering Church in the public eye. ACN's activities and public relations work were once again very diverse in 2022. Here we present some of the events organised by ACN's headquarters or some of its 23 national offices.

Children participate in "One Million Children
Praying the Rosary" – left in Portugal; middle
and right in Ukraine.





Children in the Diocese of Idukki, India.

One million children praying the rosary

The initiative “One Million Children Praying the Rosary” was born in 2005 in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. The aim of this ACN-sponsored prayer campaign is to urge for peace and unity in the world, while encouraging children and young people to trust in God in difficult times.

In 2022, the rosary prayer once again recorded a gratifyingly high level of participation; on 18 October, children from 140 countries, on all continents, united for this action. The initiative’s website registered 840,000 participants. However, ACN knows that in reality the number of participants

was much higher. Hundreds of schools around the world participated, 50 of them in Kenya. Schools in other countries also participated, including schools in Spain, Great Britain, South Korea, Argentina, Chile and Mexico.

Children from countries where Christians form a small minority among a Muslim majority population, such as Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Azerbaijan, also took part. In addition, there were participants from Asian countries where Christians are also in the minority, such as Laos, Myanmar and Bhutan.

At the Portuguese Marian Shrine of Fátima, children from different countries gathered in the Apparition Chapel, where they prayed the rosary at 6.30 p.m. The event was broadcast live on television and radio, so that even more people could listen and pray along.

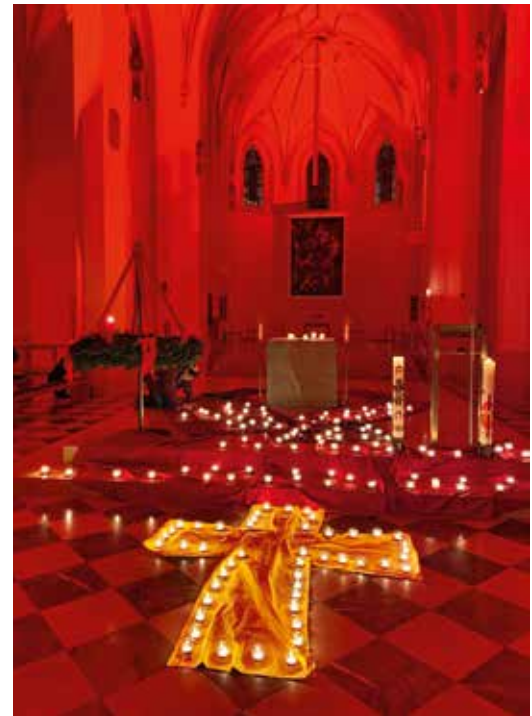
Pope Francis called on children from all over the world to join the international prayer campaign “One Million Children Praying the Rosary” on 16 October, after the traditional Angelus prayer. He also urged the attendees to keep Ukraine and all other nations afflicted by war and suffering in their thoughts.

» Thank you to all the boys and girls who are taking part! «

» Next Tuesday, 18 October, the foundation Aid to the Church in Need is organising the action ‘One Million Children Praying the Rosary for World Peace’. Thank you to all the boys and girls who are taking part! We join them in entrusting the Mother of God’s intercession for the tormented people of Ukraine and other people suffering from war and all forms of violence and misery. «

Pope Francis, Angelus, 16.10.2022





Around 350 million Christians around the world live in an environment in which they are violently persecuted, discriminated against or prevented from freely practising their faith. #RedWeek, also called “Red Wednesday” in some countries, is an initiative that was launched by ACN in 2015. The aim of this global campaign is to draw public attention to the fate of persecuted and disadvantaged Christians.

From 16 to 23 November 2022, more than 600 buildings in 17 countries were illuminated in red. In keeping with tradition, the participating national offices of Aid to the Church in Need organised events, vigils, services and lectures.

Out of all the countries, Germany had the highest number of participating buildings in the initiative, with a total of 170 illuminated churches – including the cathedrals of Passau, Regensburg, Augsburg and Mainz – followed by Austria with 145 buildings illuminated and the Netherlands with 141. In Austria, in addition to 144 churches, the parliament building was also illuminated in red.

Other significant public buildings that became symbols of solidarity with persecuted Christians were the Sacré-Cœur Basilica in Paris, the British Foreign Office, the statue of Christ the King in Lisbon, the Cuernavaca Cathedral and the Shrine of Tepalcingo in Morelos, Mexico. In Slovakia, several public buildings were “dressed in red” for the occasion, including the National Opera in Košice, the Castle and National Bridge in Bratislava and the British Embassy.

This year, in Rome, Pope Francis again expressed his solidarity with Christians in need by thanking a group of pilgrims for joining #RedWeek at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa (Jasna Góra) in Poland:

“I thank you for uniting with persecuted Christians in the world during these days by joining the #RedWeek initiative and praying for them, especially in the shrine of Jasna Góra. May the Mother of God grant these people complete freedom and comfort in their affliction. I bless you with all my heart.”
(General Audience, 23 November 2022)

#RedWeek has also become an important event in countries that do not have their own ACN national office. For example, Catholics in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Peru and even in Guatemala organised themselves spontaneously after hearing about the idea on a radio programme. In Guatemala, for example, the Central Bank building was lit up in red.

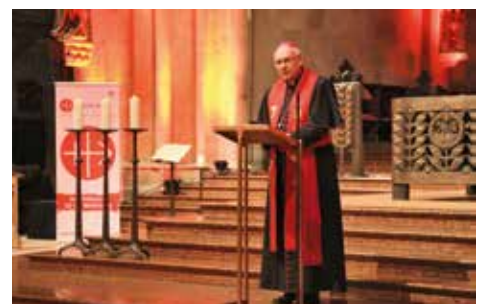
As part of #RedWeek, several ACN national offices organised other actions. For example, Australia hosted the first ever “Night of the Witnesses” in Canberra, where participants heard first-hand accounts of persecution.

In France, some 50 vigils were held in churches across the country, and a series of meetings and discussions with politicians and other prominent guests took place. ACN’s Colombian office hosted a talk in six different cities by Sister Gloria Narváez, who was held captive by jihadist terrorists in Mali for almost five years. In the year under review, the Colombian office also organised events in Peru.

Great Britain also maintained its solidarity with #RedWeek. The British



hosted an event attended by Bishop Jude Arogundade from Ondo, Nigeria, and 25 members of parliament, including the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Fiona Bruce. ACN's Scottish branch in the UK organised a webinar under the patronage of Clare Adamson, Member of the Scottish Parliament.



Some impressions from #RedWeek in Canberra (Australia), Bogota (Colombia) and Regensburg (Germany).



YOUCAT

The YOUCAT Foundation is a subsidiary of ACN. YOUCAT stands for the faith of the Catholic Church, illustratively explained, innovatively presented and officially confirmed. The media of the YOUCAT series ranges from target-group-oriented catechism editions and exciting Bible editions to digital offers, including teaching material and apps. In addition, YOUCAT is present on social media channels.

With this wide range of offers, YOUCAT acts as an important multiplier of the new evangelisation and inspires young Catholics to deepen their faith. But not only young people, also adult catechists and believers are motivated by YOUCAT to actively engage with the faith and to share it with others.

YOUCAT has been around since 2011. 9.2 million copies in more than 70 languages have been distributed worldwide during this time. These include new YOUCAT publications in various

languages, such as a faith course in Slovenian, YOUCAT in Turkish, YOUCAT for Kids in Norwegian and DOCAT in Catalan. Children do not miss out when it comes to YOUCAT either. New materials are currently being developed for the YOUCAT for Kids series, which can be downloaded for free from the YOUCAT homepage.

In addition to the book series, YOUCAT also supports the ever more crucial dissemination of the Church's teaching content through free digital offers. For example, users of the YOUCAT Daily App receive a daily impulse from YOUCAT ("What we believe") or on social teaching from DOCAT ("What we do") to accompany the daily Gospel on their smartphone or computer. More than 200,000 young people around the world already use the YOUCAT Daily app. Further digital offers can be found on the YOUCAT.org website, which recorded nearly 1.5 million visitors in 2022. One of this year's top topics

Young people with
YOUCAT in Brazil.

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



on the website is the World Youth
Day 2023, for which preparations are
currently in full swing. Of course,
the YOUCAT media will also report
in detail about participation in the
event, as well as its dates, themes
and highlights.

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

Various YOUCAT
publications.





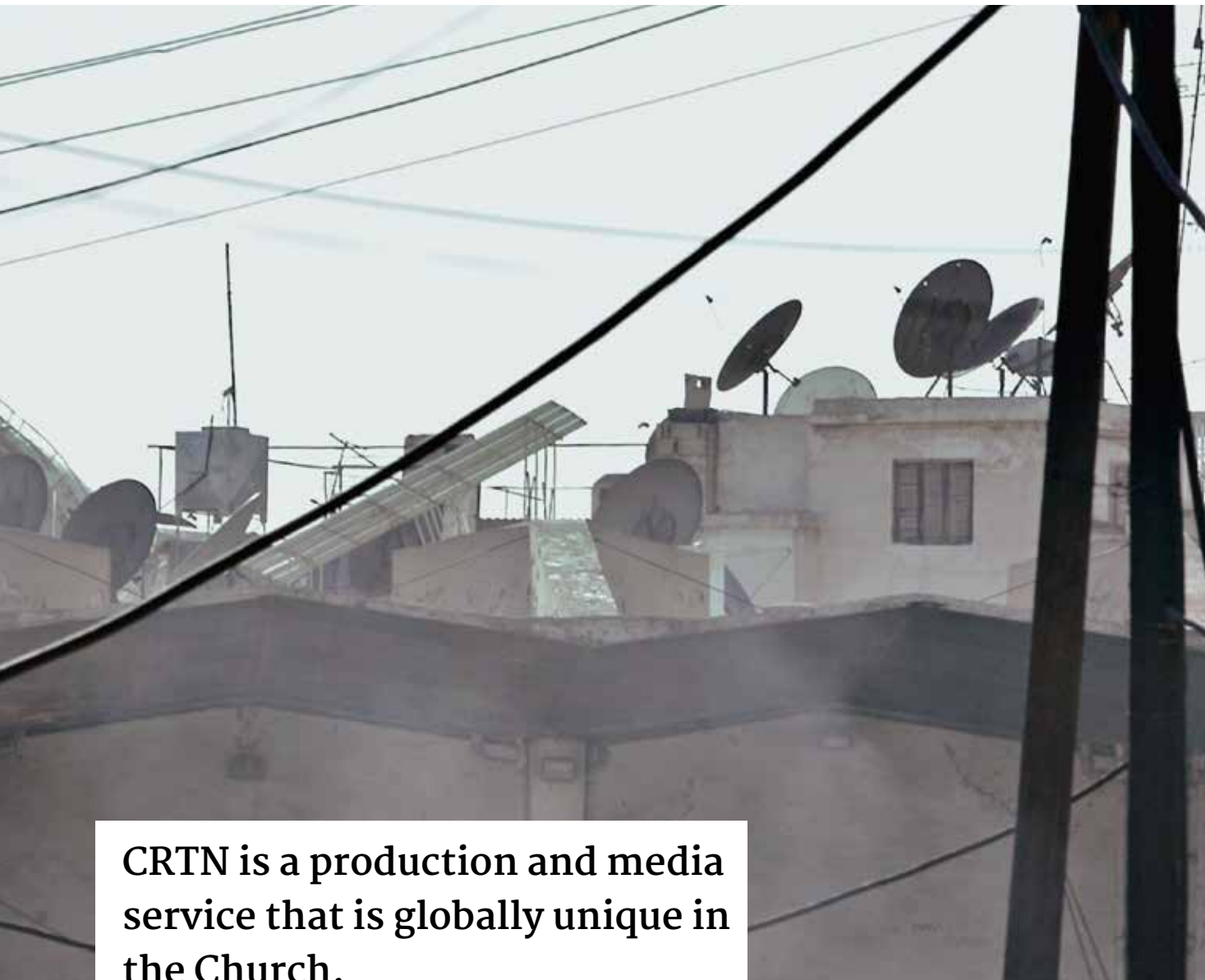
**>> In 2022, we produced
190 TV broadcasts to
spread the faith. <<**

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 provide our productions to TV stations around the world. In 2022, the studio produced a total of 190 TV programmes in all language versions, which were then broadcast on 184 channels. In addition to documentaries and interview programmes such as “Where

God Weeps” and “Donde Dios Lloro”, we were able to produce a significant number of short films for special ACN fundraising events.

Spreading the Gospel through radio and television takes on an important role, especially in non-Christian areas. The best example of this is the Middle East, where there are more than 600 Muslim television stations, 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 2022 with documentaries alone, that were broadcast on 184 television channels worldwide.

