

We have helped.

60 years of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

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Diakonie 
Katastrophenhilfe

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Proofreading/Review

Berenike Schaak

Concept and Text

Vergangenheitsagentur, Berlin:
Dr. Alexander Schug, Dr. Katja Roeckner, Dr. Hilmar Sack,
Cornelia Siebeck

Editorial Team

Stefan Libisch
Thomas Sandner (Editor-in-Chief)

Overall graphics concept, cover design, typesetting and layout

Don Design

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Dear friends of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe,

“Thus far, God has led us”: 60 Years of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe - we have come a long way. It has been a way full of dedication and laborious efforts, of highs and lows. A way full of success, happiness and gratitude, but also of sadness and anger. A way paved with concepts and plans, but also ridden with errors and confusion. For we were always confronted with and willingly took on completely new challenges: every disaster is unique and no two are alike.

Each disaster must be approached through detailed analysis and dialogue with our local partners. No person or group has the same need as the next, requires the same form of assistance or has the same potential to overcome their situation of need. Because we want to give serious consideration to people’s dignity, their desires and their abilities, we constantly need new concepts that are tailored to the specific emergency situations.

For sixty years, we’ve been exercising the art of keeping ourselves open to new experiences and views, while at the same time acting on the basis of our Christian faith and the ethical principles of humanitarian aid. Time and again the political media and market interests are increasingly threatening to crowd out this core element of church humanitarian aid - the focus on human need - and to leave it by the wayside. More and more, politics demand that we abandon the principles of independence and neutrality in favour of supporting only those who appear to be on the “right” side politically. Last but not least, the current trend is to stage spectacular aid campaigns, mainly in locations that are in the public spotlight.

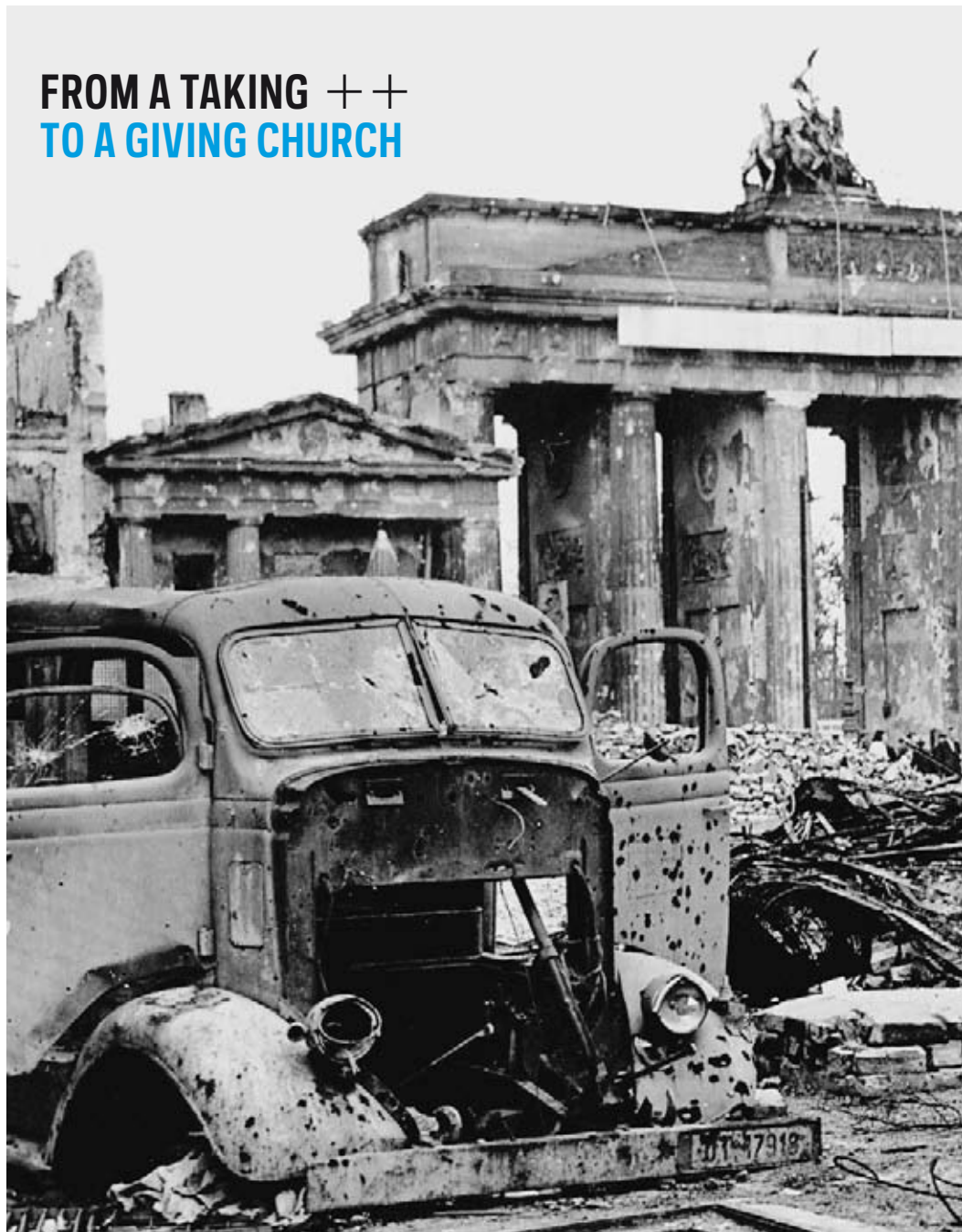
We have always actively withstood these attempts to influence our activities and will continue to do so in the future. We have steadfastly trodden new paths alongside people who had suddenly or gradually come into need, from which they could not initially free themselves unaided. We have understood our aid as an expression of our Christian conviction and in these 60 years found ourselves faced with the destinies of countless refugees, people with serious injuries, rape victims and the homeless. We looked for answers by providing humanitarian aid.

“In the name of Jesus Christ: Come and help us!” - this was the call for help from Budapest by the Hungarian churches to the West communicated over the radio in 1956, triggering the first great humanitarian aid campaign of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. It is the name of the risen One that unites us as brothers and sisters with millions of people in need. It is He who gives us and many of our partners hope and direction. It is His name that has inspired millions of givers and thousands of churches, inspiring us time and again to assist people in need.



Reverend Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel
President of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

**FROM A TAKING ++
TO A GIVING CHURCH**



INTRODUCTION ++

The early days of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

“Those who have been helped in a time of need through donations by people who do not know them, whose country they have never seen, have already implicitly committed themselves to treat other people, whom they do not know and whose country they have never entered, in the same way as they themselves have been treated.” (*Herbert Krimm, 1955*)

It all began with our own disaster. When the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church initiated its first systematic efforts to relieve the need of people outside its own borders after 1954, it had already received hundreds of millions of German Marks in foreign donations earmarked for alleviating misery in post-war Germany. The experience gave rise to the desire to give something back for the aid received - long before the actual request was made at the country's own initiative for discontinuing foreign assistance to Germany in 1960. This was how the conceptual foundation for the Ecumenical Diaconia and emergency and disaster aid of the Protestant Church was laid.





A new start: Women clearing away rubble after World War II.

The Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church - the origins of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

The experience of the Second World War is at the very roots of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. In the hail of bombs during the last years of the war, Eugen Gerstenmaier, a key figure right from the outset, had seen the humanitarian disaster looming in the destroyed cities of Germany. During the war he established contacts with the World Council of Churches in Geneva. There, too, the issue of humanitarian aid to the German people was being considered.

Eugen Gerstenmaier was the originator and founding father of the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church, which later provided an important institutional platform for disaster relief. When Gerstenmaier, who had been incarcerated for his involvement in the attempted coup against Hitler on 20 July 1944, was released from the “house of correction” in May 1945, his first steps led him to the World Council of Churches in Switzerland. He presented concrete plans for a German Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church. In addition to rebuilding the church by re-establishing church structures and rebuilding destroyed church buildings, the idea of a full-scale emergency relief

service was in the foreground. The aim was to provide aid for the many hungry people, refugees, displaced persons, bomb victims and war invalids who were seen all over Germany after 1945. These people were to be given emergency shelter and food to enable them to return to some kind of normality in their lives as quickly as possible. Both the rebuilding of the church and the emergency aid were to be limited to Germany. This is where Gerstenmaier perceived the most urgent need and for the time being the immediate field of operation of the new Humanitarian Aid Agency.

The World Council of Churches supported the project with an initial donation of 20,000 US dollars. The US occupation forces gave Gerstenmaier a jeep in which he traversed the war-battered country, travelling from church to church to further promote his project. Gerstenmaier succeeded in winning over decision makers



Women building their country again.

within the Church for his idea: the Protestant Church in Germany already founded the Humanitarian Aid Agency at its first church gathering in Treysa in August 1945. The Bishop of Württemberg, Theophil Wurm, became chairman of the Humanitarian Aid Agency and Gerstenmaier was appointed as its director. The head office of the Humanitarian Aid Agency was in Stuttgart. A letter accompanying the donation stated:



Eugen Gerstenmaier

(born in Kirchheim/Teck in 1906, died in Oberwinter near Bonn in 1986.)