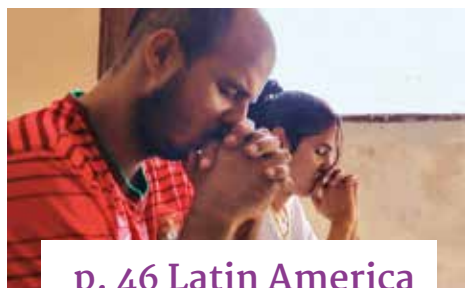
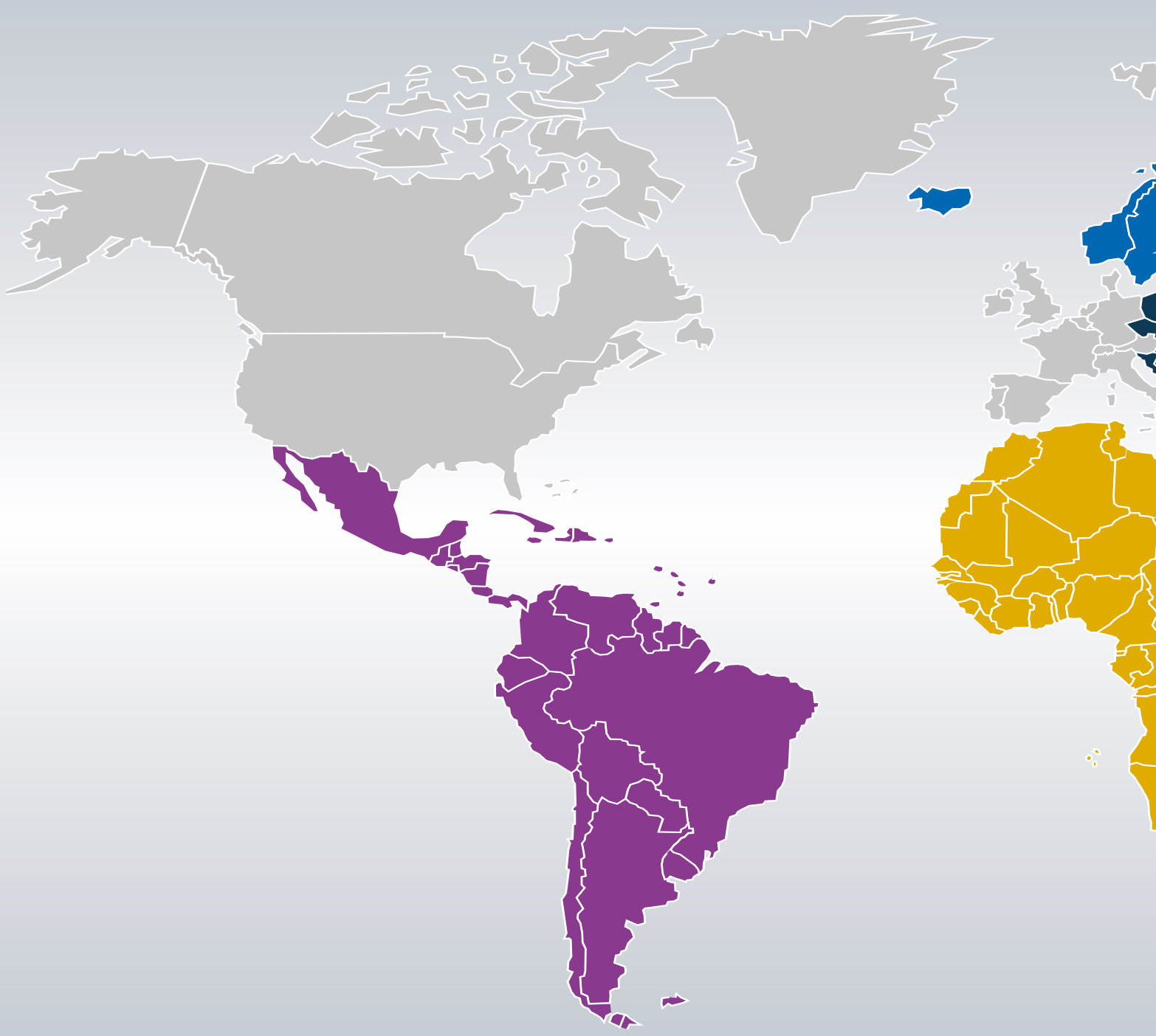
Every day, broadcasts reach tens of millions worldwide. In addition to production and distribution, CRTN also supports a number of worldwide TV distribution initiatives through consulting and programming services. What's more, CRTN established the global Catholic television resource network crtn.org, 20 years ago, which gives 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 541 productions. 320 producers and 175 television stations used this service, which is unique in the Church, in 2022. A CRTN newsletter, a CRTN Facebook page and the CRTN YouTube channel with 14,700 followers round out our media service.

Above the rooftops of destroyed Aleppo, Syria.

The CRTN YouTube channel, which currently has more than 3.4 million views.





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Our regional activities in 2022

ACN receives around 7,500 aid project applications annually from 128 countries. In the following pages, we would like to provide you with an overview of our regional funding priorities in 2022. 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. Another focus of our aid was Ukraine, where the Church has faced great challenges in its outreach to the suffering population since the outbreak of war at the end of February 2022.



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pp. 116–117 Philippines
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In spite of the advance of sects and Pentecostal churches, Latin America, with almost 400 million Catholics, is still considered the “Catholic continent”. But the Church also faces great challenges here. Social inequality, low income levels, corruption and an increasingly aggressive secularism often lead to societal violence and divisions, with the Church finding it more and more difficult to fulfil its role. ACN will not abandon the Church in this situation. In the year under review, we supported aid projects on the subcontinent with funds totalling 17.9 million euros.

Of particular concern to the local churches is the aggressive secularism that seeks to silence the voice of the Church in many Latin American countries, especially on issues regarding the protection of life and the family. To promote evangelisation, ACN is therefore increasingly helping the Church to digitise Catholic media so that it can reach as many people as possible and counteract the renunciation of religion.

rapid growth is accompanied by a quick increase in the number of believers. For many immigrants in metropolitan centres, the Church is often the last



A needy woman in Santa María in Ixhuatán, Guatemala.

>> The Church does not have a shortage of believers, but a shortage of parishes and personnel. <<


Especially in the rural regions of Latin America, which are often characterised by great poverty, the Church is being challenged by the ongoing migration of the population. In search of better employment opportunities, people are drawn to the cities. There,

refuge of hope. But due to a lack of funds, new parishes are not being created as quickly as they are needed. The weaker presence of the Catholic Church due to the lack of priests has also led to the spread of evangelical groups and sects in many areas of the continent. In addition, some countries have extremely large parishes, which poses further problems for the Church. ACN therefore particularly promotes the training of priests, religious and catechists to ensure pastoral care and strengthen evangelisation.




Mexico

Number of projects

 69
 Project applications

 55
 Funded projects

Type of projects

 7
 Construction/reconstruction


 6
 Means of transport


 13
 Mass stipends

 0
 Emergency aid

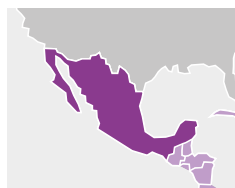
 2
 Media help

 1
 Bibles & books

 19
 Training of priests

 4
 Subsistence aid

 3
 Formation of faith



after Brazil. However, the number of Catholics is also decreasing here: only 72% of Christians still profess the Catholic faith. Sects, Pentecostal churches and occult practices are spreading. Furthermore, the Church is continually concerned about the ongoing drug wars in the country. In 2022, dioceses in the poor rural regions were a particular focus of our aid to the Mexican Church.

With nearly 134 million inhabitants, Mexico is the world's second most populous predominantly Catholic country

Nowhere in the world does the drug mafia terrorise the country as much as in Mexico. Over the past ten years alone, the drug war here has claimed at least 300,000 lives. Since President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office in late 2018, the situation has become even worse.

The Church also suffers from the increasing violence. The clergy are particularly targeted by drug gangs and criminals in their work advocating the poor and disenfranchised populations. The sad bottom line: in the last ten years, at least 35 Catholic priests have been murdered. Three priests and one seminarian were killed in the year under review.

Head of Section

Veronica Katz

» The clergy are targeted by drug gangs and criminals in their work advocating the rights of the poor and disenfranchised. «



Caring for the sick by the Misioneras Clarisas del Santísimo Sacramento.



Patron Saint's Day
celebrating the birth
of St John the Baptist
in La Asunción.

In addition, threats to and kidnappings of priests and religious repeatedly occur, as well as robberies in churches. The attacks and murders are primarily aimed at spreading fear and terror and establishing a culture of silence that enables the drug cartels and organised crime to operate largely unhindered.

Another challenge for the Church in Mexico: the country is home to about 60 different ethnic groups with almost as many languages. Due to language differences, not every priest can be deployed in every region. Additionally, there is a lack of pastoral workers in many parishes, as many priests have died from Covid-19 during the recent pandemic. ACN therefore supports the church, especially in poor areas of the country with predominantly indigenous populations, in training priests, assisting priests through Mass stipends, supporting religious sisters, delivering catechetical material and providing construction and vehicle assistance.



Death drama in the Jesuit church of Cerocahui

On 20 June 2022, two elderly Jesuit priests, Joaquín Mora and Javier Campos, were murdered in the church of Cerocahui in the north-western Mexican state of Chihuahua. They had provided refuge in the church to a man who was being threatened by drug traffickers. The latter was

also shot dead. Local sources told ACN that another Jesuit, who was unharmed, had asked the perpetrators to leave the three who had been killed in the church. However, they took them away. Two days after the crime, the bodies were found by the police.



Haiti

Number of projects

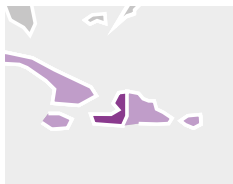
□ 199 ✓ 66

Type of projects

🔔 2 🌀 11 📶 8
 📍 1 🎤 4 📖 1
 👥 12 👤 4 👤 23

Head of Section

Veronica Katz



While Haiti was considered the richest country in the Caribbean during colonial times, it is now the poorest country in the western hemisphere. The island nation's population of around 11.4 million particularly suffers from the devastation caused by recurring natural disasters, but also from increasing corruption, mismanagement and violence. For about three years, violent criminal gangs have controlled the cities – and the Church has also been repeat-

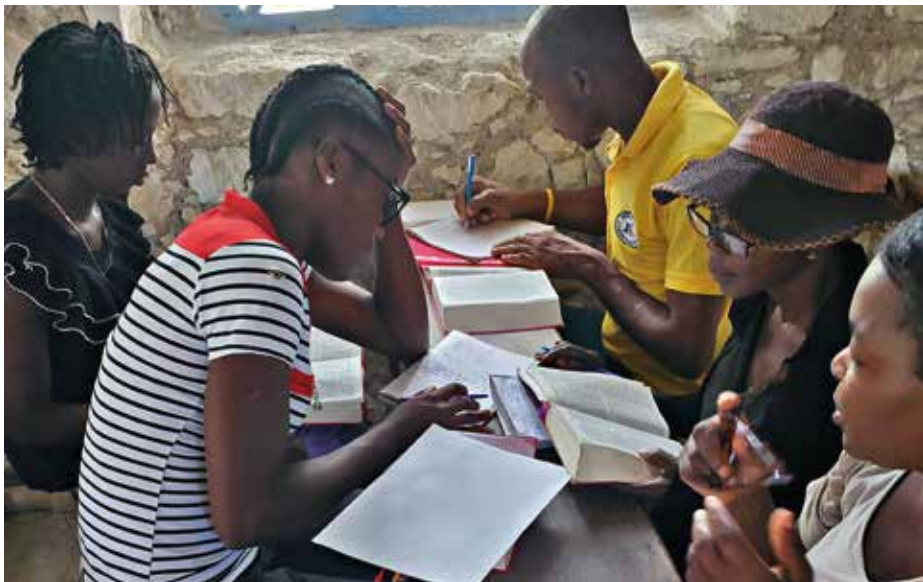
edly confronted with robberies and kidnappings. This is another reason why ACN is committed to the Haitian Church.

The rampant violence in Haiti regularly terrifies the population. But the Church is actively working to restore order. For example, in February 2022, the Bishops' Conference of Haiti issued a statement calling on political stakeholders and armed gangs to prevent the country from descending into chaos. Nevertheless, violence continues and even the Church has not been

Children celebrating their First Communion at Saint Joseph de Chameau.



ACN financed a new vehicle for the parish of Sainte Cécile de Tibélon.



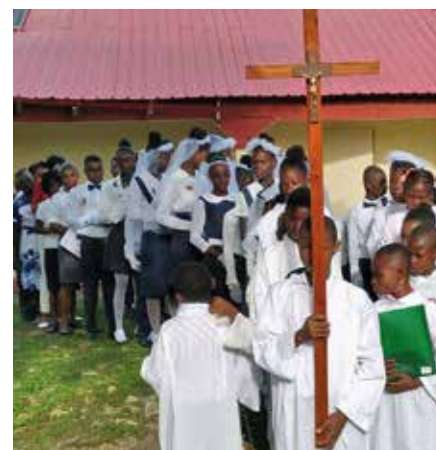
Pastoral training at Maria Mater Ecclesiae.

spared from attacks: in April, the priest Wathner Aupont, who heads a parish in Grande Ravine in Haiti's south-west, was kidnapped together with other people in a suburb of the capital Port-au-Prince. Although the kidnappers released the clergyman the next day, the others remained in captivity. In total, the Haitian Church suffered from five priest kidnappings in the year under review. But that was not all: in June, Luisa Dell'Orto, a 65-year-old Italian nun who worked in a children's home, was murdered in the capital Port-au-Prince.

Despite the escalation of violence, the faithful continue to trust in God, Masses are well attended and the Church remains a sign of hope for most people in the midst of chaos. To further assist the local Church in its pastoral mission and commitment to peace, ACN mainly supported priests with Mass stipends and religious sisters with subsistence aid during the year under review. In addition, we provided training assistance for seminarians, young religious and lay people, facilitated the procurement of catechetical material and were able to assist parishes with construction and vehicle assistance.

» The Church in Haiti never ceases to be a sign of hope for the people. «

Procession at the First Communion celebration in Saint Joseph de Chameau.





Nicaragua

Number of projects

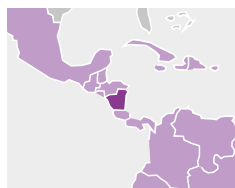
□ 25 ☒ 19

Type of projects

3	2	8
0	0	0
4	1	1

Head of Section

Veronica Katz



Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. With 6.4 million inhabitants, the country

is going through a difficult period of political and social upheaval with serious conflicts and violent clashes. The Church has taken on the role of mediator and is working for reconciliation within the country. In the process, however, it is increasingly coming under fire from the government itself. ACN continues to support the local Church, for example in the training of priests.

Church representatives have been lamenting increasing threats to the Catholic Church in Nicaragua for several years. Insults towards priests and bishops, visa and residence restrictions for foreign priests and discrimination and intimidation attempts are the order of the day. In particular, hostilities on the part of state institutions continued to be on the rise in the year under review. In order to silence the Church, the regime does not shy away from harsh measures: for example, several Catholic radio and television stations were forced to cease operations, the assets of the Catholic University of Estelí were confiscated, and the diocesan Caritas

Seminarians of the "Misioneros Kardimissio de San Juan Eudes".



>> Attempts are being made to silence the Church. <<

Regina Lynch, ACN
Project Director



Solemn inauguration
of San Francisco
de Asis Chapel.

chapter lost its legal status. But that is not all: in the year under review, several priests were expelled from the country or arrested – even the Apostolic Nuncio, the Vatican ambassador, was forced to leave the country in March. Only three months later, the “Missionaries of Charity” were also affected by strong measures. The sisters of the order founded by St Mother Teresa of Calcutta, which cares for the poorest of the poor, were expelled from Nicaragua.

Nevertheless, despite the harassment, expulsions and humiliation, the Church fearlessly carries out its mission of proclaiming the Gospel and providing assistance to the weak and the poor. ACN provides support to train priests, for example. The seminaries do not currently have problems with attracting new recruits, but providing for the young candidates to the priesthood is an enormous financial challenge for the Church. In addition, ACN provides construction and vehicle assistance and supports priests through Mass stipends.



Arbitrary use of government power against Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa

On 19 August, Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, who has voiced criticism of the government, was arrested in the middle of the night by the national police. Three other priests, a deacon, two seminarians and a cameraman were also arrested and taken to a prison for political prisoners. In December, the au-

thorities put the bishop on trial for allegedly “conspiring to undermine national integrity and spreading misinformation to the detriment of the Nicaraguan government and society.” He had already gone on hunger strike in May 2022 to protest against police harassment. In February 2023, he was sentenced to 26 years in prison.



Venezuela

Number of projects

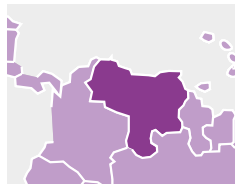
□ 161 ✓ 130

Type of projects

🔔 15 🎯 4 🏠 35
 📖 3 🎤 3 📄 12
 👤 25 👤 10 👤 23

Head of Section

Luis Vildoso



Venezuela has been going through an unprecedented crisis with extremely high inflation for several years. About half of the population lives in abject poverty. The average income of the poor is eight dollars per month. At their plenary assembly in January 2022, the Venezuelan bishops lamented the social injustice and political and economic stagnation in the country. They called on those in power to respect the

common good. In this long-term crisis, ACN has been doing its utmost to support the local Church, which has been suffering from the consequences of the authoritarian regime for years.

Due to high inflation and unemployment rates, many in the country now suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Livelihoods, if not financed by remittances from abroad, are often funded by illegal activities, in turn leading to the spread of organised crime and drug trafficking. The crime rate is high, which also affects the Church. In December,

Celebration of the 158th anniversary of the birth of Blessed José Gregorio Hernández in La Guaira.



The faithful celebrate the Stations
of the Cross and a day of penance in San
Cristóbal, Táchira State, before Holy Week.



Confession before Holy
Week in San Cristóbal.

for example, the Archbishop of
Mérida, Cardinal Baltazar Porras
Cardozo, was the victim of a robbery
on his way to a church service.

Many areas of the country lack the
basic necessities of life. The desper-
ation of the people is so great that
the suicide rate has risen alarmingly
in recent years. According to the
United Nations, more than seven
million Venezuelans have fled the
crisis to go abroad and seek their
fortune. As a result of the exodus,
the number of inhabitants has
now shrunk to 26 million. Since it
is mainly young people who are
leaving the country, the average age
of the population is rising.

At present, the Venezuelan Church is
almost the only authority that stands
by the suffering population. And
there is hope: after the pandemic,
in-person pastoral care programmes
could be restored, especially for
families and young people. The
vocational ministry has been
reactivated and ACN supports the
training of seminarians throughout
the country. Through Mass stipends
and subsistence aid, we also help
priests and religious in their quest
to continue proclaiming the Gospel.
However, they are not only support-
ed materially, but also spiritually, as
ACN also promotes the organisation
of spiritual retreats and advanced
training.

» In times of crisis, the Church is the rock
of strength for many Venezuelans. «



Brazil

Number of projects

□ 375 ✓ 330

Type of projects

🔔 56 📶 58 📡 41
 📶 0 📡 3 📡 53
 👤 62 👤 47 👤 10

Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui



Brazil is the largest majority-Catholic country in the world. Of approximately 213 million

inhabitants, 64% are Catholic, although 20 years ago this figure was 75%. As in many other Latin American countries, Brazil's situation is marked by corruption, unemployment, economic crisis and environmental destruction, which makes many people open to sectarian promises of salvation. In order to strengthen the presence of the local Church, our aid organisation focuses primarily on promoting the training of priests and maintaining the Church infrastructure.

The situation in the Amazon Basin is particularly precarious. Although the

area is rich in resources, the population here suffers from great poverty. The Church plays a key role in helping the poorest. However, many villages located on riverbanks in the impassable jungle can only be reached by water. The dangerous journeys often take many hours or even days. Here, ACN provides reliable boats and fuel to parishes, so that priests can reach the faithful more easily.

In the year under review, other funds for the Brazilian Church were used to promote the training of future priests, religious and lay employees in order to strengthen the proclamation of the faith and pastoral care and to ensure that these can also take place in the future. In addition, ACN financed vehicle purchases for pastoral care in huge parishes and made catechetical material available for evangelisation work.

Capuchin friar Paolo Braghini at prayer in one of the parishes of Belém do Solimões.

» The Church plays a key role in helping the poorest in Brazil. «



Members of the Ticuna tribe on the Solimões River.



A new boat for pastoral care on the banks of the Amazon River

The parish of “John the Baptist”, situated in Curralinho, is located in the Brazilian Amazon Delta. 57 settlements are scattered along the riverbanks and can only be reached by water. Until now, the priest only had an old wooden

canoe at his disposal for pastoral care in difficult-to-access villages. This made the trips very long and dangerous. Thanks to ACN’s help, the parish now has a new boat that makes the river trips faster and safer.



Bolivia

Number of projects

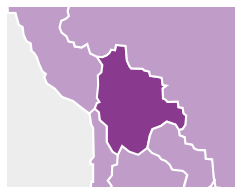
□ 56 □ 53

Type of projects

🔔 7 🌀 7 🏠 9
 📍 0 🎤 1 📖 0
 👤 11 👥 12 👤 6

Head of Section

Luis Vildoso



For a long time, Bolivia was considered the poorest country in Latin America. In the meantime, the economic situation has improved. Nevertheless, about 36% of the country's 11.5 million mostly indigenous

inhabitants live in poverty. Although a good three-quarters of the population profess the Catholic faith, the socialist government's attitude has been marked by hostility towards the Church for years. Acts of vandalism against church buildings are also on the rise. In this difficult situation, it is important to us that the local Church can count on ACN's help.



A sister of the "Misioneras de Jesús Verbo y Víctima" having a conversation.

Bolivian society is deeply divided. Sometimes there is talk of a "latent civil war". The year under review was also marked by unrest. In autumn 2022, against the background of the census scheduled for 2024, there was a week-long general strike in Santa Cruz; protests and violent riots also took place. At least four people were killed and another 178 were injured in the unrest. The Catholic Church expressed concern about the escalation of violence and repeatedly called on the government to resolve the existing political problems. The Church considers its task to stand by the population and advocate for peace and dialogue

Missionary sisters of the “Misioneras de Jesús Verbo y Víctima” on their way to the faithful.

» Hostility towards the Church is increasing. «

A new vehicle for the remote parish of Virgen de la Natividad.



in society. In return for its commitment, it often reaps hostility from the government.

In addition to political unrest in the country, the Church is very concerned about the increasing spread of sects. These are mainly active in the outskirts of big cities and usually have more funds and staff than Church institutions. First and foremost, Catholic pastoral care must be strengthened, because where the Church is not present, people are often amenable to questionable promises of salvation.

Pastoral care is a challenge in the metropolises and it is also an enormous challenge for the local Church to support the faithful in the Andean highlands. For distances are mostly long and travel arduous in the sprawling parishes of the Altiplano. Without the assistance of religious sisters, the few priests would hardly be able to look after numerous remote villages. ACN supports the sisters who work in these areas with subsistence aid, provides



A missionary of the “Hijas de María Inmaculada de Guadalupe” playing with children.

all-terrain vehicles suitable for off-road use for pastoral care and assists the priests with Mass stipends. We also support the vocational ministry and the training of future priests, because more pastors are urgently needed in the parishes.





The Church in Africa once again faced major challenges in 2022: in particular, increasing violence caused by jihadists, who have been able to further consolidate their presence in the Sahel, is a cause for concern. For years, more and more priests have been abducted and even murdered by extremists. Millions of people have already fled the conflict regions. It goes without saying that ACN supports the local churches in their distress. But there is also cause to rejoice: one in five Catholics in the world now lives in Africa, and the number of believers continues to grow. For ACN, the African continent continues to be a priority region.

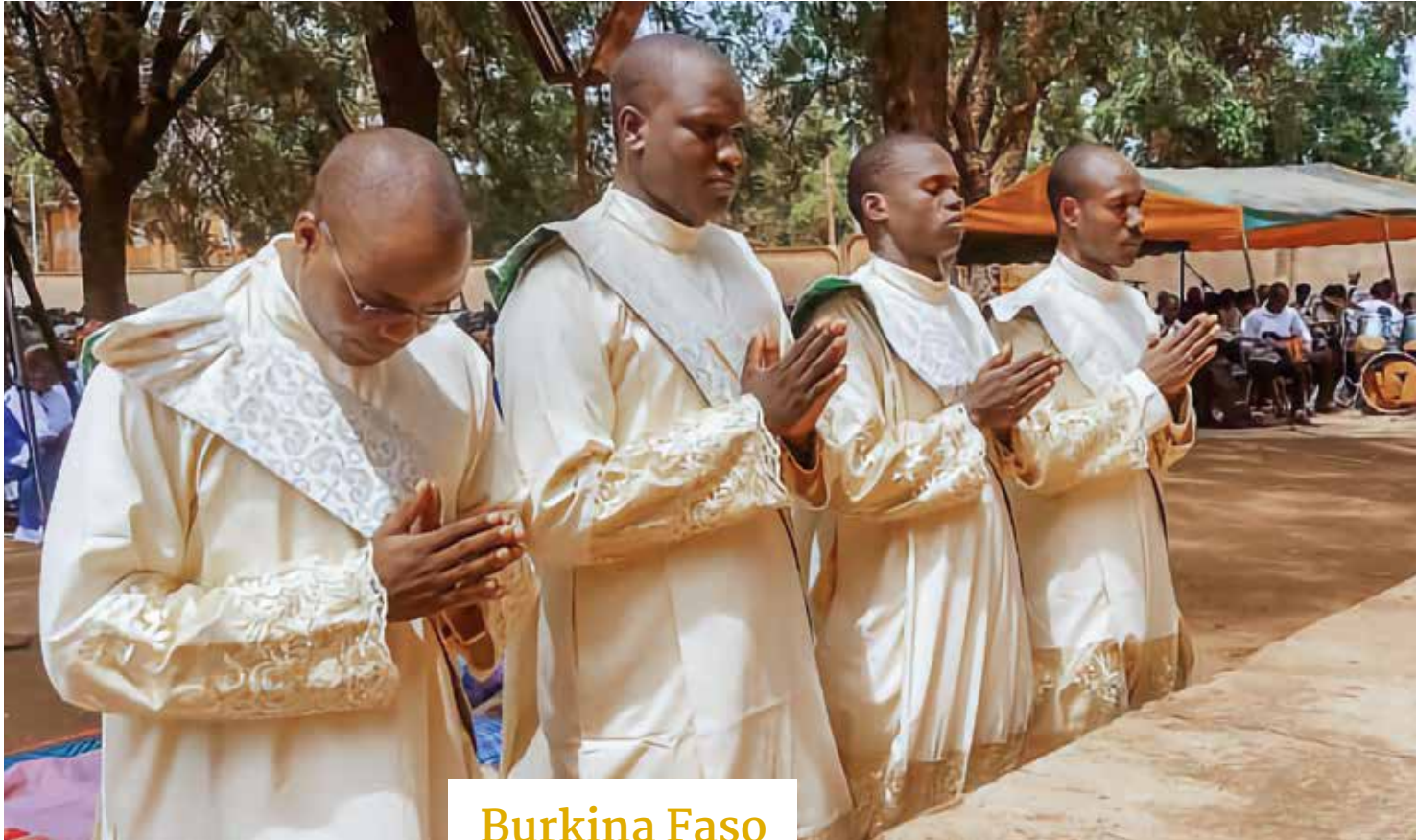
Due to the precarious situation in many countries, the Sahel has become a hotspot for more than two dozen radical Islamic groups that are active in 14 countries and becoming increasingly networked. Among them are offshoots of IS and al-Qaeda. The consequences for the population are catastrophic. The Church has also suffered greatly. In the year under review, Africa once again set a sad record as the continent with the highest number of murdered priests, religious and church workers worldwide. In many African countries, kidnappings of priests and religious have recently become a means of pressure used by armed groups and criminals to advance their interests.

>> Africa remains a continent of hope for the Catholic Church. <<

Despite all the challenges, Africa remains a continent of hope for the Church. The Church is young and growing. Today, almost one in eight priests, more than one in eight religious sisters and almost a quarter of all seminarians worldwide live on this continent. But for the future of the Church, the sound, high-quality training of its pastoral workers is more important than ever. Our aid organisation therefore focuses on supporting the training and further education of priests, religious and lay people, as well as training the trainers. Furthermore, we support the construction of churches and chapels and help to purchase off-road vehicles for pastoral care in remote villages. And we also provide financial support for church initiatives to strengthen the family and for the care and support of internally displaced persons in terror-stricken areas.

“Sisters of the Immaculate Conception” caring for children in Burkina Faso.





Burkina Faso

Number of projects

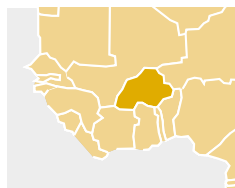
96 Project applications
62 Funded projects

Type of projects

8 Construction/reconstruction	12 Means of transport	7 Mass stipends
5 Emergency aid	2 Media help	0 Bibles & books
17 Training of priests	5 Subsistence aid	6 Formation of faith

Head of Section

François-Xavier Pons



Of Burkina Faso's 21 million inhabitants, around a quarter are Christians and just over 60%

are Muslims. For a long time, the West African country was considered an example of peaceful coexistence between religions. Since late 2015, however, the northern and eastern parts of the country have become a major theatre of jihadist terror in the Sahel. Christians and Church institutions are also the target of their attacks. ACN supports the local Church on its path through these difficult times.

Already in 2019, Christian believers and churches had been targeted for the first time. Since then, the extremists seem to be trying to stir up religious and ethnic conflicts with their attacks. About two million people have been forced to flee their homes.

In the year under review, the situation deteriorated even further. Local project partners have informed us that priests and religious are increasingly being targeted by the terrorists. For example, the small seminary in the Diocese of Fada N'Gourma was attacked and severely damaged by extremists in February 2022. Robberies, kidnappings and murders have also increased dramatically. A sad climax to the escalating



Training with the "Sisters of the Immaculate Conception" in Ouagadougou.

Four young deacons
are ordained as priest
in Fada N'Gourma.



Children from
schools in Kologh-Naba
pray the rosary.

violence occurred on 31 December 2022 when a priest on his way to Mass was murdered by terrorists. Meanwhile, the violence has put entire regions into a state of fear and terror. Several parishes had to be closed completely for security reasons; work is severely restricted in others. Most roads are now controlled by terrorists or have been completely blocked.

After seven years of violence, the country seems to be sinking into a state of complete political instability. The government seems incapable of acting, and the military and security forces are also helpless in the face of the spiral of

violence. The security question, which has become a central issue for the entire population, has led to two military coups in less than a year.

Nevertheless, the Church's situation in this crisis is not hopeless. With ACN's help, it is standing by the suffering population. For example, we were able to support the training of numerous religious and seminarians and assist priests in the areas particularly affected by the violent attacks through the provision of Mass stipends. In the year under review, we also provided funds for the purchase of vehicles that are urgently needed to maintain pastoral care.

**» It is horrifying how terrorism
is gaining ground here. «**

Father Alain Tougma, Superior for
Africa of the "Frères Missionnaires
des Campagnes" community

Destroyed religious images:
crucifix and statue of the
Virgin Mary in the Saint Kisito
de Bougui Seminary.





Benin

Number of projects

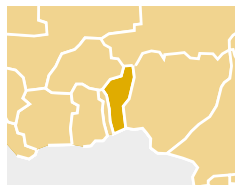
□ 52 ✓ 41

Type of projects

🔔 7 🌀 10 🕯️ 8
 ⬠ 2 🎤 0 📖 0
 👥 12 👤 1 👤 1

Head of Section

François-Xavier Pons



25% of the 12 million inhabitants, most of whom live in the southern part of the country. The north, on the other hand, is predominantly Muslim. In addition, the cult of voodoo is widespread. Increasing Islamist terror, which is also spreading in Benin, is a cause for great concern. The aim of our aid is primarily to support the

The Catholic Church has been present in Benin for 160 years. Catholics currently make up

Church in training and evangelisation, thereby strengthening its presence in the country.