Gerstenmaier worked as a theologian and CDU politician. During the times of National Socialism, he was a member of the Confessing Church and was briefly detained for this in 1934. Because of his involvement in the “Kreisauer Kreis” and in the coup d’etat of 20 July 1944, the National Socialists put him in jail and he was only liberated after the war. In 1945 he was appointed the first head of his planned humanitarian aid agency of the Protestant church in Germany. From 1949, Gerstenmaier was a Member of Parliament, from 1954 to 1969 its President. As a member of the Diaconical Board of the Protestant Church, he continued to be committed to the principle of an “involvement of the entire Christendom in shaping the world in the sense of solidarity” for the rest of his life.

“We know that we are not forgotten by our fellow Christians in other countries, but we should not wait for help from the other side of our national and denominational borders. The Christian community

in Germany is called upon to foster self-help.”

Solidarity with the conquered people - the ecumenical postwar miracle



After long years of uncertainty, soldiers were released from captivity.

In the beginning, the agency relied massively on foreign assistance. Without the generous donations from abroad, the rapid reconstruction and enabling of the German people would not have been possible. In view of the German crimes committed during National Socialism, this assistance could hardly be taken for granted. In fact, there were enough voices abroad that spoke against rebuilding Germany and in favour of returning its development status to that of an agricultural economy or entirely splitting it up among the neighbouring states. The experience of the Second World War and the collective mistrust were deep-seated.

Nevertheless, the first foreign donations for Germany did not take long to arrive.



Refugee camps and makeshift shelters - a common sight in post-war Germany

As early as the autumn of 1945 Swedish steam ships began to bring supplies. The first CARE packages arrived in Hamburg, from where the agency distributed them throughout the country together with other relief organisations. The CARE packages have remained ingrained in the collective memory of the

German people to the present day. In addition to the USA, food supplies also came from the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark, which had all suffered heavy losses under German occupation. Even people from poor countries like Colombia, Peru, Bolivia and Mexico sent donations to the agency - countries in which Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe would itself become active in the years to come. The expression of solidarity from other churches in over 30 countries came in the form of food and consumer goods, donations of money, interest-free loans and, most importantly, raw materials.



The foreign “charity parcel”, as they were popularly called at the time, enabled the agency to help the 14 million refugees, displaced persons, survivors of bombing raids and starving people in Germany. In addition to rebuilding church structures, refugee assistance was one of the main tasks of the agency



Donations arrived from all over the world.

The realisation that the problems of the present can only be solved in the context of global responsibility also played an important role: “For better or worse, we are all members of the same family. Today, the call to the people of the world is to care for people and their needs, wherever they might live.” (Christian Berg, 1957)

The employees of the agency were deeply touched by the foreign solidarity that was shown with defeated Germany. Just a few years after the Second World War and the Nazi crimes which Germany had to answer for, Germans experienced a readiness to help that they had not counted on. Elisabeth Urbig, one of the first staff members, noted with astonishment at the time: “Here were friends from Switzerland, Scandinavia, England, the USA, Australia and Canada

who saw us as partners in the efforts to provide practical help. They never asked where and how we had lived during the Third Reich, and never treated us as a ‘conquered’ people.”

The Humanitarian Aid Agency as part of the international church networks

The agency was closely integrated in the church networks around the world from the very beginning. It collaborated not only with the World Council of Churches in Geneva but also with the Lutheran World Federation founded in 1947. Later on, the Lutheran World Service was established as its arm in 1952. Its task was to coordinate the worldwide refugee provisions, church reconstruction and general emergency relief of the Lutheran churches.



Elisabeth Urbig

(born in Berlin in 1905; died in Berlin 1998)

Urbig was a translator after the war with the American Military government in Berlin. From 1947 to 1972, she worked in the Central Office of the Humanitarian Aid Agency in Stuttgart, responsible for foreign relations. In 1954, together with Herbert Krimm, she was the most

valuable colleague during the initial stages. She was responsible for various projects in the framework of ecumenical aid. The focus of her work was on inter-church assistance. As the member of staff for ecumenical tasks, she supported Ludwig Geissel and later Hans-Otto Hahn in the planning and implementation of aid projects abroad. Elisabeth Urbig summed up her guiding principle in 1957: “Ecumenical Diaconia can never be only receiving or only giving, it is always both giving and receiving.”

The German Department of the Lutheran World Service was housed in the Head Office of the agency in Stuttgart. “The reintegration of the German Christian community into ecumenical relationships after 1945 was quick and took place on many levels. There is hardly anyone who can adequately appreciate this fact in all its intricacy.” (Christian Berg, Head of the Ecumenical Department of the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany, 1957)

The Humanitarian Aid Agency, the World Council of the Churches and the Lutheran World Federation formed many conceptual and personal ties. The later head of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Ludwig Geissel, was a dedicated staff member of the Lutheran World Service. Herbert Krimm, who became head of the Humanitarian Aid Agency in 1951,

represented the German Protestant Church in the Department for Inter-church Aid and the Refugee Service of the World Council of Churches. It is in these various common ties that the origins of the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, which were not always clear at the institutional level, are to be found.

First donations to people in need abroad

The early history of emergency relief is founded primarily in the active involvement of individuals with strong convictions. They opened the eyes of the German people to the suffering beyond their own horizons. Particularly noteworthy in this respect are Herbert Krimm, Ludwig Geissel, Elisabeth Urbig and Christian Berg, the later co-founder and name giver of “Bread for the World”, which was established in 1959.



Herbert Krimm

(born in Przemysl, Galicia in 1905; died in Karlsruhe in 2002)

Krimm was the pastor and director of the Humanitarian Aid Agency. As a military pastor during World War II, he made contact with the resistance group “Kreisauer Kreis” and met Eugen Gerstenmeier. Gerstenmeier appointed Krimm to the board of the Humanitarian Aid Agency in 1949. In 1951, he succeeded Gerstenmeier as director. In 1954, he founded the Ecumenical Diaconia department in Stuttgart and was one of the spiritual fathers of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. From 1954 to 1970, he was head of the Institute for Diaconic Science in Heidelberg. After that he worked as a pastoral caregiver in a neurological clinic. Herbert Krimm was guided by the principle that: “The real, the most difficult, but also the most important task is to consider our responsibility for the poverty and suffering of the world as being an element of church life that is just as self-evident and unchallenged as our concern for the poverty and suffering in our own midst.”

The realisation that the problems of the present can only be solved in the context of global responsibility also played an important role: “For better or worse, we are all members of the same family. Today, the call to the people of the world is to care for people and their needs, wherever they might live.” (Christian Berg, 1957)

Through their international contacts, the staff of the Humanitarian Aid Agency gained deep insights into hardship situations around the world. Elisabeth Urbig, who was responsible for foreign relations at the agency in the mid 1950s, said: “The turning point of our Ecumenical Diaconia came when foreign visitors no longer came to Europe just to look around Germany, but to recount their experiences in Asia, Korea Japan, India and Pakistan, and to tell of the Arab tragedy. Their reports always culminated with the thought: ‘Yes, here in Germany things certainly are still bad, but the hardships in Korea, Jordan, Greece ...’ - we had never imagined that things could be so terrible.”

In order to help, the agency sent its first contribution to the World Council of Churches in 1951. The letter accompanying the donation explained: “This initial contribution for assuaging refugees’ hardships outside of Germany is also to be seen as an expression of our gratitude for all the help that has been sent to Germany and its Protestant Christianity from funds of foreign churches in previous years. It is intended as a sign our growing awareness of responsibility for

hardships outside our own national borders.” They were well aware that these were only “small offerings”... “But they’re a start and a sign of our commitment to render such help.”

The work that was initiated in 1951 and then followed up with the first large-scale relief campaign after the flood in the Netherlands in 1953, gained added momentum in 1954. This year is remembered for the clear moral appeal which was made to German Protestant Christians to take international responsibility. At the same time, far reaching changes took place within the Humanitarian Aid Agency. These two developments made 1954 the most important year in the history of the origins of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

1954 as the founding year of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

Under the motto “Three Milestones. The Journey of the Humanitarian Aid Agency through the New Year” as director of the Agency, Herbert Krimm expressly urged Protestant Christians in Germany to take “overall responsibility for the need of others, a responsibility that is not restricted by national borders, geographic regions or skin colour, and is not to be crassly brushed aside by a perfunctory view of cultural differences and the diversity of civilisation-based life expectations”. In the same year, the Ecumenical Diaconia was founded as a department of the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church and the Ecumenical Emergency Response

Programme was established. This was the first time that the diaconal task of providing disaster relief extended beyond the country's borders and was institutionalised, albeit under a different name. During this period, the present-day Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was referred as the Ecumenical Emergency Response Programme, the campaign "Churches helping Churches" was subsumed under the general term of "emergency relief".

The campaign "Churches helping Churches" was called emergency relief abroad and it exclusively dealt with the reconstruction of churches. However, in the source references it was classified as emergency aid. The various names indicate that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was not yet established and institutionalized. It was still undergoing its creation and its history of origins has to be understood as a process.

DAS HILFSWERK

MITTEILUNGEN AUS DEM HILFSWERK
DER EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND

No. 27

ZENTRALBÜRO STUTTGART

MÄRZ 1954

AUS DEM INHALT:

Bischof Dibelius appelliert an die Gemeinden

Diakonie-Institut Heidelberg
Der Dienst an den Gefangenen
in Mitteleutschland

Was ist das „Sozialwerk“?