Benin is considered the cradle of the voodoo religion, which still attracts many people today. Followers of superstitious practices can also be found among Christians. One remedy lies in deepening knowledge of the faith. Strengthening a well-founded faith formation is therefore a top priority for the local Church. To this end, ACN primarily supports the Beninese Church with training and aid for procuring vehicles, as well as with Mass stipends.

» We are aware that we are a preferred target of attacks. «

Sister Ana, Benedictine nun,
ACN project partner

Archbishop Pascal N'Koué
with the sisters of the monastery
"Notre Dame de l'Écoute".



Children during catechesis.



In the convent of the congregation “Sœurs Contemplatives de Jésus Eucharistie” in Boko.

Another challenge for the local Church is the spread of radicalised Islam, which is already affecting other West African countries such as Nigeria and Burkina Faso. Terrorist attacks have been occurring in northern Benin since November 2021, and carrying out pastoral activities there is now severely restricted. For example, in the Diocese of Natitingou, the Benedictine nuns of the monastery “Notre Dame de l’Écoute”, who had been living there for 17 years, had to leave their monastery indefinitely. The sisters have settled in a place where the situation is safer.



Faith school for a happy life

ACN supports the evangelisation programme “Jeunesse Bonheur” for youth and young adults in Benin. The name translates as “happy youth” – the participants live their faith together for a year, become better acquainted with it and learn how to pass it on to others. With this type of

“school” for evangelisation, the Beninese Church has been a pioneer in Africa since 2014. And the work is bearing fruit: numerous priestly and religious vocations have emerged from it, others have founded a Christian family or taken up work in the church sector.



Nigeria

Number of projects

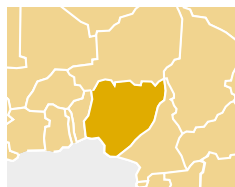
□ 182 ✓ 122

Type of projects

🔔 20 🎯 3 🏠 22
 ⚡ 4 📺 0 📖 1
 👥 60 🏫 5 👤 7

Head of Section

Kinga von Schierstaedt



With 206 million inhabitants, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Christians and Muslims are represented in almost equal numbers, but large regional differences exist. The country is marked by strong social and political tensions. The presidential

elections scheduled for February 2023 have made the atmosphere even more explosive. In addition, radical groups such as Boko Haram and the Fulani are terrorising the country. Christians, in particular, find themselves in the cross hairs of the extremists. ACN supports the local Church with a focus on priestly formation and initiatives to care for trauma victims.

» Catholic priests are easy prey for bandits and terrorists. «

Archbishop Matthew Man-Oso
Ndagoso of Kaduna

A typical street scene.





In northern Nigeria, Christians and moderate Muslims have been persecuted for years by the terrorist group Boko Haram. Although the situation there has eased somewhat recently, Christians now suffer from violent attacks in other parts of the country, perpetrated by radicalised Muslim cattle herders, the Fulani. Priests and religious are often doubly endangered: on the one hand, through hatred against Christians, but also by bandits who have discovered kidnapping as a “business model” and hope to earn ransom money from it. In the year under review, at least 32 priests and religious were victims of kidnapping in Nigeria, and four were murdered.

A particularly bloody terrorist attack was carried out on Pentecost Sunday in the Nigerian state of Ondo. The target of the attack was St Francis Xavier Church in Owo. At least 41 worshippers were killed and dozens seriously injured in the massacre during a Mass. Some of the suspected attackers were arrested. They are said to be members of the self-proclaimed Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Despite or perhaps because of the increasing violence in the country, many Christians are increasingly putting their trust in God. The Church is not only pleased about well-attended Masses, but also about the particularly high number of priestly vocations.

In 2022, ACN focused on the training of future priests and supported needy priests with Mass stipends. In view of the high number of severely traumatised victims of violence, we are also committed to the therapeutic training of priests and religious sisters, so that they can offer effective help to traumatised persons. In addition, we help priests and religious sisters who have themselves been victims of abductions to overcome their own traumas. Other funds go towards the reconstruction of destroyed places of worship and also to security measures, including the construction of protective walls and fences or the installation of security technology to protect monasteries and seminaries from attacks.

**>> ACN is a source of
light in a valley of
darkness. <<**

Bishop Wilfred Anagbe
of Makurdi

Middle photo:
Christian women in St Mark’s parish.

Bottom photo:
Seminarians in Bare.





Cameroon

Number of projects

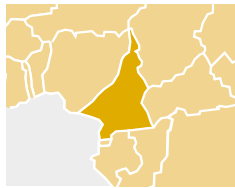
□ 137 ✓ 110

Type of projects

🔔 10 🌀 4 🏠 15
 📖 1 🎧 1 📄 9
 👤 45 👥 15 👤 10

Head of Section

François-Xavier Pons



For a long time, the central African country of Cameroon, with nearly 26 million inhabitants, was considered relatively stable. In 2016, however, there were protest marches because the English-speaking part of the country felt oppressed by the French-speaking part and demanded its independence. These protests escalated into an armed conflict between the English-speaking separatists and the central government, which continues to this day. In view of the spiral of violence, the local Church is focusing on sustainable peace education. ACN supports it in this endeavour.

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

The unrest in Cameroon has already claimed thousands of victims; hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee. Kidnappings are common – priests, religious sisters and church workers are also affected. For example, on 16 September 2022, five priests, three lay people and one religious sister were kidnapped during an attack on St Mary's Church in the

» The Church of Cameroon is passionately committed to a culture of non-violence. «

Peace education for young people in the parishes of the Mamfe Diocese.



Dominican nuns
in Bertoua.

Novices of the
Passionist Sisters in Enia,
Bertoua building a house.



village of Nchang in the anglophone region of south-west Cameroon. The hostages were not released until six weeks later. The church was burned down in the attack.

ACN is aware of the difficult situation of the Church in Cameroon. To maintain its pastoral care during this time, we supported the local Church in the year under review, focusing on Mass stipends for priests and sustenance help for religious sisters. We also supported the training and further education of future priests and religious, as well as peace education measures.



Peace education for Cameroon's youth

In the Diocese of Mamfe in south-western Cameroon, ACN was able to sponsor a year-long peace education programme. The aim was to establish a culture of non-violence. "To avoid an incessant spiral of violence, one needs to try to teach peace and tolerance instead of fuelling hatred and mistrust," says

youth chaplain Roland Arrey. Once a month for a year, young people from all 27 parishes of the diocese met for a weekend training programme that also included joint church services and prayer times. The courses were supplemented by radio broadcasts that could also be followed in remote villages.



Baptism in
the Diocese
of Kumbo.



Ethiopia

Number of projects

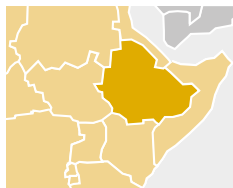
104 64

Type of projects

9 4 9
2 0 3
18 2 17

Head of Section

Toni Zender



The country on the Horn of Africa is a land of many contrasts. On the one hand, there is strong economic growth; on the other hand, there is great poverty in many places. Since 2020, a bloody conflict in the northern Tigray region, which has escalated into a civil war, has kept the people very anxious. In addition, Islam is becoming radicalised in some regions, which also worries the Church. Although only 2% of Ethiopia's nearly 113 million major-

ity-Orthodox inhabitants are Catholics, church life here is extremely vibrant. ACN supports the local Church, above all in training future priests and in promoting pastoral care.

Ethiopia is home to more than 100 ethnic groups with very different cultures and languages. Almost 58% of the population are Orthodox Christians. However, the proportion of Muslims is increasing and currently stands at 34%. Although Catholics form only a tiny minority, the Church runs many schools, kindergartens and social institutions. Especially in areas of first evangelisation, where people still belong to traditional tribal religions, there is a gratifying number of baptisms.

Since the beginning of November 2020, troops of the central government have been fighting in northern Ethiopia against regional militias of the "Tigray People's Liberation Front", who are rebelling against the centralist policy under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The humanitarian crisis accompanying the bloody conflict receives barely any media attention. After two years of blockade, a ceasefire was at last agreed upon in early November

A new vehicle for the pastoral work of the Villaregia Missionary Community in Robe.





Benedictine nuns preparing a meal.

2022, finally making the contested areas accessible for humanitarian aid again.

>> For ACN, those who proclaim the faith are the top priority. <<

In Ethiopia, ACN's first priority in 2022 was once again the people who proclaim the faith. Mass stipends have been used to help priests and religious sisters have received help with their day-to-day living. We also funded projects for the further 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, among other things, contributes to young people wanting to work for a better future in their homeland instead of leaving the country. Further funds were made available for the construction and renovation of churches and chapels.



A baptism and First Communion celebration in Gaba Sambatha Parish.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

Number of projects

□ 302 ✓ 304*

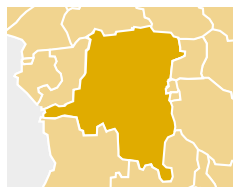
Type of projects

🔔 48	🕒 31	🏠 76
📌 0	🎤 2	📖 4
👥 119	👤 11	👤 13

Head of Section

Maxime François-Marsal

*including project applications from the previous year.



The Democratic Republic of the Congo is four times the size of France and has rich natural

resources that include gold, diamonds, ores and oil. Even so, a large segment of the country's 89.5 million inhabitants lives in deep poverty. Furthermore, several parts of the country are the scene of armed conflicts involving continually changing rebel groups. In the year under review, the number of internally displaced persons increased by more than one million, so that the number now stands at over 5.3 million, according to the United Nations.

The situation is particularly dramatic in the east of the country. The territory of Beni in the province of North Kivu is considered the epicentre of the violence. According to human rights organisations, the longest-running humanitarian crisis in Africa is taking place in eastern Congo. The suffering of the war-affected population is increasing. At the same time, one can also observe the progressive breakdown of basic structures needed for survival, primarily leading to food shortages and a lack of clean drinking water. In July 2022, Pope Francis wanted to visit the Central African country to offer encouragement to the population. His Apostolic Journey was postponed and eventually took place in February 2023.

>> The Church helps the people, but who helps the Church? This is where ACN comes in. <<

Maxime François-Marsal,
Head of Section at ACN

Many sisters run a farm to support themselves.



>> The situation is serious. Our country is in danger. <<

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of
the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Novices of the
Congregation of the
“Daughters of the
Resurrection”.

The Church keeps raising its voice for peace and reconciliation. In November 2022, for example, the country's bishops' conference warned in an open letter that growing insecurity in several regions affected by violence threatened to divide the country. The bishops also pointed to the responsibility of multinational corporations that are plundering natural resources. They declared 4 December a day of prayer and solidarity and invited people to participate in a peaceful protest march.

Despite the great challenges, the number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life is encouragingly high. ACN regularly supports numerous projects, especially in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo – these include the promotion of priestly formation, as well as day to day support for religious sisters who assist the suffering population.



Arson attack on a church clinic

On 19 October 2022, Sister Marie-Sylvie Kavuke Vakaturaki from Butembo was the victim of an arson attack. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan jihadist group also known as Islamic State's Central Africa Province (ISCAP). The terror-

ists first looted a pharmacy in the village of Maboya and then a church hospital, which they ultimately set on fire. The nun, who worked as a doctor in the hospital, and a patient were burnt alive in the building. Other people were reported missing – they may have been abducted by the attackers.



Mozambique

Number of projects

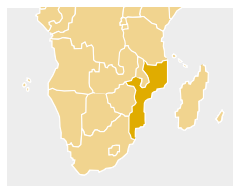
□ 81 ✓ 69

Type of projects

🔔 12 🎯 14 🏠 15
 💎 3 🎤 0 📖 5
 👤 11 👤 6 👤 3

Head of Section

Ulrich Kny



Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world. Even today, the population is still suffering from

the consequences of the civil war that raged in the country between 1977 and 1992. Ever since then, coexistence has been largely peaceful. Since 2017, however, the jihadist group “al-Shabaab” has terrorised the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Thousands have fallen victim to the terror to date. The Church, which has meanwhile been hit by attacks itself, continues to stand at the side of the suffering population. ACN will not let it down.

Poverty in Mozambique – as so often is the case in Africa – stems from various causes, including mismanagement, corruption and exploitation by international corporations. In the contested north, the majority of the population remains excluded from sharing in the region’s wealth of resources. Young people, in particular, have hardly any prospects for a better future.

In this precarious situation, Islamist terror is now spreading in the north. Since mid-2020, the jihadists have also carried out large-scale offensives, which have enabled them to take control of several towns in Cabo Delgado. Due to

Displaced people in Cabo Delgado.



Bishop Alberto Vera Aréjula
after the attack on the Catholic
mission in Chipene.

Cyclone “Gombe” devastated northern
Mozambique in 2022, making the situation of
hundreds of thousands of internally
displaced people even more difficult.



the reinforcement of the Mozambican security forces by soldiers from Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the terrorists have tended to strike in smaller groups since mid-2021. Nevertheless, by the end of 2022, attacks had killed over 4,500 people and displaced more than one million.

Since the end of 2021, terror has been spreading from the north to other areas that had been considered safe until then. This includes the south of the Diocese of Pemba (Cabo Delgado Province), the Diocese of Lichinga (Niassa Province) and the Diocese of Nacala (Nampula Province). In the latter, two villages were attacked by the Islamist rebels on 2 September 2022. Only four days later, the Catholic mission in Chipene was the target of an attack. The 83-year-old Italian nun Maria de Coppi, who had worked in Mozambique for 59 years, was shot dead. The attack, which made headlines around the world, also resulted in the burning and destruction of the mission’s church, school, health centre, priests’ and nuns’ houses, library, boarding schools for boys and girls, and several vehicles.

ACN is assisting the people who were forced to flee from terror-stricken areas, primarily with pastoral, psycho-social and humanitarian aid projects. Other funds in the year under review went towards the delivery of building materials for houses, the construction of community centres and the purchase of vehicles for missionaries who care for displaced people.

**» Parishes and religious communities
continue to be places of assistance
for people. <<**

Bishop António Juliasse of Pemba

A sister during
catechesis.







The Middle East is the cradle of Christianity. But in this region marked by war, terror, flight and economic decline, fewer and fewer Christians see good prospects for themselves and their families. In the year under review, ACN's primary commitment was to the local churches in Syria and Lebanon. The goal of this assistance is to inspire hope among the Christians residing there and to support them in their efforts to remain in their native land. Here, the Church plays an important mediating role between the different religious communities.

Numerous Christians in the Middle East still experience a sense of insecurity. The economic and political situation often seems hopeless, resulting in many leaving their homeland to go abroad. Our project partners in Syria report that during the war, people still held hope that the situation would improve after the war. But now they have no prospects at all. Additionally, many Christians feel unwelcome in societies where Islam is the predominant religion. This sometimes manifests itself in social exclusion and discrimination, e.g. when it comes to job opportunities or the interpretation of family law.



In the hospital of the Franciscan Sisters of the Cross in Beirut.

“Switzerland of the Orient”, is presently facing significant economic and political turmoil. In addition, the people there are still burdened by the trauma of the heavy explosion that occurred in the port of the capital Beirut on 4 August 2020, claiming hundreds of lives and severely damaging large parts of the city – including numerous churches and church facilities. Here the Church is faced with a monumental task, and once again in 2022, ACN has not abandoned it.

In the year under review, we were able to support the Church in the Middle East with a total volume of 19.3 million euros. The projects funded included emergency aid covering basic needs for food and medicine, aid for seniors and students, subsistence help for religious sisters and Mass stipends for priests. Additionally, building and reconstruction projects were also supported.



>> Many Christians no longer see prospects for themselves in the Middle East. <<

The situation in Lebanon also remains catastrophic. The country, which has historically provided a sanctuary and a place to call home for Christians, in particular, and has been hailed as the



Lebanon

Number of projects

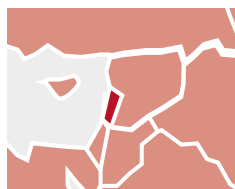
 235	 217
Project applications	Funded projects

Type of projects

 24	 8	 19
Construction/reconstruction	Means of transport	Mass stipends
 76	 5	 3
Emergency aid	Media help	Bibles & books
 24	 14	 44
Training of priests	Subsistence aid	Formation of faith

Head of Section

Xavier Stephen Bisits



In the past Lebanon was often praised as a positive example for the entire Middle East, not least because of the comparatively peaceful coexistence of religions. In modern times, Lebanon was the only country in the Middle East with a Christian majority. Today, the Christian popula-

tion in Lebanon is estimated to be, at most 34%, and this number may have dropped even further due to the ongoing economic and political crisis. ACN has already significantly increased aid to the Church here since the Port of Beirut explosion in 2020.

After the financial collapse of 2019, many Christians left Lebanon. They simply no longer saw a future for themselves



Sister Patricia cares for the needy in the Armenian Christian neighbourhood of Bourj Hammoud in Beirut.

and their families in the country. Yet Lebanese Christians enjoy a high level of respect within society. Christian schools are highly valued by believers of all religions in the country. In particular, they form a bridge between the different religious communities and promote tolerance and respect.

The war in neighbouring Syria brought more than 1.5 million refugees to Lebanon, even though the country itself only had four million inhabitants at the time. When a severe economic and political crisis was added in 2019, unemployment and discontent among the country's population rose rapidly. According to the United Nations,

three-quarters of the Lebanese population are now affected by poverty. Many can barely cover their basic needs. Lebanon's inflation rate is one of the highest in the world and comparable to countries such as Venezuela and Zimbabwe. Since the start of the economic crisis, prices for consumer goods have quadrupled. The reasons for this include national debt, corruption and political stagnation. In addition, there is the catastrophic state of medical care: The racks in the pharmacies are often as empty as the food shelves in the supermarkets. What's more, fuel is now unaffordable for most Lebanese, and the government provides only one or two hours of electricity a day.

A young Christian in Beirut.



» Three-quarters of the Lebanese now live in poverty. «

Graffiti on Martyrs' Square in Beirut.





» The Church faces a Herculean task here. «

According to surveys, Lebanon is currently experiencing one of the fastest declines of its middle class into poverty among all countries. In relation to its gross domestic product, no other country in the world today is as dependent on foreign aid as Lebanon. The Church is also dependent on foreign aid. Christianity in the region is at a crossroads. Many believers are leaving the country. If Christians are not offered hope for a better future, the parishes will continue to be bled dry.

When the catastrophic situation in the country was dramatically worsened by the devastating explosion in the Port of Beirut in August 2020, we significantly increased our aid to the local Church. While prior to the Beirut disaster the majority of our aid funds in Lebanon were earmarked for Syrian refugees, it is now the Lebanese themselves who need help. Alongside the human suffering, the heavy explosion resulted in severe damage to many churches and church facilities. During this time of great need, ACN is committed to standing by the Church. To this end, we

Left:
Monument to non-violence
in the port area of Beirut.

Middle:
Young people in
Harissa form a cross.



“Presentation of Mary to the Temple” during Lent in the Greek Orthodox Church in Beirut.



In the streets of the Armenian Christian neighbourhood of Bourj Hammoud in Beirut.



continued to help with reconstruction projects in the year under review. But our assistance also prioritised securing the livelihood of families, as well as ensuring Christian education and offering pastoral support to the faithful.



Aid for 200 Catholic schools in Lebanon

The Catholic Church runs about 330 schools in Lebanon. These are important because they maintain a Christian presence, help ensure families stay in villages and create jobs for teachers and the non-academic staff. About 90 of these schools are known as “assisted schools”, which are mainly for

pupils from poorer families. In the year under review, ACN was able to support a total of 200 Catholic schools so that they could reopen after the summer holidays. The extensive aid package totalling more than 1.8 million euros also included salary subsidies for teachers and school scholarships for pupils.



Lebanon's economic depression is particularly hard on young people. Surveys show that 90% of the young people have either thought about emigrating or would like to do so. The emigration rate is particularly high among young Christian university graduates. At the Jesuit University of St. Joseph in Beirut, for example, the rate of diploma holders who emigrate im-

mediately following graduation, especially to the Gulf States or France, is at least 40%. The reasons for this include the substantial rise in poverty and unemployment rates, as well as political corruption. Additionally, ongoing religious conflicts are also driving many young people abroad, especially given the influence of Hezbollah, which seeks to turn Lebanon into an Islamic regime.

» The Catholic University Chaplaincy encourages students to stay in Lebanon. «

Students celebrating the Eucharist.



Novice of the Congregation
“Sœurs des Saints-Cœurs de
Jésus et de Marie” caring for
a needy family in Beirut.



Emergency aid for a
Catholic widow in the
village of Addousiye.

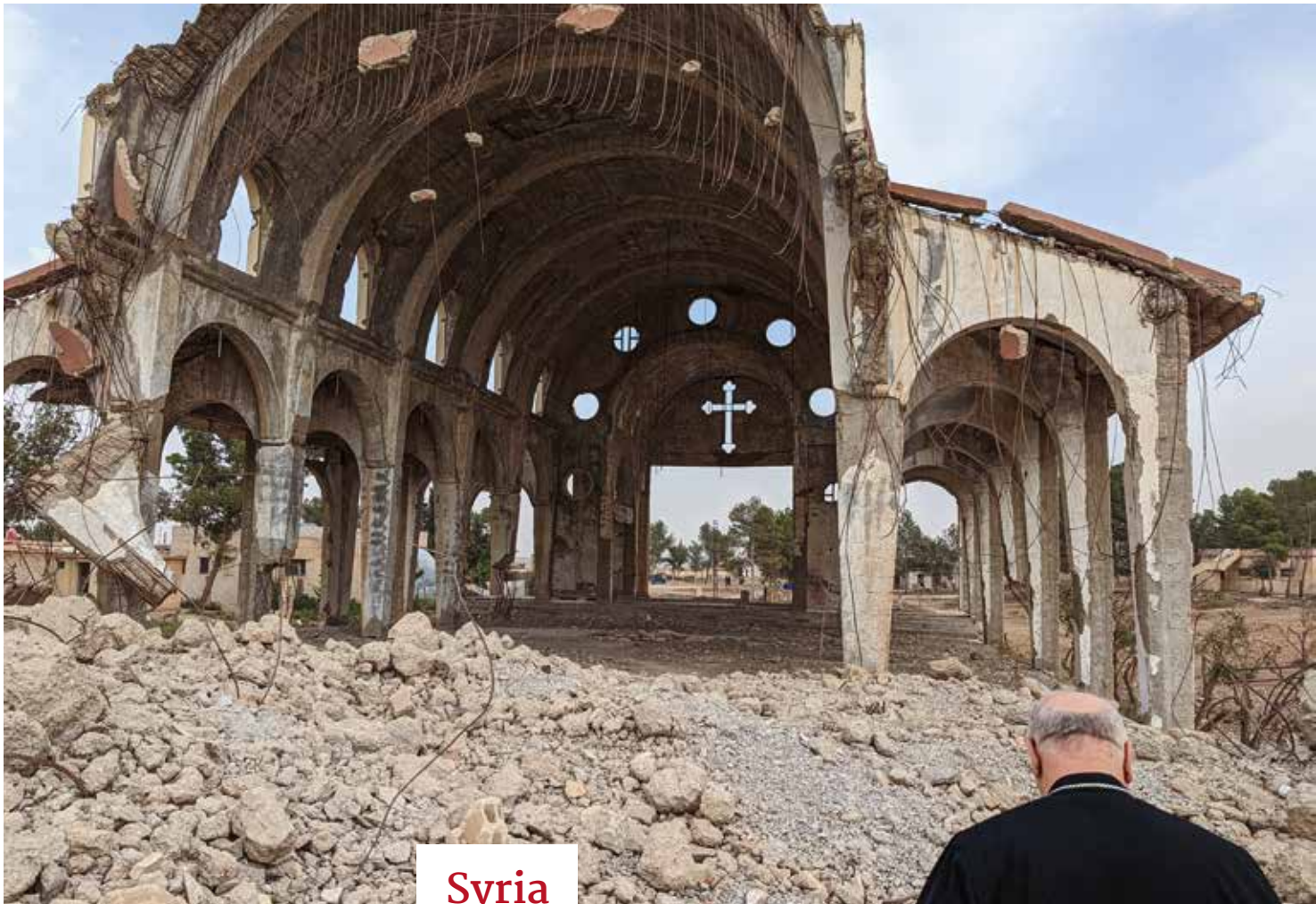
The Catholic University Chaplaincy wants to counteract the wave of emigration by students from public and religious universities: By providing spiritual support, it encourages young students to stay in Lebanon. Through the experience of fellowship with other young believers, it is hoped that students gain more confidence from their faith and find motivation to actively shape society. The initiative also convinced ACN. Thus, in the year under review, we helped the Catholic University Chaplaincy to finance events and online services, as well as to support needy students and to procure required materials.

One of our classic support projects is the training of priests. In the year under review, we were also able to support seminaries in Lebanon. Part of this aid went to the Melkite Greek Catholic Seminary in Harissa, for example, where, among other things, investments were made for the installation of a solar power system in order to reduce energy costs and ensure the facility's power supply. This is because the state electricity supply only works for a maximum of two hours a day, forcing the seminarians to use an expensive generator or to study in the dark by candlelight. However, we have also included children in our considerations. At Christmas, 14,000 children in Lebanon were provided with warm clothing as a result of ACN's help.



Left:
The Mediterranean Sea
at the Port of Beirut.

Right:
Sculpture made from
scrap metal in front of the
ruins of the Port of Beirut.



Syria

Number of projects

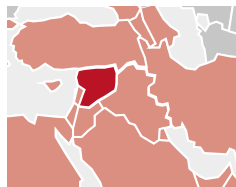
145 136

Type of projects

12 1 9
45 1 0
2 9 57

Head of Section

Xavier Stephen Bisits



Eleven years after the outbreak of war in Syria, the population still suffers from

the ensuing economic and social crisis, which continued to worsen in the year under review. The consequences of the war are devastating: hundreds of thousands of dead, millions of displaced people, destroyed infrastructure and devastated cities. The situation for Christians in the

country is also catastrophic. But the local Church can continue to count on ACN's help. Since the beginning of the war in March 2011, our aid organisation has been able to support projects in Syria with a total sum of more than 50 million euros.

At the outbreak of the war, 23 million people were still living in Syria. Since then, thousands have been killed and millions have fled. About 6.7 million people are internally displaced and 5.5 million live as refugees in neighbour-

Destruction in Aleppo.



The destroyed Assyrian Church in Tal Tamr.



ACN supported the renovation of Theotokos Church in the Old City of Aleppo.

ing countries. One-third of the refugees alone are children; many of them severely traumatised. The Apostolic Nuncio in Syria, Cardinal Zenari, informed us that 90% of the population in Syria now lives below the poverty line. Pope Francis called the situation in this war-torn country a “scandal”.

Although the security situation in Syria has improved somewhat, the people suffer from a debilitating economic crisis marked by rampant inflation.

Daily life is severely affected by price increases. Many cannot afford medicine, operations, meat, milk for children or even a bus ticket to school or university. The average monthly income is now the equivalent of 30 dollars, but monthly needs amount to around 160 dollars. Even Syrians who have relatives abroad cannot get money from them due to the banking embargo. Another problem is that the war in Ukraine has exacerbated the crisis in Syria, as the import of important basic foodstuffs and other

goods came to a partial standstill during the reporting year. This also limited the amount of aid from humanitarian organisations. Our local project partners report growing despair among the population. The suicide rate has risen sharply and the number of begging children has multiplied.

>> Many Christians lack hope, but any hope they still have is given to them by the Church. <<

Regina Lynch,
ACN Project Director



Like 151 other couples, newly-weds Sandy Mstrie and Simon Aleid are supported by ACN.



The convent and school of the Sisters of the Holy Family are in need of major renovation.



Father Jules Boutros, now Bishop of the Syriac Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch, listening to a confession.



A primary goal of our Syrian aid is to motivate Christians to stay in their homeland. From the 1.5 million Christians who lived in Syria before the war, it is estimated that only a third are still in the country. The decline in Aleppo is even more dramatic. According to the information currently available to us, about 180,000 Christians lived there before the war. Of these, no more than 25,000 remain.

Young people, in particular, will only stay in their homeland if they see good future prospects for themselves there; primarily encompassing a solid education. That is why we are particularly pleased that a total of 500 university scholarships were awarded through our assistance in 2022. In the reporting year, we were also able to support refugees and extremely destitute families with rent subsidies once again. Additionally, needy families, the elderly and the sick received food aid and financial contributions towards living expenses. We were also able to help with grants for school fees, as the increased cost of living often encourages families not to send their children

to school; either to save on school fees or to avoid hidden education costs for things like transport and photocopies.

The mass flight of Christians abroad is also of major concern to the bishops. For they know, to a large extent, Syria's future depends on young families staying in the country and actively shaping it. Against this backdrop, it was important for us to be able to support 152 needy young married couples in renting and furnishing their first flat in the year under review. With a total of 740,000 euros, we could also once again support Church microcredit programmes in Aleppo, Homs and Damascus. These programmes provide families with funds to start their own businesses or resume professional projects that came to a halt as a result of the war.

In 2022, ACN also committed itself in Syria to continue restoring churches that suffered damage during the civil war. Throughout the country, our aid organisation supported summer camps for underprivileged children, enabling them to strengthen their faith and experience

Our aid organisation was also able to financially support summer camps for Christian children in Syria.



ACN provides financial assistance for the rent and sustenance of needy families residing in Marmarita, the Valley of Christians.

joy, even in times of crisis. Furthermore, we were able to provide 30,000 Syrian children with much-needed clothes at Christmas, and in Aleppo we enabled 1,500 children, sick and elderly people to take part in Christmas celebrations with nativity plays, Christmas carols, small gifts and lunch.

**>> Without young families,
the country has no future. <<**



In the streets of Damascus.