**Aus den Trümmern das Haus
- und dann die Wohnung**
- Blicke zum Aushang -

DREI MEILENSTEINE

Der Weg des Hilfswerks durch das neue Jahr

Mit nachstehenden Ausführungen leitete Pfarrer Dr. Krimm die Sitzung des Hilfswerk-Ausschusses ein, der unter Vorsitz von Bischof Dibelius am 17. 2. in Stuttgart zusammentrat. Wegen ihrer grundsätzlichen Bedeutung veröffentlichen wir sie nachstehend ungekürzt. Außerdem wurde den Bevollmächtigten der Landeskirchen vor der Sitzung eine zusammenfassende Rückschau über die Arbeit des Zentralbüros im Jahre 1953 geleistet, die die Grundlage des in einigen Monaten erscheinenden Jahresberichts des Hilfswerks der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland bilden wird.

Einen Querschnitt durch die Hilfswerktagung, auf der u. a. Frankfurt/Oder zur „Stadt des kirchlichen Wiederaufbaus 1954/55“ gewählt wurde, finden unsere Leser auf Seite 6.

Wie anders wäre ein Ausblick auf den Weg des Hilfswerks durch das Jahr 1954 ausgefallen, wenn die Berliner Konferenz ein Ergebnis gehabt hätte, wie Millionen in unserem Lande es inbrünstig ersehnt haben! Ein großer Plan für die diakonische Arbeit der Evangelischen Kirche in einem geeinten Deutschland! Beendigung sämtlicher Provisorien und Notunterkünfte, wie sie heute für unsere Arbeit gut sein müssen. Und dann ab sofort das herzliche Anpacken der gewaltigen Aufgaben, die man heute in ihrem Inhalt und Ausmaß nur ahnen kann. Nur zu Anfang würden das Aufgaben auf dem Gebiet der Nothilfe, der Speisung und Kleidung, der Erholung müder und verängstigter Menschen sein. Immer stärker würden bald die Aufgaben des kirchlichen Wiederaufbaus hervortreten: die Zusammenfassung aller Kräfte, erst der deutschen, dann der ökumenischen, um nachzutreten, was alles dort bisher nicht möglich war und doch längst hätte getan werden sollen.

Bewährung: was wäre dem Vertriebenen zu sagen, wenn er heute wieder zurückkehren könnte? Was ergibt sich aus der Lehre vom Eigentum zur Frage der Geltendmachung alter Besitzrechte zur Gestaltung einer neuen Eigentumsordnung? Was ergibt sich für Wiedersiedlung und Wohnungsbau, zu schweigen von den notwendigen Auswirkungen auf die Konfessionsgeographie, die dann vielleicht für Jahrhunderte bestimmend sind? Was ist zu tun, um die Spannungen zwischen Rückkehrern und Verbliebenen zu überwinden, gar nicht zu reden von den grauenhaften Klüften, die zwischen den Völkern und Stämmen aufgerissen sind, zwischen denen noch immer die ungesühnte und unvergessene Bluttat steht? Was ist zu tun für ihr friedliches Miteinander, ohne das ein geeintes Europa nicht bestehen kann?

Über das alles hat sich neu und doppelt schwer der Nebel der Resignation gesenkt. Und doch bedarf es dieses Horizonts, weil sich erst auf diesem Hintergrund unsere

1954: In an article in the Information Brochure of the Humanitarian Aid Agency Herbert Krimm explains why help is needed abroad.

The milestones defined by Krimm were not without controversy. He was reproached from all sides with the argument that the continuing need in one's own country should be given precedence. Others could simply not understand why the Humanitarian Aid Agency would want to provide assistance without regard to religious denomination. The idea of ecumenism was still in its beginnings at the time. Helping others regardless of religion or nationality has remained one of the inalienable principles of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to this day. In the mid 1950s this was a novel approach that triggered a controversial learning process.

Indeed, the Humanitarian Aid Agency provided the breeding ground for a social innovation. Motivated by a modern and open understanding of Christian fraternal love and implemented with determined pragmatism, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe soon grew into a dynamic sphere of activity, which Elisabeth Urbig characterised as follows: "It is not a secret science controlled by obscure powers on high, but hard work which must be done industriously and faithfully, and which also provides for moments of laughter and release, not only because of the babel of languages ..."

The Geneva Convention

Disasters always produce huge waves of refugees. The international community created legislation regulating the way in which refugees are to be dealt with: the Geneva Convention. The 1951 Convention and its amending 1967 Protocol are considered as the "Magna Charta" for refugees. The Convention is the expression of the international community's efforts to establish minimum standards for the treatment of people who are forced to leave their homeland in order to seek shelter from persecution because of their origin, religion, nationality, political conviction, affiliation to a certain social group or their sexual orientation. Governments do not always act according to this international treaty. As the foundation of the international refugee protection system, the Geneva Convention is also the authoritative document for relief organisations. Many of its principles are thus reflected in the work of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. According to the spirit and the letter of the 1951 Convention, the protection of refugees is based on the following basic ideas:

- that refugees are not sent back to a place where they are exposed to persecution or threatened by persecution (principle of "non-refoulement")
- that the refugee problem is a social and humanitarian problem and should not become a cause of tension between States
- that providing for the protection of refugees can only be accomplished through international cooperation

- that persons who are escaping from persecution cannot be expected to obey all rules when leaving their country and entering another, and that they should not be punished for illegal entry into the country in which they are seeking asylum or for illegal residence in this country.

In the view of the recurring waves of people fleeing from violence, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been calling for more protection and help for the millions of refugees and displaced persons worldwide. The UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees adopted on 28 July 1951 must be actively implemented again. It is currently the poor who are carrying the brunt of this burden: 80% of all refugees live in developing countries. With 1.6 million refugees, Pakistan, for example, took in the largest number of people in 2013, followed by Iran, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Millions of uprooted, displaced and desperate people live in the poorest countries of Africa.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe campaigns especially for the destiny of internally displaced people. According to the UN, 33.3 million people were on the run in their own country in 2013. Estimates indicate that at least half of them are children, and it is they who suffer the most from being uprooted. However, internally displaced people do not automatically fall under the protection of the UN Convention. Therefore, they do not receive help from any official organisations, but are left to rely on the solidarity of already poor households and the mercy of the authorities and the military.

Help wherever it is needed: International disaster relief in the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany

International disaster aid was an essential part of the Ecumenical Diaconia. The flood disaster in the Netherlands in 1953 was among the last of many factors which gave rise to its establishment. During the course of the emergency relief provided following the political unrest in Hungary in 1956, donations from Germany amounted to several million. This money ensured the systematic pro-

vision of emergency aid for the Hungarian refugees. It was clearly evident that Germany was doing better again - so much better that it was increasingly able to give away some of its own goods. After this breakthrough, under the leadership of Ludwig Geissel, the emergency and disaster help, as it was called back then, remained firmly embedded in the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany, which had evolved from the Humanitarian Aid Agency and the German Inner agency and the German Inner Mission in 1957.

From the outset, a significant feature of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was its ability to tap into the worldwide church infrastructure at all times. Churches are everywhere and in every place where disasters take place. Through its partnership with church organisations in the affected areas it was well informed about the local conditions and could adapt itself to the cultural peculiarities and current requirements. To this day our cooperation with partner organisations in disaster areas is an essential component. As the helpers and aid supplies mainly come from the affected areas themselves, this ensures the assistance is culturally adapted and strengthens the regional economy. A complex understanding of disaster relief quickly developed which was not just based on providing isolated and short-term assistance in the event of disasters. Close cooperation with sister organisation Bread for the World, which

was founded in 1959, also made it possible to transfer acute emergency relief into long-term assistance programmes.

From the very start, the disaster relief was strongly guided by ethical principles according to the Christian image of man. ‘The person in need is the focus, irrespective of nationality, origin or belief,’ summarised Hannelore Hensle, who was the director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe for many years. As an organisation, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has always been characterised by a strong sense of pragmatism and swift action. It received its motto “fly now, pray later” from its first director, Ludwig Geissel.

What is a disaster?

The term “disaster” is used to describe a profound disruption to the natural, ecological and cultural balance and human behaviour. It can occur either suddenly or gradually.

Depending on the causes, time and circumstances, this disruption is associated with long-lasting changes and destruction which make it questionable whether a return to the status quo or continued development is possible. Emergency and disaster relief is the systematic endeavour to reduce or eliminate the causes of various events of different intensities that threaten the existence of individual groups or parts of the population by providing humanitarian aid that is suitable for the local context.

From the Assistance for Hungary campaign to the conflict in Syria

Just like the Assistance for Hungary campaign, over the coming decades many other campaigns followed in response to situations of humanitarian need caused by political crises. In the sixties this took the form of the emergency relief campaign in North and South Vietnam as well as the campaign in the war-torn Nigerian province of Biafra. To this day, the airlift to Biafra organised by Ludwig Geissel is regarded as a milestone in international disaster relief. After the seventies and eighties, many campaigns followed in reaction to famine and war disasters in Africa, for example in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Congo.

The 1990s and the end of the cold war put Europe back on the agenda of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. In the succession states of the former Soviet Union the people were often in great need. This was followed by the war in Yugoslavia, resulting in suffering on a scale which had long been viewed as a misery of the past in Europe. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was involved here in the long-term reconstruction of houses, schools and hospitals with the aim of enabling sustainable capacity building.