Syrian Christians celebrate the end of a three-year pilgrimage

On 15 September 2022, the day of the commemoration of the Sorrows of Mary, a solemn procession in Homs marked the end of the ACN-sponsored “Comfort My People” initiative. The aim of the initiative was for Christians from the different denominations of Syria to pray together for peace and the protection of all Christians in their country.

The prayer campaign had been launched by Pope Francis on 15 September 2019, after he had blessed the “Our Lady of Sorrows, Consoler of Syrians” icon. A month earlier, he had already blessed rosaries distributed to those

families who had lost a loved one in the war.

The icon then went on a pilgrimage through the country’s 34 Catholic and Orthodox dioceses. The parishes celebrated its arrival with processions and church services. The pilgrimage was intended to bring comfort, particularly to families who had lost loved ones in the war. For the people of the different denominations, the initiative was also an occasion for encounters and discussions.

The icon’s pilgrimage ended after three years with a large procession through the city of Homs, which



Children asking the Mother of God for protection and help in the ruins of Damascus.



Blessing of the icon on 15 September 2019 by Pope Francis.



Transfer of the icon in Aleppo on 17 May 2020.



Procession with the icon through Homs on 15 September 2022.



Transfer and enthronement of the icon at the Monastery of Saint Elijah in Rableh on 16 September 2022.

was heavily devastated during the initial years of the war, and whose residents have endured significant hardships. The official programme began in the Syriac Orthodox Cathedral of Um Al-Zennar and ended with a liturgical celebration in the Melkite Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace, which had been rebuilt through ACN's support. The following day, 16 September, the icon was transferred to the Monastery of Saint Elijah in Rableh for enthronement. During the ceremony, ACN Executive President Thomas Heine-Geldern laid a list at the statue of the Virgin Mary with the names of the 1,271 Christians killed in the war between 2011 and 2022, according to information available to ACN.





The most significant event of the year under review was Russia's attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022. This war has also had an enormous impact on both the work of the Church and our organisation; since it began, the main priority in Ukraine has simply been to survive. Immediately after the war began, many monasteries and church parishes opened their buildings to refugees and people in need. Consequently, ACN promptly made sure that help was on its way to the local Church.

Prior to the war, our aid efforts for the churches in Eastern Europe were primarily centred around eliminating the effects of communism and coping with the pandemic. For the Church in Ukraine, however, the situation has become much more dire since the war began. In addition to the destruction of buildings and infrastructure and the large number of refugees seeking help from the Church, sharp price increases, especially for energy, have also been a major challenge for church parishes and monasteries.

>> The Church in Ukraine is currently facing immense challenges due to the war. <<

In total, we supported the Church in Ukraine with 9.5 million euros in 2022. But the Catholic Church is also in urgent need of help in other parts of Eastern Europe, especially where it is in the minority, such as in Russia. Here, providing subsistence help for religious and Mass stipends for priests remains a fundamental aspect of our traditional aid efforts. We also extend assistance for crucial renovations to church buildings and provide vehicles for priests and religious sisters who are responsible for vast areas. Nevertheless the Church can also continue to count on our help in those countries of Northern Europe in which Catholics only number a small minority.

Air-raid alarm in the basement of the Catholic Grammar School in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.





Northern Europe

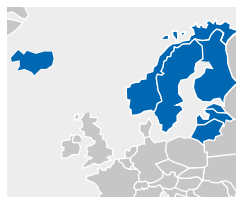
Number of projects

21 Project applications
16 Funded projects

Type of projects

3 Construction/reconstruction
2 Means of transport
0 Mass stipends
0 Emergency aid
1 Media help
1 Bibles & books
3 Training of priests
1 Subsistence aid
5 Formation of faith

Head of Section
Marco Mencaglia



With the exception of Lithuania, the Catholic Church has no historically established presence in Northern Europe. In countries like Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden, most of the faithful come from abroad and are often scattered widely across the country. Although

these are predominantly rich countries, the diaspora situation means that the parishes find it difficult to fulfil their tasks on their own. ACN's help is therefore an important form of support for the local churches in these countries.

In Northern Europe, Iceland serves as an example of the minority situation of the Church. Of some 357,000 inhabitants of the island, only 13,500 are Catholics. This

Pastoral activities with the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin Mary of Matará in St Joseph's Parish in Hafnarfjörður, Iceland.



Summer camp with the International Evangelization School in the village of Pakutuvėnai, Lithuania.

Prayer service at the Christian summer camp of the Diocese of Kaunas, Lithuania.



>> We would like to assist the Church in Northern Europe in its challenging diaspora situation. <<

means that Catholics form a minority of 3.8%. They are almost all immigrants and speak more than 100 different mother tongues. The number of believers continues to rise due to continued immigration. Just 50 years ago, only about 1,000 Catholics lived on the island. In the year under review, ACN supported the Church in Iceland in procuring vehicles for pastoral care, because the parishes cover huge areas.

In 2022, we also directed our aid efforts towards the Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania. There, too, we helped by providing vehicles and supported religious sisters through subsistence help. We also provided assistance for Christian holiday camps, where young individuals could cultivate a sense of community while enhancing their knowledge of their faith.



Middle and right: Pilgrims' retreat at the Youth Evangelisation School in Telšiai, Lithuania.





Russia

Number of projects

☐ 74 ☒ 61

Type of projects

☒ 17 ☒ 5 ☒ 4
☒ 2 ☒ 8 ☒ 1
☒ 9 ☒ 4 ☒ 11

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk



With an area of over 17 million square kilometres, Russia is the largest country in the world.

Of the 144 million inhabitants, about 75% belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, 12.5% are Muslims and only a few hundred thousand believers are Catholic. Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops, aid measures from abroad have been severely restricted due to tightened sanctions against Russia. ACN nevertheless attempts to do all it can to support the local Church in this difficult situation.

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Catholic Church has been dependent on aid from abroad due to its minority situation in Russia. ACN has supported its journey towards the future by helping to strengthen its presence and rebuild its structures. Now the war launched by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has created new challenges for the local Church. For example, the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia have resulted in the suspension of regular payment transactions, making it more challenging to provide aid from abroad. In addition, there have been considerable restrictions on travel. The Catholic Church in Russia is now situated

A family in Irkutsk praying together.



Left and below:
ACN supports the training
of the Servants of Mary
Immaculate in Russia.



In front of a statue of
St Joseph in Angarsk, Siberia.



in a country isolated from the West,
whose population also suffers from
stricter laws.

The consequences of the war are
increasingly putting the local Church in
a precarious position. This is because
the majority of the priests, as well as the
religious sisters and brothers, are for-
eigners who can face problems with their
residence permits. Despite the significant
challenges, ACN is dedicated to exploring
all potential avenues for assistance.

Our most important concern is to
ensure pastoral care for Catholics in
Russia, but this has always been diffi-
cult in many places. The reason for this
is that the faithful often live scattered
over vast areas. For example, the
Diocese of St Joseph in Irkutsk alone
covers an area of 10 million square kilo-
metres, which is larger than the USA.
ACN therefore continues to support the
Catholic Church in Russia in procuring
vehicles. Furthermore, building and
renovation aid, support for the training
of priests, religious and lay people, as
well as subsistence help for religious
and Mass stipends for priests were all
on our aid list for the Russian Church
during the year under review.



A pastoral tour of the
Diocese of St Joseph, Irkutsk.

**» Due to the war in Ukraine, the local
Church in Russia has become in-
creasingly isolated from the West. «**



Ukraine

Number of projects

□ 439 ✓ 353

Type of projects

🔔 65 🎯 70 🏠 59
 📍 31 🗣️ 2 📖 6
 👤 31 👥 65 👤 24

Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek



On 24 February, Russia's attack on Ukraine sent shock waves throughout the world. The

Russian invasion brought dramatic changes to the Ukrainian people, and thus also to the Church. Since the very first day of the war, we have been in continuous contact with our

local project partners, learning first-hand about their situation and needs.

Catholics form a minority in Ukraine, with just under 10% of the total population of 44 million people before the war. The Catholic Church is represented here in two rite churches, with most Ukrainian Catholics belong to the Greek Catholic Church, which celebrates its services using the Byzantine rite. There are 1.5 million Roman Catholic believers.



Procession for peace in the Catholic parish in Hvizdava.

The situation of the local Church became dramatic immediately after the war began. Depending on the region, parishes and monastic communities were confronted with an influx of refugees, and priests and religious sisters were forced to hold out alongside the frightened population in air-raid shelters and underground train tunnels, where they undertook to provide first aid and pastoral care for the people. Responding immediately to the start of the war, ACN put together an initial comprehensive aid package consisting of 24 projects with a total sum of 1.3 million euros.

The heavily damaged village of Bohdanivka near Kyiv.

» ACN will not abandon the Church in Ukraine during this very critical and difficult time. «

Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President of ACN



Homeless people at the Albertine Brothers' soup kitchen in Lviv.

Through this initial aid, we were able to empower the Catholic Church throughout the country to respond to the needs of the population.

From the beginning of the war up to and including January 2023, ACN supported the Churches of both Catholic rites in Ukraine with 353 projects totalling over 9.5 million euros. For example, we were able to help 55 monasteries

to adapt their household amenities, in response to the sharp increase in the number of those accommodated. In addition, 205 electricity generators were provided to ensure an uninterrupted power supply, thereby responding to the destruction of infrastructure in multiple regions from the bombing. We also financed heaters and portable stoves for the winter, which gets very cold in Ukraine.

Left:
Humanitarian aid provided by Basilian monks in Kherson.

Middle and right:
Distribution of food at the seminary of the Archdiocese of Ivano-Frankivsk.





There was also an urgent need for additional vehicles in the dioceses. We supported church institutions in procuring a total of 74 cars and vans used to transport relief supplies for the care and support of refugees and people in need. We were able to distribute emergency aid to more than 7,600 religious and church employees to secure their livelihoods. We were also able to provide Mass stipends to 3,493 priests. In addition, we helped more than 700 seminarians to continue their education.

Meanwhile, at least seven million Ukrainians have fled abroad, and another seven million are internally displaced within the country.

A primary focus of our aid has been to provide care for children and young people who are especially affected and traumatised by war and displacement. Communities of sisters, in particular, are doing admirable work here. With the support of ACN, the Ukrainian Church has, for many years, been offering holiday camps under the motto “Holidays with God”. During the war, the number of summer camps could even be increased. In the year under review, well over 1,700 children and young people, most of them from refugee families, benefited from the recreational activities at camps, regaining new hope and a zest for life.

Our aid organisation will not tackle the reconstruction of destroyed church

» The priests should not be afraid; the Lord will bless them. If they were to leave, it would be a great loss for everyone. «

Bishop Vasylij Tuchapets, the Greek Catholic Bishop of Kharkiv

At the evacuation of Irpin.



Eucharistic adoration in the shelter of St Anthony's Parish in Kyiv.



Left and right:
In a shelter during the numerous attacks in Kyiv.



buildings until after the war. Nevertheless, individual exceptions were already made in the year under review. For example, we supported the restoration of the Roman Catholic seminary of the Archdiocese of Kyiv-Zhytomyr, which was looted and partially destroyed shortly after the Russian army invaded. The seminarians have now been able to return there.

ACN maintains close contact with the representatives of the local Church and will continue to provide unwavering support to the Catholic Church in Ukraine by assisting those who have been traumatised and displaced, and addressing their spiritual and material needs.

Confession in a metro station of Kyiv.



A Catholic and an Orthodox bishop join forces to provide assistance together

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, came under heavy fire immediately after the war began. In early March 2022, an air strike also hit the house of the Roman Catholic Bishop Pavlo Honcharuk and severely damaged the roof. Fortunately, no one was injured.

The bishop then took refuge in a shelter where 40 people, including his Orthodox counterpart, Bishop Mytrofan, had already sought protection from the increasing attacks. The two bishops immediately visited the injured in hospital together and helped distribute food.



Romania

Number of projects

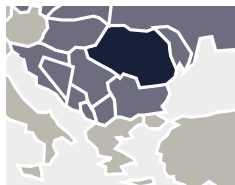
□ 55 ☒ 41

Type of projects

🔔 16 🎯 1 🏠 10
 📐 0 🎤 0 📖 2
 👤 7 👤 1 👤 4

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



A member of the EU since 2007, Romania today nevertheless continues to be marked by economic stag-

nation, corruption and a lack of prospects. Many young people no longer see a future for themselves here and have already left their homeland. 86% of the country's 19.5 million inhabitants belong to the Orthodox Church. Catholic believers form a minority of just under 6%. ACN supports both the Roman Catholic and the Greek Catholic Churches in Romania.

The Greek Catholic Church was persecuted under the communist regime between 1948 and 1989 in a particularly cruel manner.

The Catholic Church in Romania is mostly composed of small parishes – especially in rural areas, as well as on the outskirts of cities. Since the end of communism, ACN has provided significant aid here for building and renovating churches and rectories. In recent years, the focus of our aid has increasingly shifted to activities at the diocesan level. For instance, one important concern is to establish pastoral plans in the dioceses.

Left and right:
Renovation of the rectory
of the Greek Catholic
Parish of Baita.



**>> We would not be able to fulfil our
task without help from abroad. <<**

Father Anton Cioba, Rector
of the Oradea Seminary



During a prayer service
in the Diocese of Oradea.

Another focus of our aid in Romania is to train priests and religious, as the number of vocations to the priesthood is gratifyingly high. In this context, we are also committed to ensuring that suitable premises are available. For example, the seminary in Blaj received subsidies for the renovation of its building in the year under review. In addition, ACN provides assistance in Romania, every year, through Mass stipends and procuring vehicles for pastoral care, while also promoting programmes to strengthen the faith of the youth.



Romanian seminarians help Ukrainian refugees

In the far north-west of Romania, ACN has been supporting the Greek Catholic Seminary of Oradea since 1993. 46 young men are currently undergoing their training here, which continued to be supported by ACN in 2022. In the year under review, aspiring priests were able to gain initial practical experience

at the Ukrainian border, where they cared for refugees arriving from the neighbouring country. Many refugee families were also accommodated in Oradea itself. The encounters were valuable and strengthened both sides in their faith, reports the rector of the seminary.



Bulgaria

Number of projects

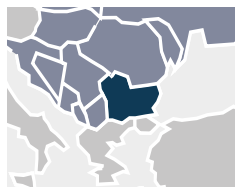
□ 14 ✓ 13

Type of projects

🔔 5 🎯 1 📡 1
 ⚡ 0 🎤 1 📖 0
 👥 2 👤 3 👤 0

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



Around 83% of Bulgaria's 6.9 million inhabitants are majority Orthodox Christians. Catholics

form only a tiny minority of 1%. Furthermore, approximately 13.7% of the population in the country consists of Muslims with Turkish origins. In the year under review, ACN supported the local Church mainly through Mass stipends, subsistence help and grants for renovations. It also offered substantial assistance for the creation of a Catholic radio station.

During the communist regime, the Bulgarian Catholic Church suffered severe persecution. From 1946 to 1990, nearly every priest was imprisoned for some time. During this era, church property was also confiscated, foreign

priests were expelled and seminaries were closed. Since 1990, the Church has largely recuperated from this experience. Today it numbers 60 diocesan priests and 100 religious sisters and brothers, most of whom hail from Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic and France.

Nevertheless, many young people in Bulgaria have not been brought up in the faith, as their parents themselves did not receive any religious education under communism. This has made it difficult for them to pass on the faith to their children. As a result, there is a fundamental need for religious education. ACN is stepping up its efforts to train priests in order to meet this long-term need.

The year 2022 was marked by several Catholic Church celebrations in Bulgaria, for example, the 20th anniversary of the visit of Pope John Paul II was celebrated

Girls accompanied by Eucharistic Sisters in Sofia during their stay in a recreational camp in the village of Pokrovan.

Eucharistic Sisters in Sofia during an online catechesis.



and the 70th anniversary of the murder of four Bulgarian martyrs by the communist regime was also commemorated. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, came to Sofia for a series of events. He also inaugurated the first Bulgarian Catholic radio station, “Ave Maria”, which will be an important tool for evangelisation and ecumenism and will respond to the increased need for religious education. The station, which was set up with the support of ACN, not only has Catholics as its target group, but is aimed at all seekers interested in spiritual and religious topics. In addition, cultural education programmes with musical and historical contributions will also be produced here.

» There is a hunger for spiritual and religious education in Bulgaria. «

Bishop Christo Projkov, Greek Catholic Bishop of Sofia and President of the Bulgarian Catholic Bishops' Conference

Religious sisters support the needy.







The challenges facing the Church in Asia and Oceania are multifaceted and vary greatly from region to region. In many areas, poverty and natural disasters complicate the lives of the population and thus also the work of the Church. Across the area, rural exodus and migration are major issues. But many Christians also suffer from social discrimination, nationalist movements and authoritarian government systems. In 2022, ACN supported local churches in the region with a total budget of 15.7 million euros.

In most countries in Asia and Oceania, Christians are in the minority and frequently face disadvantages and social exclusion. In some countries, Christianity is seen as a harmful influence from abroad, threatening the dominance of the leading party or the perceived religious cohesion of the nation. Especially under autocratic regimes and national movements, Christians often have a difficult time. The Church also needs help in the former Central Asian Soviet republics. Here, the reconstruction of ecclesiastical structures continues 30 years after the collapse of communism.



Two women from Faisalabad in Pakistan express their gratitude for aid.

is the only region in the world in which the number of priests and religious is increasing. About 30% of the world's seminarians live in Asia. ACN assists the local churches in strengthening their presence and carrying out their multifaceted tasks. In addition to promoting the training of priests, religious and lay people, the focus is on family and youth pastoral care because of the disintegration and uprooting of families and the resulting lack of prospects for young people. These are among the great challenges facing the Church in the Asian-Oceanic region.

In the year under review, ACN was also able to approve many requests for aid for the construction and renovation of church buildings, the provision of catechetical material and the purchase of vehicles.

>> Where Christians are in the minority, discrimination is often a daily occurrence. <<

Despite its predominantly diaspora situation, the Church of Asia and Oceania looks to the future with confidence. Apart from Africa, Asia



Kazakhstan

Number of projects

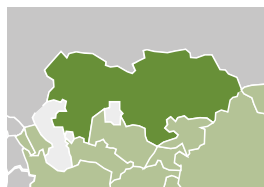
102 Project applications
86 Funded projects

Type of projects

27 Construction/reconstruction
10 Means of transport
2 Mass stipends
1 Emergency aid
2 Media help
0 Bibles & books
19 Training of priests
7 Subsistence aid
18 Formation of faith

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk



With a surface area of more than 2.7 million square kilometres, the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan is larger than one-quarter of the USA. At the same time, the country only has 18.8 million inhabitants. In early January 2022,

unrest, apparently triggered by protests against rising fuel prices, claimed more than 200 lives. For Christians in the country, Pope Francis' visit in September was the major event of the year. Catholics are a minority in Kazakhstan, and the Church relies on aid from abroad. ACN makes an important contribution here.

» Without help from abroad, the Church in Kazakhstan could hardly survive. «



The "Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará" after Sunday Mass in Shymkent.

Father Estéban and the “Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará” care for neglected youths in Shymkent.

Father Artur Zaráś and the Congregation of the “Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary” care for orphans at the Kapchagay Children’s Home.



Kazakhstan is a multi-ethnic state. 70% of the inhabitants are Muslims. About 25% are Christians, but most belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Catholics form a minority of just under 1% of the total population. Most of them are former deportees or their descendants with mainly Polish, German, Baltic or Ukrainian roots.

Despite its minority situation, the Catholic Church is respected and held in high regard in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the country is a positive example of a friendly relationship between Catholic and Orthodox Christians; there are joint initiatives and a constructive dialogue. The visit of Pope Francis in September 2022 has further strengthened the reputation of the Catholic Church in Kazakhstan. The head of the Church took part in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions and celebrated Holy Mass in the capital’s Expo Square. Afterwards, the Pope engaged with bishops, priests, religious, seminarians and lay people who are ac-

tive in pastoral ministry. However, the Pope’s visit was not only an important event for Catholics, but also for all of Kazakhstan; it was reported extensively in the media and received a good deal of attention.

Even today, the economic survival of Kazakhstan’s Catholic community depends on aid from abroad. ACN supports the local Church, especially in the training of priests at the Catholic

seminary in Qaraghandy, and provides building, renovation and vehicle assistance. In the year under review, we were also able to support religious sisters with subsistence help. The nuns are indispensable for the work of the Church: they hold catechesis sessions for children, young people and adults, prepare them to receive the sacraments, organise days of reflection and youth meetings, and care for the elderly, the sick, the lonely and the needy.

Pope Francis in Astana with heads of various religious communities.





Pakistan

Number of projects

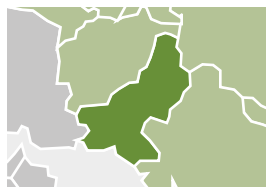
□ 107 ✓ 105

Type of projects

🔔 29 🎧 19 📡 3
 📍 13 🎤 1 📄 3
 👥 10 👤 3 👤 24

Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



In Pakistan, 96.4% of the 208 million inhabitants are Muslim. Religious minorities

ties are often repressed in the country, and forced conversions are also common. In 2022, Pakistan was hit by a severe flood that claimed many lives. The Church is often the only place of refuge and assistance during such natural disasters. Among many other relief projects, ACN therefore supported the local Church in its emergency aid efforts for the flood victims in the year under review.

Christians have a difficult time in Pakistan because religious minorities are exposed to strong pressure from several sides: from the state, from Islamist extremist groups, but also from the Muslim population, for whom, as a rule, only a Muslim is a full-fledged Pakistani citizen.

Particularly worrying are the increasing cases of abduction, forced marriage and forced conversion of Christian and Hindu girls. The phenomenon is not new, but has intensified in the recent past. This is because underage girls and women belonging to religious minorities are often insufficiently protected by the laws in Pakistan, or the existing legal framework is not utilised and the perpetrators go unpunished. In December 2022, more than 30 organisations called on the Pakistani government to collect reports and data on cases of forced conversions and submit them to parliament. Participants included the Justice and Peace Commission of the Pakistan Catholic Bishops' Conference, supported by ACN.

People fleeing the floods in Sindh Province.



Until St Dominic's Church is rebuilt, the congregation is celebrating services in the open air.

» Christians and other minorities in Pakistan are often excluded from aid from the state and local NGOs. «



A Capuchin friar visits flood victims who were made homeless in Sindh Province.

In the second half of the reporting year, Pakistan also experienced the worst floods in 30 years. Six million people were affected by the disaster, and officially more than 1,500 people died. In their distress, many of those affected sought help from church congregations. The Church repeatedly lamented that members of religious minorities were often discriminated against and excluded from aid from the state and local NGOs. ACN provided several emergency relief measures in 2022 so that the local Church could help the families most severely affected by the floods.

Despite their difficult situation, Christians in Pakistan maintain a strong faith. The local Church is very lively and is developing dynamically. Young believers, in particular, come to Mass in large numbers. Lay people are also increasingly taking on tasks in Christian congregations, for example as catechists. ACN supports their training and promotes pastoral programmes to strengthen the faith, e.g. in the youth ministry.

In the year under review we also aided priests with Mass stipends and enabled them to participate in spiritual retreats. In addition, we were able to respond positively to requests from the local Church for help in procuring vehicles and for the construction and renovation of church buildings.

Houses destroyed by the flood in the village of Chak.



Flooded church in Nawabshah in Sindh Province.





India

Number of projects

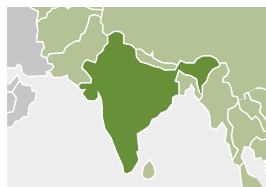
749 480

Type of projects

71 59 127
1 2 17
140 12 51

Head of Section

Véronique Vogel
Barbara Rettig



With approximately 1.4 billion inhabitants, India is the world's second most populous

country. The majority of its citizens are Hindus. Muslims, accounting for 14.5% of the total population, and Christians, accounting for 2.3%, are among the country's religious minorities and are often discriminated against and attacked by Hindu nationalist groups. Church representatives have repeatedly called on the government to protect religious minorities from attacks. ACN is particularly active for the local Church in the poor northern and north-eastern parts of the country.



Religious sister of the
Diocese of Bareilly at prayer.

» Many Christians in India live in a state of permanent tension and fear. «

A new motorbike for the vast Maliapota Parish in the city of Krishnanagar, West Bengal Province.

Religious sisters working in the garden at the novitiate of Mariam Nilaya, Bangalore State.



Although they number 30 million believers, Christians in India nevertheless form only a small minority among the country's religious communities. Many Christians belong to the Dalits, the lowest caste in the Indian social order, or to disadvantaged ethnic minorities. In addition to discrimination due to their minority situation, many Christians are also affected by ostracism and social exclusion because of their low social status.

For many years, India has been ACN's focus country in Asia. We are particularly involved in the north and north-east because the situation of Christians in these areas is especially precarious. The believers there usually belong to disadvantaged ethnic minorities and most suffer from overwhelming poverty.

For the Church in India, 2022 was also marked by discrimination and violence against Christians. Militant groups of Hindu nationalists have further intensified their hostile actions against religious minorities. Christians are in a state of permanent tension and fear spontaneous violent attacks. Churches are repeatedly vandalised, often with priests and religious being attacked in the process. Strict anti-conversion laws are in place in several states, requiring any change of religion to be declared and authorised by the authorities.

Faith education in the socio-pastoral training centre in Krishnanagar.





Construction of the Sadhna Sadan Catechetical Centre in Chianki, Jharkhand State.

Frequently, many of them can only find hope and confidence in faith and in the church community. In the year under review, we mainly supported priests and religious with Mass stipends and subsistence aid and promoted ini-

tiatives for marriage preparation in the Church, as well as catechesis for children and young people. Furthermore, we were able to provide vehicles for pastoral care in areas that are vast and difficult to access, and assist with



Left:
St Mary Matha Church
in Dodrajpur.

Middle and right:
Street scenes from Varanasi.



» We help in the north and north-east of India, where the situation of Christians is particularly precarious. «

Archbishop Sebastian
Kallapura of Patna visiting
the Carmelite nuns in
Tapovan, Uttarakhand State.

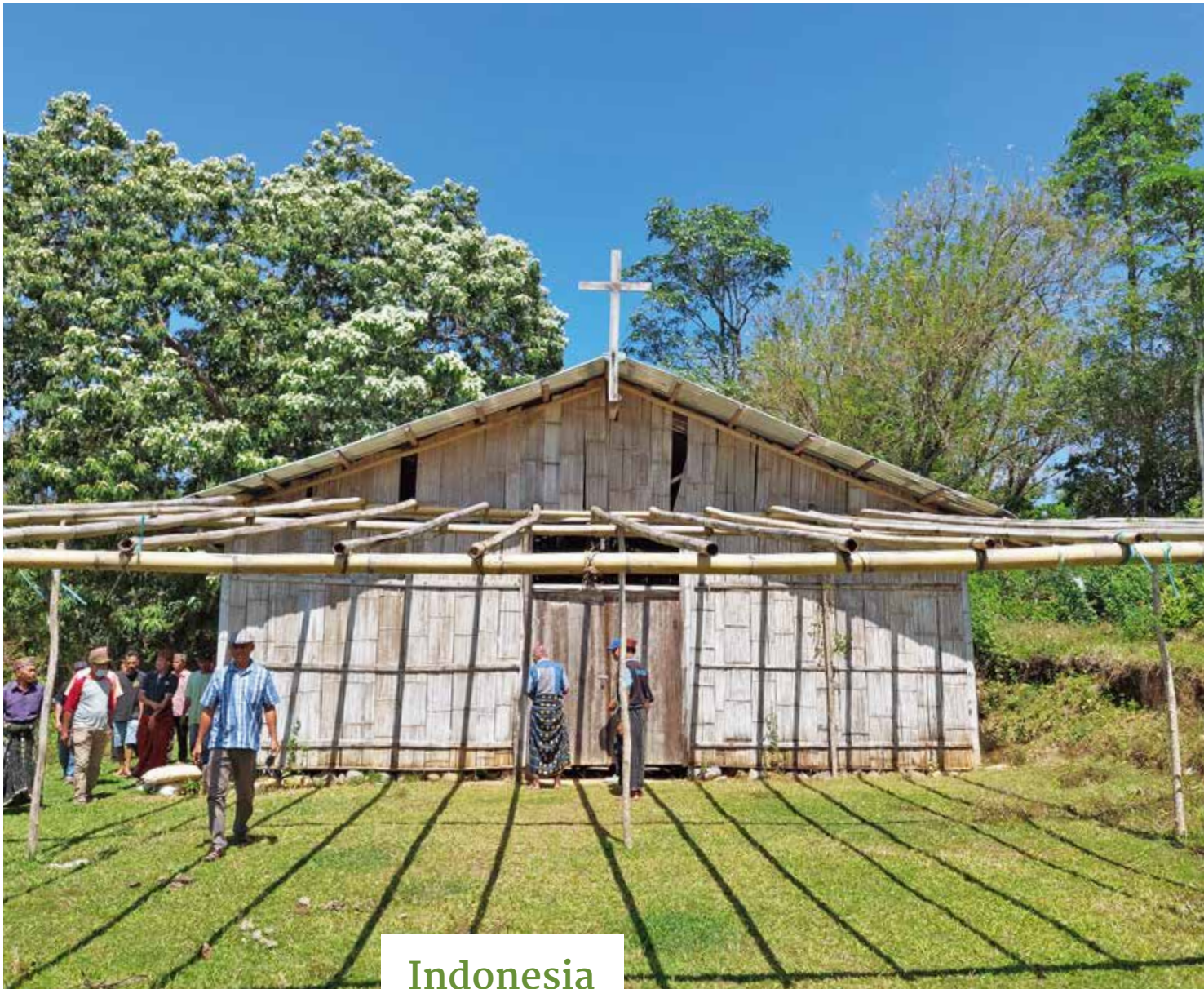


the Church's building and renovation projects. In addition, our aid organisation promotes the training of priestly and religious vocations, as well as the continuing education of priests, religious and lay people.