The 21st century once again brought war to Afghanistan and Iraq. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was there to help mitigate the humanitarian disasters. Major relief campaigns in the last decade include the flood in Germany in 2002, the tsunami in south-east Asia

and other countries in 2004, the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the civil war in Syria since 2011 and the ongoing aid in war and famine crises in several African countries. Following immediate emergency relief, the focus was increasingly shifted towards providing sustainable assistance that will prevent or mitigate future disasters and enable capacity building for the affected person. Disasters do not simply happen, they are man-made and are the result of the over-exploitation of nature or the interests of political power.

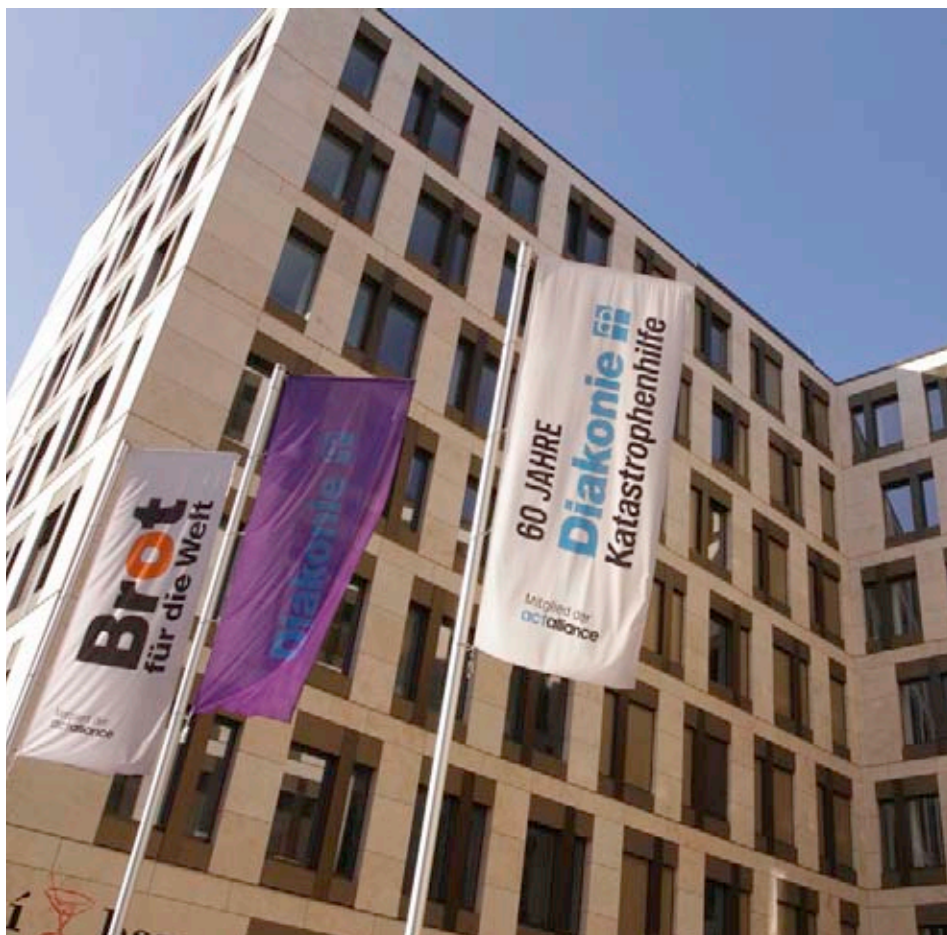
Since its early days with only a handful of staff and much voluntary commitment, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has grown to become a highly professional, donation-based organisation with about 250 staff. There are multiple regional and project-related offices in Africa, Asia and America, currently in the Chad, South Sudan, Kenya, the Congo, Turkey, Pakistan, Colombia and Haiti.

In 2012, the Humanitarian Aid Agency underwent significant restructuring. Since the end of the 1950s, it had been a part of the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church based in Stuttgart. Today it belongs to the “Protestant Agency for Diaconia and Development”. This agency originated from the merger of the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Bread for the World and the Protestant Development Service. Reverend Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel is head of the board of directors of the Protestant Agency for Diaconia and

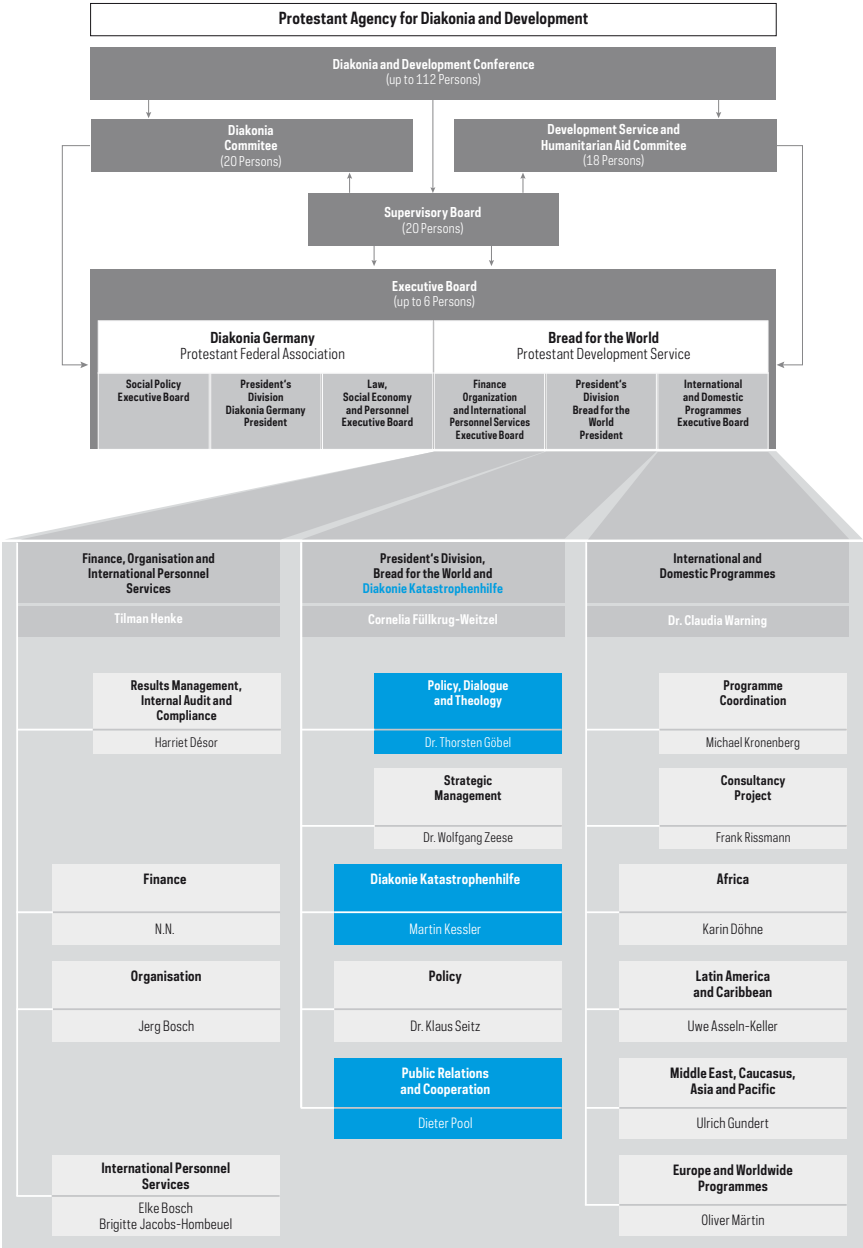
Development and president of Bread for the World, where Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is based today.

The department of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is currently headed by Martin Kessler, successor to Ludwig Geissel, Hannelore Hensle, Thomas Hoerz and Volker Gerdesmeier.

The merger was also the reason for moving from Stuttgart to Berlin. However, this did not influence the principles of the work. “Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s mode of operation and its mandate to help affected persons in acute difficulties irrespective of their religion, colour of skin and nationality in order to help them to get back on their feet as soon as possible remain unchanged by the merger,” explains Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel.



Organisation chart of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe





THE ASSISTANCE FOR HUNGARY CAMPAIGN ++
"COME AND HELP US" ++



THE FIFTIES ++

At the end of October 1956, two four-tonne trucks loaded to the brim with food and medication drove along the old "Nibelungen Road" Regensburg-Passau-Linz towards their destination of Vienna. The trucks belonged to the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church of Germany, which had set up a branch to support refugees from Hungary.

At the time, many Hungarians were fleeing from the invading Soviet troops to the neighbouring country of Austria, which was completely overstretched by the influx of over 200,000 refugees. The Hungarian revolution against the government in 1956 triggered an unprecedented wave of assistance and donations in the Federal Republic of Germany. The disaster relief division of the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church, which was still in its formative stage, was put to the test with its first great challenge.