In Ramnagar, the oldest mission of the Bettiah Diocese in north-eastern India, a new chapel and a rectory could be inaugurated in summer 2022 thanks to the help of ACN. The building project was urgently needed because the old chapel was in danger of collapsing and the former rectory

had no sanitary facilities. Moreover, it was so small that the “office” was located on the veranda. Now the parish is happy to have a new place of worship and the newly built rectory, not only accommodates the current priest, but also another priest who is expected to arrive in the parish soon.



Indonesia

Number of projects

□ 44 ✓ 35

Type of projects

🔔 10 🎯 1 🏠 6
 📍 0 🎤 0 📖 0
 👥 16 🧑 0 👤 2

Head of Section

Véronique Vogel



Indonesia has a population of 272 million inhabitants. It is the largest Muslim nation

in the world. Christians make up a total of 10% of the population, and 3% of the Christians are Catholics. Many

Muslims are followers of moderate Sunni currents, and the coexistence of the religions has, so far, been largely peaceful. Recently, however, there have been attacks by violent Islamists; including against churches. ACN's aid projects primarily pursue the goal of strengthening the presence of the local Church.



Salesian nuns at a kindergarten in Palla.

The old chapel “Our Lady of Fatima” in Wankung is to be replaced by a new building.

Indonesia stretches over numerous islands.



» Despite its difficult situation, the local Church has recorded a pleasing number of priestly vocations. «

Since the military victory over troops of the “Islamic State” in Syria and Iraq, there have been more Islamist attacks in Indonesia in recent years. Churches have also been the target of these attacks.

Nevertheless, the local Church has reason for hope: there are a gratifying number of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. In the year under review, the Discalced Carmelites in Indonesia celebrated the 40th anniversary of their mission, which began with only two priests from India. The order now has 55 local priests in Indonesia, as well as five houses of formation with 89 young friars.

ACN supports the Carmelite priests and many other Catholic priests in Indonesia with Mass stipends, thereby making

an important contribution to securing their livelihood. Also high on our list of projects in the year under review was the further education and training of religious sisters, because especially in a non-Christian country, a high-quality theological and spiritual education is of fundamental importance to become firmly anchored in one’s own Catholic identity. For this reason, we also support retreats of religious congregations. In addition, we finance building projects in places where parishes or monasteries lack rooms and we help to purchase vehicles.

Sister Benny with a child on the site where a new novitiate of the Camillian Sisters is being built.





Philippines

Number of projects

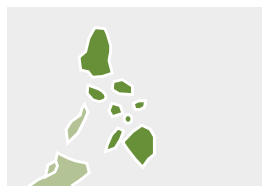
□ 52 ✓ 51

Type of projects

🔔 5 🎯 3 📡 2
 📍 0 🎤 1 📖 9
 👥 16 👤 4 👤 11

Head of Section

Véronique Vogel



The Catholic Church has been present in the Philippines for 500 years. About

80% of the 109 million inhabitants of the archipelago in the Pacific Ocean are Catholic. This makes it the only country in Asia with a Christian majority. The Church faces great challenges here. The main concerns are social grievances in the country and Islamist terror on the southern islands. ACN supports the local Church in its pastoral tasks, but also in its commitment to interfaith dialogue.

Life in the Philippines is largely characterised by inequality and increasing materialism. In the Church's view, these challenges can only be overcome by deepening the faith and imparting non-material values. Above all, this requires intensive pastoral care. ACN therefore supports priests, especially in the poorer dioceses of the country, with Mass stipends and religious sisters with subsistence aid.

The Church's commitment is also indispensable in Mindanao. The archipelago occupies a special position in the Philippine territory because many Muslims live there. For some years now, the area

At the 2nd Diocesan Synod in Borongan, Eastern Samar Province.



Harmony Youth Day during the training programme for a dialogue culture between Christianity and Islam in Zamboanga.

Pastoral work with prison inmates during the training programme for a dialogue culture.



has been terrorised by Islamist groups who hope to establish an Islamic state there. Here the Church relies on dialogue with moderate Muslim groups. The Silsilah Centre for Muslim-Christian Dialogue, founded in 1984 by Father Sebastiano D'Ambra in Zamboanga City in south-western Mindanao, plays an important role here. Catholic leaders are trained in this institution; in the future, they will work primarily for dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The institution is recognised by the state and is entitled to award the academic degree of Bachelor of Theology. ACN regularly supports the work of the centre, which has already trained several thousand people in interfaith dialogue.

» ACN supports the Church's commitment to interfaith dialogue. «



Participants in the summer course for promoting dialogue between Christianity and Islam in Zamboanga.



Papua New Guinea

Number of projects

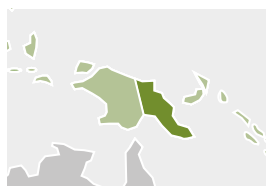
□ 66 ☒ 34

Type of projects

🔔 5 📶 13 🏠 3
 📍 0 🎤 0 📖 0
 👥 7 👤 0 👤 6

Head of Section

Irene Eschmann



Unlike in the Philippines, the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea has only been present

in some parts of the country for a few generations. Nevertheless, today, more than a quarter of the 8 million inhabitants are Catholic. Large parts of the country are still undeveloped and a majority of the population feels torn between tradition and modernity. Here, the Church provides orientation

to the people and supports them in all their needs. ACN stands by the Church and supports its work to the best of ACN's ability.

The challenges facing pastoral work in Papua New Guinea are great: in the largest and most populous Archipelago of Oceania, a myriad of different languages are spoken. In addition, the rugged country is virtually impassable and there are only a few roads, which frequently presents a huge challenge to pastoral work.

The pastoral programmes in the parishes of the Diocese of Wabag are sponsored by ACN.





ACN supports the new parish in
the jungle of Sandaun Province.

» The Church provides an
orientation to the people
and accompanies them in
all their hardships. «

Moreover, the prices for everyday goods are disproportionately high, as there is almost no industry in the country and many things have to be imported. Although scores of inhabitants practice subsistence farming and can feed themselves from what they grow, schooling, for example, remains unaffordable for most.

While many areas of Papua New Guinea are severely underdeveloped, technological progress, digitalisation and globalisation have reached the country, leaving parts of the population feeling socially disconnected and economically left behind. This balancing act of living between tradition and modernity overwhelms many people. In this situation, they seek orientation and often find it in the Church. The priests are confronted with immense social and pastoral problems.

ACN supports the work of priests and religious through Mass stipends and subsistence aid. We have also been able to help the local Church with the purchase of all-terrain vehicles that are suitable for the difficult road condi-

tions. Besides priests and religious, well-trained lay people are also indispensable when it comes to pastoral care. In the year under review, we therefore organised, among other things, a congress for Catholic teachers and educators in the Diocese of Alotau and a three-year training programme for catechists in the Diocese of Port Moresby.

The 18 priests of the Diocese
of Daru-Kiunga are
supported with Mass stipends.





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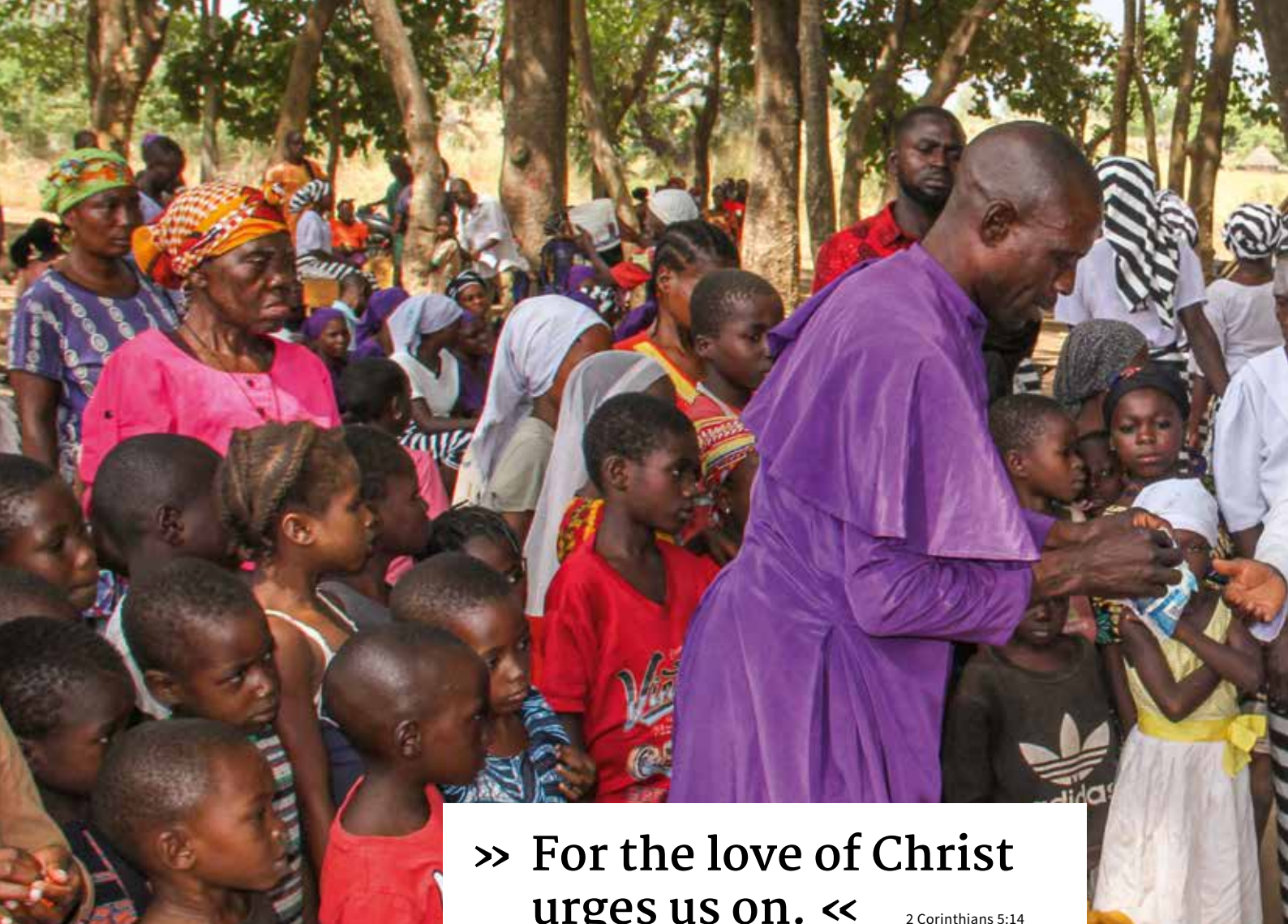
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» For the love of Christ urges us on. «

2 Corinthians 5:14

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

1. 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



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.



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.



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.



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.

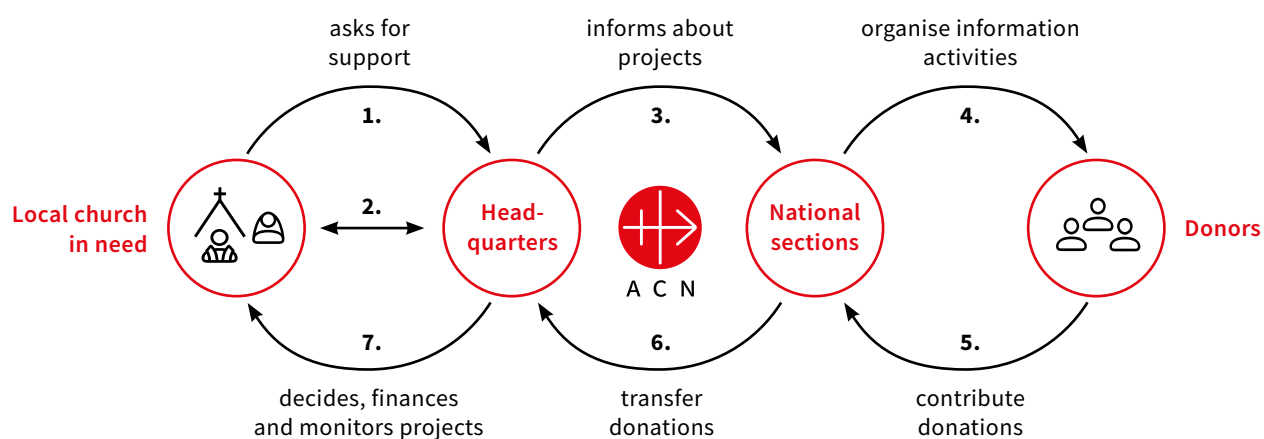
It is our moral duty to channel the donations we receive with the utmost care. For it is our mission to promote ecclesial and spiritual communion between those who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ and those who possess a compassionate and generous heart. And we will remain faithful to this credo in the future. The following diagram provides an overview of how the donation cycle at ACN works.

» It is our moral duty to use donations in a responsible manner. «

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.



Donation cycle



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.



» May the Lord make your prayers and commitment to the Church bear fruit throughout the world. «

Pope Francis to the benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need



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-

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.



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.

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.



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".

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.

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.

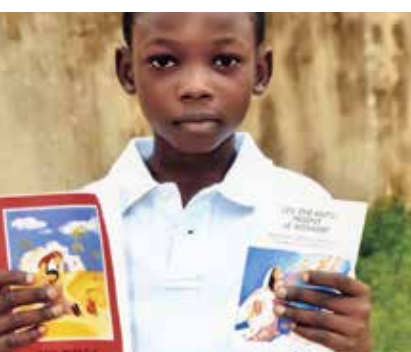
1979 With the Children's Bible, we launch a major project for boosting evangelisation efforts worldwide. To date, the book has been translated into 191 languages and printed and distributed over 51 million times.

1956 After the bloody suppression of the Hungarian uprising against the Stalinist system, ACN helps the local Church get through the crisis.

1984 ACN is recognised by the Holy See as a Universal Public Association of Pontifical Right.

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.

1989 Following the political turning point in Eastern Europe, ACN provides aid for reconstruction and new evangelisation in the former Eastern bloc countries.



1962 We step up our aid for persecuted and threatened Catholics in the "Catholic continent" of Latin America.

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 YUOCAT 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.

2022 Immediately after the start of the war in Ukraine, our aid organisation launches a large-scale relief operation to enable the local church to assist those who had fled their homes, suffering people and to continue pastoral care.





Aid to the Church in Need and its organisational structure

**Mauro Cardinal
Piacenza**
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.

**Thomas
Heine-Geldern**
Executive President



In the **General Council**, the presidents of the 23 National Sections advise the foundation and vote on all the significant decisions of the Superior Council.

In cooperation with the Ecclesiastical 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



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.

Regina Lynch
Director of Projects



Guido Gröning
Director Finance
and Administration



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.

**Mark von
Riedemann**
Director for
Public Affairs and
Religious Freedom



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Aid to the
Church in Need

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Please support us!

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PONTIFICAL
FOUNDATION