HUNGARY

NETHERLANDS

GRECCE

PALESTINE

HONGKONG

Hungary 1956

“In the name of Jesus Christ: Come and help us! We have lost most of our worldly belongings...” This call for help sent by the Hungarian Bishop Lajos Ordass reached ecumenical Christianity on 2 November 1956 via Radio Budapest. The eyes of the world looked on in dismay as Soviet troops violently crushed all hopes of a reformist socialist movement in Hungary. Prior to this, Budapest students had protested against the Soviet regime to demand more democracy, free elections, the withdrawal of Soviet troops and economic reform. Even after the twentieth party conference of the Communist Party in the USSR in February 1956, which was meant to bring about a political “thawing” in the Eastern Block,

the Hungarian government refused to alter its Stalinist course. As a result, from October 1956 onwards, the Hungarian capital was frequently shaken by strong demonstrations. This was the beginning of the Hungarian revolution. On 2 November, in the name of the unofficial opposition government, the social reformist politician Imre Nagy, who had taken the lead of the movement, declared the country’s withdrawal as a member of the community of states of the Warsaw Pact. The USSR intervened and Soviet troops entered into bloody battles with the revolutionaries on the streets of Budapest. The situation escalated. While the flow of Hungarians leaving the country in previous weeks was already great, this now grew into a mass exodus, with over 200,000 people leaving their homeland.



More than 200,000 refugees from Hungary had to be fed.

A feverish search for solutions

In the Stuttgart Head Office of the Humanitarian Aid Agency ways of coping with the Hungarian disaster were feverishly deliberated. Already in October, Ludwig Geissel, the later director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, had travelled to Austria. Carrying an emergency donation of 20,000 German Marks for the Austrian welfare organisation in his luggage, he informed himself first-hand about the situation. Only a few days later, full truck-trailer combinations crammed with blankets and covers, food and medication drove from Passau to Vienna. Although it was hoped that this aid would alleviate the worst of the suffering, it proved to be far from sufficient. In collaboration with the Inner Mission, the Lutheran World

Service and other organisations, the Humanitarian Aid Agency initiated a large-scale immediate emergency relief campaign for Hungary. The Emergency Aid office in Nuremberg, which became the command headquarters for the “Hungarian Aid campaign”, sent the first aid shipments directly into the Hungarian cities of Budapest and Gyor. When the USSR decided to bloodily strike down the rebellion and the local situation intensified, the Humanitarian Aid Agency could only concentrate on sending packages to Hungary and providing assistance to the approximately 70,000 refugees who had found shelter in Austrian camps. The agency was confronted with an unprecedented situation which could hardly be resolved with the existing infrastructure. A call for generous donations went out to the German population - a call which met with resounding success.



Saved: a refugee family arrives at the refugee camp of the Humanitarian Aid Agency.

A “new ecumenical act” the Assistance for Hungary campaign

Over 500 tonnes of donations in kind were collected within a short time, in addition to cash donations of 1.6 million German Marks.



Ludwig Geissel

(born 1916 in Alzey/Rhine Hesse; died 2000 in Stuttgart)

Geissel was a soldier during World War II in the France and Russia campaigns. In the Social Service Agency he was head of the “Finances and Emergency Aid” department from 1957 to 1981. He was committed to the creation of an international emergency and disaster relief organisation. His name was closely linked with the organisation of the “Joint Church Aid” for Biafra and responsibility for a number of aid measures for the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. The Federal Government of Germany entrusted him with implementing the release of detainees from the GDR through money transfers. His memoirs were published in 1991 under the title “Negotiators of Humanity”, in which he states: “Our supreme guiding principle: If people are in danger, we have to act immediately. I have reduced this to the words: ‘fly first, pray later’.”

This was the highest amount to date donated by Germans for humanitarian assistance abroad. In addition, the Protestant Churches in East Germany also contributed to the Assistance for Hungary campaign with a Christmas collection that amounted to around 400,000 German Marks. Every two days, a rail-

road car filled with aid supplies was sent from Nuremberg to Austria. At this time it was already evident that the Assistance for Hungary campaign would become the largest international mission of the Humanitarian Aid Agency so far.

The World Council of Churches

The WCC alliance presently consists of 349 member churches worldwide (2013). The member basis of the WCC encompasses more than 500 million Christians in churches, denominations and church communities all over the world. This includes the majority of the big churches from the protestant tradition (Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist churches, etc.) the Anglican churches, the Old Catholic churches and most of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches, and many united and independent churches.

The Roman Catholic Church does not belong to the WCC. While most of the WCC founder members were European and North American churches, today's members mainly consist of churches from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean Sea, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific area. Its foundation was planned for 1938 by various initiators, but because of the outbreak of war it had to be postponed until the war had ended. After the war, the World Council of Churches encouraged the churches to extend its development aid and carried out aid programmes among refugees, migrants and destitute population groups.

When the WCC was founded in its first plenary meeting in 1948 it had 147 member churches. It seeks to enhance the unity and mission of the churches, theological dialogue and a common service to the world. This includes joint advocacy and lobbying of the churches towards the UN and general public as well as peace missions, human rights work, studies on issues concerning economy and ecology. The WCC outsourced the coordination of inter-church and humanitarian aid in the event of a disaster by founding the network Action by Churches Together (now known as the ACT Alliance). The WCC concerns itself today with policy matters and guidelines on the sharing of resources and diaconical work worldwide.

We can only guess at the reasons that induced this enormous readiness to help among Germans in both the East and West. A possible explanation may be their own experiences as refugees after the Second World War. The images repeated themselves. At the sight of the refugee camps in Austria, many Germans may have been reminded of their own survival in temporary Nissen huts during the post-war years and the misery of refugees in occupied Germany. Another explanation for the German assistance provided in 1956 lies in the strained political situation during the Cold War in Europe. Only three years before, on 17 June 1953, Germans had dared to rebel against the government of the GDR - and been bloodily suppressed by Soviet tanks. Apart from the humanitarian motive, for people living behind the Iron Curtain which was lowered over Europe after the World War, making a donation also sent a political sign. This context led to new questions within the agency because this was exactly what the support of the churches was not meant to be: a political sign. They dissociated themselves from any politicisation of their activities. For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, this established a further principle of its humanitarian aid work: its actions should not be determined by power interests or ideologies but solely by the need of people. The idea of disaster relief could only be successful and gain integrative power on this condition, even though this would repeatedly entail conflicts and attempts at monopolisation by political interest groups in the decades that followed. In the shadow of

politics, the provision of aid for the Hungarian refugees grew into an international campaign. Together with donations from the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Service and other church organisations in Europe, aid supplies were continuously delivered to Austria and Hungary. According to the activity report issued by the agency in 1956/7, the international church cooperation conferred “the character of a new ecumenical act” to the Assistance for Hungary campaign.

“Special mission: baby clothing and diapers”

The Humanitarian Aid Agency also resorted to unconventional methods, as illustrated by the example of the “special mission baby underwear and diapers”. In December 1956, there was a shortage of diapers and clothing for the infants and children of the Hungarian refugees. The Protestant Humanitarian Aid Agency in Bavaria and the Bavarian Regional Association of the Inner Mission distributed church leaflets to women and girls with the appeal: “Show your Christian kindness and sisterly charity, and give a few hours or days of your time to knit or in any other way collect urgently needed baby clothing!” The campaign met with an overwhelming response: for weeks on end the post office delivered thousands of packages of baby clothing and diapers to the offices of the Bavarian branch of the agency.

“Help teams on wheels”

The Assistance for Hungary campaign most poignantly demonstrated one thing: the Humanitarian Aid Agency was capable of providing rapid and unconventional emergency relief with a small staff by utilising the church structures and mobilising people in Germany and all of Europe. Food supplies, blankets and medication were enough for a start. But what about later? Taking over responsibility in the spirit of Christian love meant that emergency relief could not possibly be restricted to quick deliveries of aid packages only to step back again later. Genuine assistance would have to continue and be planned for the longer term. Hungary set a new precedent for this. Together with the World Council and the Lutheran World Service, the agency created the “help teams on wheels”.

The concept aimed to provide more extensive care and spiritual support in close collaboration with the heads of the refugee camps. The campaign was led by Paul Laufer from Munich, who was responsible for refugee affairs in the Bavarian Regional Church. He recognised that in emergency situations, the Humanitarian Aid Agency would have to counter an established mechanism: “Church-based assistance is not intended only for the weeks of the initial enthusiasm that comes from helping and giving,” said Laufer, “but also for the times when our readiness to help begins to wane”. The “help teams on wheels” were made up of agency staff, December 1956, the relief



New prospects after fleeing: Hungarian youths in a shelter of the Aid Agency.

teams travelled from refugee camp to refugee camp in a Volkswagen station wagon. According to a retrospective in the Annual Report of the Humanitarian Aid Agency, the main objective at the time was “firstly to bring the gift parcels that arrived so abundantly from around the world to the refugee camps, but also to give them to the right people”. None of the numerous camps were left without a church service during the holidays.

After the world had turned its back

By July 1957 the car of the team leader alone had run up more than 36,000 kilometres. The campaign, which had managed to solve only a fraction of the problems, was extended until September 1957. It had become a symbol of hope for the refugees, as a staff member, reported: “In the face of mountains of questions which were simply overwhelming, we were so often short of solutions. Where and how were we to help these people? Our gift parcels provided a welcome break in the desolate hopelessness of camp

life, but the key way to help lay in regular visits and in being there for the refugees”.

From the middle of 1957, the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church concentrated its activities on caring for the 11,000 Hungarian refugees in Germany, most of whom were young people aged between 17 and 22. On 1 July 1957, Ludwig Geissel and Christian Berg wrote to the Regional Associations and Head Office of the Humanitarian Aid Agency: “They are now experiencing a kind of freedom that is unfamiliar to them. We must not leave them to their own resources, but must help them, show them new ways and provide them with advice and help”. The Austrian Humanitarian Aid Agency continued to receive financial support to build houses for the local refugees. In the aftermath of the relief work, the focus now shifted towards the integration of Hungarian refugees.

“Christian love seen with our own eyes”

In May 1957, the Hungarian Bishop Ordass, who one year earlier had turned to the Ecumene for help via Radio Budapest and now had responsibility for the Hungarian Diaspora in all of Europe, expressed heartfelt gratitude for the support provided by Germany and Austria: “In the most difficult of times, we could not only feel Christian love flowing towards us but also saw it with our own eyes, like a miracle”. In one of his visits to Germany in 1957 he added: “However, it is not necessary to describe the hardships, but rather to tell of the Christian love we were able to experience in Austria and Germany, especially through the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Church!”.

The “Assistance for Hungary” campaign had given the final push for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe outside the Federal

The Lutheran World Federation

The Lutheran World Federation was founded in Sweden in 1947. Today it unites 136 churches of the Lutheran tradition from 76 countries. They represent the majority of Lutheran Christianity. In 1952 the “Lutheran World Service” was founded as a department with its secretariat in Geneva. From the start it was closely linked to the World Council of Churches and other international organisations. Emergency and disaster relief are among the most important tasks of the organisation. Special attention was given to Lutheran Christians who had become refugees in the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War. Today, the relief work of the LWS encompasses the whole world, regardless of ethnic, national, political or religious confines. The Department World Service of the LWS is one of the important partners of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

Republic of Germany. Looking back, this was what Ludwig Geissel emphasised in his memoirs. In 1957, this development came to organisational fruition through the establishment of the department for “Finances and Emergency Assistance” at the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany, which itself was formed earlier that year as the successor organisation to the Humanitarian Aid Agency and Inner Mission. From then on, Geissel headed the department and its emergency relief activities. This marked the beginning of an era that lasted until 1981.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe continued to gain public respect and recognition. It increasingly began to expand its activities to include disaster cases in countries outside of Europe. The special qualities of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe became evident during the Assistance for Hungary campaign of 1956: rapid response, flexibility and unconventionality, accompanied by the high personal commitment of its staff. It was also characterised by perseverance that extended far beyond the immediate disaster situation.

THE FIFTIES ++ NETHERLANDS GRECCE PALESTINE HONG KONG

The Assistance for Hungary campaign was the most extensive foreign campaign following the formation of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in 1954. Its formative period, however, was also based on a series of relief campaigns in the Netherlands, Greece, Palestine and Hong Kong which preceded its actual formation.

Flood disaster in the Netherlands

On 2 February 1953 the Netherlands were hit by the biggest flood disaster in the country’s entire history. This natural disaster claimed 1,800 lives and 300,000 people had to be evacuated. For Ludwig Geissel, the “Assistance for the Netherlands” campaign was an important step on the way “from a taking to a giving church” in Germany: “The disaster relief activities of the Humanitarian Aid Agency had begun,” he wrote in his memoirs in 1991.

For the first time, the Humanitarian Aid Agency sent out an appeal for spontaneous donations to the neighbouring country. As early as February 2, the head office of the Humanitarian Aid



Zend Water (send water) was written on the boat in Brouwershaven in the Netherlands: flood victims were cut off from food and drinking water.

Agency decided that the time was ripe to ask German churches to make a solidarity contribution to the people of the Netherlands, as Ludwig Geissel recalls: “We knew full well that this was risky. The need within Germany, particularly among the displaced persons and the refugees, was far from alleviated”. Indeed, objections were voiced by certain individuals. For example, a staff member of the head office of the Humanitarian Aid Agency in Rhineland doubted whether the Dutch really needed help from outside. “Their textile industry should welcome the opportunity to cover the rising demand. What’s more, Germany still has enough of its own problems to deal with, and the Dutch do not need nearly as much help as we do ourselves”.

On the whole, however, the willingness to help prevailed. The Humanitarian Aid Agency sent nearly 38,000 German Marks to the Netherlands and the largest portion of the money was used to rebuild a youth centre in Rotterdam. In addition, extensive contributions in kind came from the church congregations. Surprisingly, young people who wanted to become personally involved in the rebuilding effort in the Netherlands also came forward. In March 1953, the Dutch Committee for Interchurch Aid and Refugee Service sent words of sincere gratitude for the assistance they had received: “The poignant help of hundreds of thousands of people all over the world and their true and varied acts of sacrifice have left a

deep impression on the entire Dutch population. That our German brothers and sisters did not stand back but were the first to come to our rescue was a great joy to us”.

An earthquake shakes Greece



Churches help churches: with funds from the Humanitarian Aid Agency the church in Sofades in Greece was rebuilt.

Shortly after the flood in the Netherlands, an area of Greece which turned into a place of great need, also marked an important step for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. On 12 August 1953, an earthquake on the Ionian Islands destroyed hundreds of villages. The earthquake left 100,000 people homeless and 450 dead. After a request for assistance was sent to the World Council of Churches, Bishop Dibelius asked the Protestant Churches for support in his capacity as Chairman of the Humanitarian Aid Agency's Committee: "As great and difficult the tasks in our country may be, we should not and do not want always to act only as recipients!"

By May 1954, donations of over 40,000 German Marks had been collected, partly also from the churches in East Germany. The money was given to the

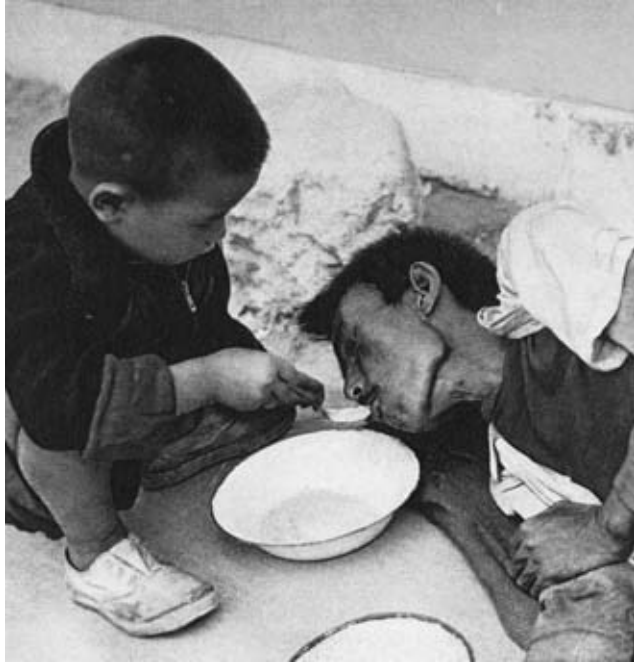
Committee for Interchurch Aid in Greece "as a small token of gratitude and sign of our own readiness to make sacrifices" for the reconstruction. Among other things, the Protestant church in Sofades was rebuilt with its help. In 1955 and 1956, the Humanitarian Aid Agency sent 67 East Frisian breeding ewes and cart horses for farmers who had been affected by the earthquake. The sheep were transported from their home pastures by train and cargo plane.

Greece they were received with joy by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture in a small celebration. "We did not know that such big sheep even existed," wrote the Greek farmers in a thank you letter to the Humanitarian Aid Agency. "They and the 35 lambs born on the way are very happy with us". The deep impressions were mutual. A German farmer who had been displaced from Silesia after the war accompanied the convoy to Greece. He was appalled at the conditions. "I had never imagined that such poverty could exist. And I witnessed much misery when we fled from home".

Assistance for refugees in Palestine and Hong Kong

Palestine, 1953: as a result of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, hundreds of thousands of refugees needed to be provided for in Palestine and in its neighbouring countries. From 1953, the Humanitarian Aid Agency sent up to 30,000 German Marks per year to the World Council of Churches or directly to partner organisations in Palestine. From 1955 onwards, it took part

in ecumenical projects aimed at helping refugees in the Arab countries. In addition, the Humanitarian Aid Agency regularly sent blankets and medical supplies to the Palestinian refugee camps in Syria. This is where a conflict arose which was to keep disaster relief organisers busy over the coming decades. Another refugee disaster was brewing in Hong Kong. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, three million Chinese fled to Hong Kong, which was still a British colony at the time.



Such pictures put the need in post-war Germany into perspective.

From the mid-1950s, the Humanitarian Aid Agency collected donations of tens of thousands of German Marks every year which were sent to church partner organisations in Hong Kong. Elisabeth Urbig commented on one aspect of the German early readiness to donate, which reflected the political situation at the time: “The first donations for Hong Kong came from Berlin’s refugee camps - just like Berlin, Hong Kong was a city without a hinterland. People knew very well how that is.”

All these examples of humanitarian relief measures demonstrate the exceptional combination of Germany’s goodwill and willingness to help after experiencing its own plight after 1945. The

extreme gratitude felt for the incredible support from abroad in the post-war years was a major motivation for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in the 1950s. The economic consolidation of Germany in subsequent years offered completely new prospects regarding the volume of donations.

In the wake of the economic miracle, the emergency and disaster relief also needed new arguments to motivate contributions. The course of history had provided proof of such necessity. “Never again war!” was the sentiment which resounded all over the world from 1945 after National Socialism had finally been overcome. Never again war?



BIAFRA ++
AIRBORN RESCUE



THE SIXTIES ++

In the morning of 24 July 1968, at Frankfurt Airport the engines of a DC-7 were drumming. The first aircraft acquired jointly by the Social Service Agency and Caritas took off heading for Port Harcourt, Nigeria with twelve tons of canned meat, milk powder, and pharmaceuticals on board. This is the beginning of one of the most complicated projects of the Social Service Agency: the airlift to Biafra.

Under extremely difficult circumstances from 1968 until 1970 several millions of people affected by the civil war in Nigeria received food supplies, and sick children were flown out for treatment. It was a competition against time between the political fronts. Ludwig Geissel, as head of the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was permanently on mission. The "Joint Church Aid" for Biafra united church-based relief organisations from all over the world and became a role model for many future humanitarian aid projects.

NIGERIA

BIAFRA

HAMBURG

INDIEN

VIETNAM



The Nigerian province of Biafra declared its independence in 1967. A civil war threatened the lives of 14 million people.

Nigeria - first civil war in Africa

1968 began as a year full of hope. The churches had addressed the world with a call for peace, the UN proclaimed the “International Year of Human Rights”. Nevertheless, 1968 was also to become a year of wars and human rights violations.

The tragedy of 1968 was a culmination of events that began in 1960 and people around the world merely looked on without taking action for many years. On 1 October 1960, almost 100 years of British colonial rule came to an end. The young state was meant to be a role model for careful decolonisation. The British rulers had raised indigenous elite leaders and empowered a federal government. Nigeria

was an experiment. A daring one, obviously, because soon the serious consequences of a long phase of colonisation became apparent. The basic problem was that the colonial power had - as was done elsewhere in Africa - drawn state borders without taking into consideration the regional or tribal context. The instability of the young state was therefore inevitable and permanent power struggles followed. In 1966, the government was toppled by the military and the president was killed, as were cabinet members. Bloody tribal wars between the Hausa and Ibo militia started. The different religious affiliations - the Hausa being Muslim, the Ibo mostly Christians - were exploited and added a further edge to the conflict. The first

massacre happened in 1966 when 30,000 Ibo living in the north were killed. Negotiations failed. Eventually those Ibo who had fled to the eastern part of their homeland declared themselves independent. On 30 May they proclaimed the “Free Republic of Biafra”. The central government reacted by mobilising the army and threatening to use the force of weapons. What initially appeared to be a tribal feud developed into an international conflict. Nigeria was caught in a bizarre game of world politics and economic interests. The USSR and Great Britain provided military support for the central government of Nigeria, while France, Spain and Portugal supplied Biafra with weapons. Interests in oil played a considerable role.

War against renegade Biafra

In Stuttgart, the Social Service Agency received the first reports of a looming humanitarian disaster. Sir Francis Ibaim, one of the six presidents of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, and familiar with the situation in Nigeria, met with Ludwig Geissel. He gave a detailed account of the precarious situation of the Biafra people, around whom the blockade lines of the troops of the central government came ever closer. Initially, Geissel was only able to provide immediate aid of 500,000 German marks without a great deal of red tape. The aid was linked to the obligation that the money was only to be used for the benefit of the civilian population. In 1968, as the UN solemnly proclaimed the “Year of Human Rights”, the central government of Nigeria announced the “total war” against the renegade province of Biafra.



Millions of people left their houses to escape the Nigerian army.

Biafra found itself in a hopeless position, closed in from all sides and cut off from food supplies. Two million Biafrans were already so undernourished that help seemed to be virtually impossible. Gradually the media became interested in the emerging humanitarian disaster. The existence of 14 million people in land-locked Biafra was at stake - in front of the eyes of the world. Ludwig Geissel was stunned: “Images of children reduced to skin and bones with hunger-inflated bellies flickered across our television screens. Eyes of people barely alive glazed apathetically into the cameras of the international television teams, semi-consciously dozing towards



After the declaration of independence of the province of Biafra, the central government announced “total war”.

their own death”. The disaster became a media event and the entire world watched. But even the World Council of Churches in Geneva was not ready to organise relief measures on a larger scale. In German politics and elsewhere, intervention was considered too hazardous. Geissel, who pleaded for a response to the humanitarian disaster, found himself alone. He knew that the earlier donation of 500,000 German marks was less than a drop in the ocean.

The situation was precarious, especially because the political and economic interests of various western states once again clashed together in Nigeria.

Manager of humanity

The fate of those on whose shoulder the conflicts of interest were carried out was increasingly pushed aside. This was exactly what Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe wanted to take action against. And that meant serving as an advocate for the suffering people in Biafra. Geißel took a bold decision which later caused the German media to call him the “manager of humanity”. Those involved at the Social Service Agency were aware that they faced a challenge that would eclipse the isolated relief campaigns of the past. They were also aware of the fact that they would not be able to carry out Geißel’s plan on their own. He planned to organise an airlift similar to the one in Berlin in 1948/49.

Cooperation between Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas international

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas have been cooperating successfully for decades. The emergency appeal for Vietnam in 1966 marked the beginning of this cooperation between Protestants and Catholics. Together, they collected donations for the needy in North and South Vietnam. Their cooperation intensified during the Nigerian civil war between 1968 and 1970. The impetus came from Ludwig Geissel from Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Georg Hussler from Caritas international. The cooperation between Protestant and Catholic humanitarian aid agencies led to the Joint Church Aid association: Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, Caritas Internationalis and Catholic Relief Services were members of this association.

Today, cooperation between Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas international is a matter of course. Its bedrock is the Christian ethical conviction and the common principles of humanitarian aid: defending the right to life, the dignity of suffering people, independence from politics or conflicting parties, and providing both sustainable and preventative assistance.



Ludwig Geissel: the airlift to Biafra was his life's work.

During his search for partners he met Georg Hussler, secretary general of the Catholic organisation Caritas. Caritas had already had initial experiences with relief flights; experiences from which one could profit. But who wanted to fly into Nigeria, a country engaged in a raging civil war? All airlines declined. "After all, who would be willing to come under fire from Nigerian anti-aircraft guns while landing on a runway in the bush?" asked Geissel too, almost understandingly. At the time, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which had previously been operating an airlift to Biafra from the Spanish offshore Island of Fernando Po in the Gulf of Guinea (current name Bioko), had stopped flights after an airplane had been shot down. Hank Warton, a businessman and owner of an airplane, offered his services. He would fly any route, no matter what kind of freight, if the price was right. Not only was the price extremely high, it also had to be paid in cash. Another even bigger problem for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was that Warton would transport arms in one shipment, then fly in foodstuffs the next

time. This way he benefited from all sides. However, in the beginning there was no alternative if Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe wanted to at least achieve something and provide initial food supplies. This arrangement with Warton was not sustainable in the long run. Geissel and Hussler decided to buy their own airplanes, an idea which at first seemed to be no more than a pipe dream. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe had had some experience with disasters beyond Germany's borders. In 1965, it provided relief for tens of thousands of people in Hungary, marking the beginning of its professional character. Nevertheless, Biafra meant tackling problems on a whole new scale, with 14 million people hoping for help from outside.

Donations give wings

Neither Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe nor Caritas had the funds to finance such an airlift and subsequently both organisations appealed to the public for donations in June 1968. The response was enormous. Just one month later, both aid agencies had already raised donations close to 80 million German marks.

Soon afterwards, backed up by thousands of donors, Geissel and Hussler negotiated the purchase of airplanes with representatives of Lufthansa in a lawyer's office in Zurich. The meeting lasted until after midnight and finally a decision was reached: on 16 June 1968, five aircraft type DC-7 came into the possession of Social Service Agency and Caritas. Eight days later the first of the aircraft took off from Frankfurt Airport



Through complex logistical strategies millions of people were cared for in the midst of the civil war in land-locked Biafra.



bound for Nigeria, carrying several tonnes of food and pharmaceuticals. Ludwig Geissel und Georg Hussler were also on board. “When we took off, we knew that the flight could be fatal and that each time we landed in Biafra somewhere on a widened road without landing lights, or just very few oil lamps, it was a daring coup.”

Just as politically independent organisations were preparing to provide instant and unbureaucratic aid, the political powers in Bonn finally reacted. Two committees of the Bundestag met, but in the end they merely called for a “subcommittee for humanitarian aid in Africa”. Following an intense discussion, this subcommittee nevertheless advised the government to support Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas in their endeavours. The scales were tipped in favour of support by the vote cast by Helmut Schmidt, the former Senator for the Interior of Hamburg and future Chancellor, who said: “I remember Geissel from the flood disaster in Hamburg. Whatever he does is very much to the point.”

The birth of Joint Church Aid

The relief campaign for Biafra gained in importance when church organisations from all over the world got involved. An ecumenical movement came into being and provided what governments were not able to. Catholics and Protestants in Europe, Jews and Quakers in America overcame their denominational and national boundaries. Initially, the problem was a lack of coordination between the initiatives. Cooperation within a wide-spread international network, which would later become routine for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe after the foundation of ACT (Action by Churches Together, today ACT Alliance), was still something new in the late 1960s. Sustainable structures and communication had to be established and learned. In early September, Geissel spontaneously invited the representatives of the Christian humanitarian aid agencies in North America and Europe to attend a meeting to discuss coope-

ration in Frankfurt. “I was asked to work out a detailed organisational plan with exact assignments of responsibility. On 9 October 1968, I presented the plan to the panel again at a meeting at Caritas Internationalis in Rome”. In the following weeks and months, the enterprise developed into the most extensive global church relief campaign there had ever been at that time. It also became a role model for many network-based campaigns in the future. In total, 37 church organisations from 32 countries worked effectively together for a period of two years in spite of reoccurring difficulties.

“Joint Church Aid” was born. Its symbol, which would nowadays be called a logo, was two fish. “We worked together without a legal structure, we had no official headquarters. It was simply teamwork,” says Geissel. The Americans ran a worldwide campaign for the airlift, which was relocated to Sao Tome; the Scandinavians took on responsibility for the flights;

Caritas Internationalis in Rome coordinated staff deployed in the conflict area; the Swiss ensured radio communication; Ludwig Geissel and Georg Hussler were in charge of ensuring supplies of all relief goods and logistics.

Apart from buying more aircraft, Geissel also bought ships and lorries for transportation and built



Children's village with school and cemetery: aerial view of the children's village in Gabon where sick children from Biafra were airlifted to by Joint Church Aid.

warehouses. The “Airlift Biafra” enterprise was able to begin, replacing the previously sporadic relief supplies. By January 1969, 1,000 flights had been made and by around Christmas that year this figure rose to 5,000. The distribution system was functioning well. With more than 1,000 cooking and issuing points, the Joint Church Aid provided at times for up to 4 million people in the encircled region of Biafra. Hospitals, children’s wards and mobile clinics provided medical care on a large scale. But children’s care in particular remained a problem.



Little Festus from Biafra was able to be saved.

Children’s village in Gabon



School class in the children’s village in Gabon.

Children especially suffered from the aftermaths of the war. In September 1968, the Social Service Agency started to fly out sick and undernourished children from the encircled area of Biafra to the Island of Sao Tome and later into the neighbouring country of Gabon. In Gabon, en route from Libreville to the heartland, a children’s home was established at “Kilometer Eleven”. Initially designed for 250 children, it rapidly grew. At its peak it accommodated up to 5,000 children, Biafran nurses and teachers (approx. 700), personnel from Gabon (approx. 500) and international assistants (approx. 90), including the young Hannelore Hensle, who later became Ludwig Geissel’s successor. The “world’s largest children’s village” had a school system, a hospital and also a cemetery of its own.

Christian duty to help

With the capitulation of Biafra on 12 January 1970, the civil war which had lasted two years came to an end. However, starvation and misery continued because the victorious central government of Nigeria refused to maintain the airlift. It was only after tough negotiations that the humanitarian aid agencies of the churches were allowed to continue working in Nigeria and in the territory of the Ibo. At the end of the year, Bread for the World took on responsibility for con-

tinuing the relief projects of the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. This also was the end of Ludwig Geissel's the sixties work in Nigeria, who now concentrated on other activities. In his memoirs he explains the motivations behind the relief work and the challenges: "We tried to do everything within our power to save people, as our Christian mandate requires. The work demanded everything from those who were directly responsible. Through the work of all those persons who got involved out of their sense of duty to help, Joint Church Aid has become highly regarded and trusted despite strong counter-currents in the respective countries of the relief organisations involved". Regrettably, the church also was instrumentalised by the conflicting parties. As a result, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has made great efforts since then to ensure independence and neutrality in conflicts.

The tragedy of Biafra was over, but there was no happy ending. The airlift was an unprecedented success but 17 pilots paid with their lives and over 30 members of Joint Church Aid died. More than a million people lost their lives in the course of the civil war.



House Stuttgart in the biggest children's village of the world: a class of rescued children.

THE SIXTIES ++

HAMBURG

INDIA

VIETNAM

The airlift to Biafra was one of the biggest relief operations in the 1960s. However, it was not the only one by far. While the idea of a worldwide emergency and disaster relief gained ground in the 1950s, the 1960s were the decade in which the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was regularly in action and all over the world. Disaster relief often meant providing money or food. But if one could foresee that more extensive assistance was required after the immediate relief, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe also engaged beyond that. Apart from Biafra, this was particularly the case after the floods in Hamburg and even more so in Vietnam and India.

Efficiency thanks to prompt response - Hamburg

In 1962, the Social Service Agency had to deal with a disaster of a totally different nature - this time in its own country: "17 February 4 a.m.: dike breach in the Altenwerder Elbdeich, 120 square kilometres, a sixth of the urban area of the city of Hamburg, have been flooded. Approximately 100,000 people are surrounded by 220 million cubic meters of water." End of news flash. A storm flood, the worst in a hundred years, made more than 100,000 people in northern Germany homeless.



Land under: in 1962 Hamburg was hit by a disastrous storm surge. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was immediately on the scene to offer assistance.

Hamburg suffered vast destruction. The river Elbe flooded the districts of Harburg and Wilhelmsburg, and even came as far as the Town Hall. The water took many by surprise in their sleep, forcing people to climb onto their roofs or up trees where they had to wait up to 48 hours before the Federal Armed Forces could take them somewhere safe. For some, rescue came too late. By 21 February, 300 people had been recovered dead around Hamburg.

Among the first helpers to arrive was the Social Service Agency. In the morning following the disaster, the main offices in Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg and Hanover were connected via telephone from Stuttgart. Heinz-Dieter Pilgram, the

PR officer for the headquarters, travelled to the crisis area on the same day to serve as a reporter and relief coordinator. The Social Service Agency put together shipments of goods which were then distributed by ten lorries to the worst affected areas. By 19 February, camping beds, blankets, clothes and shoes worth one million German marks had been supplied. The churches in Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg made their recreation and holiday homes available to the evacuees. Necessary sanitary services and care were assigned to the Johanniter-Unfallhilfe, an organisation providing a first aid and ambulance service. An appeal to the public for funds brought in more than seven million German marks by the end of 1962. During the period up until 1 March 1963, the Humanitarian Aid Agency gave

nearly 1,000 financial grants to persons and families in need so they could repair or refurbish their homes. This was done through the agency's district offices in northern Germany. In cooperation with local rectories, money was even granted for the refurbishment of fruit and vegetable gardens, which for some people were important for self-sufficiency. For many the money facilitated a new beginning after the flood.

Hungersnot - Indien

Another relief operation of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe during that decade illustrates the unbridled vagaries of nature to which humans must often helplessly surrender. In 1962, the northern part of Germany was threatened by flooding,



Hans-Otto Hahn

(born in Erbach/Odenwald in 1936, died in Stuttgart in 2003)

Hahn was a pastor and the Director of the Ecumenical Diaconia. In 1966 he started working as a member of staff at the Stuttgart headquarters. From 1969 to 1999 he was the Director of the Main Department Ecumenical Diaconia, with responsibility for Bread for the World and from 1982 also for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. From 1979 to 1999 he served on the Executive Board of the Lutheran World Federation and was one of the founding fathers

of the worldwide ecumenical network Action by Churches Together (ACT). In 1989, he was a co-founder of the campaign Hope for Eastern Europe. From 1995 to 1999, he held the office of Vice President of the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany. In 1999, Hans-Otto Hahn wrote down his motto: "If there were a development formula which I could derive from my experience, it would be this: firstly, have a good look at things and listen, secondly, be ready for dialogue, and thirdly, be ready to learn."



In 1965 India was hit by the worst drought ever.

while in India people waited in vain for water. After two successive crop failures in 1962 and 1963, India was struck by the worst drought in decades. The impending famine led the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN to issue an appeal together with the World Council of Churches in Geneva on 11 February 1966. Within eleven days the Social Service Agency transferred an initial sum of 500,000 German marks to Geneva. Given the scale of suffering in India, however, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was determined that this would not remain the only donation.

In order to raise public awareness of the misery of the twelve million starving people in India, a major campaign was put into action. During the weeks before

Easter 1966, all regional churches appealed to their members to make special donations for India. The launch of this fundraising campaign was conducted on 3 April outside the Stiftskirche (a Collegiate Church) in Stuttgart. Staff of Bread for the World sold small bags of rice printed with "India is starving" for 13 and 26 German marks, symbolising either 25-kilo or 50-kilo bags of rice, an amount that could feed two or four Indian children for a couple of months. The result was overwhelming, and within 15 minutes 6,200 German marks had been collected. Thanks to this money, 11,900 kg of rice was made available for immediate relief purposes. The donation campaign enabled a large-scale feeding programme to be set up in northeast India. The aid coordination was carried out from Stutt-

gart and was entrusted to the reliable hands of Ludwig Geissel, who assigned Bread for the World with the implementation of the measures.

Following exhausting organisational preparations, the first shipment of relief supplies comprising powdered milk, dried vegetables and rusk was already able to be dispatched from Bremen to Calcutta on 12 April 1966. On 15 May, the feeding schemes, which were mostly for children aged two to twelve, began. "I saw walking skeletons, emaciated boys and girls, whose ribs were all visible," said deacon Friedrich Weissinger from Mainz-Kastel, one of the organisers on site, describing his emotional experience of feeding 90,000 children in Orissa. He set up 2,580 cooking stations across the districts of Sambalpur and Sundargarh, driving 12,000 kilometres in a decrepit old Mercedes in daily temperatures of 40° to 46° C. "Wherever we arrived people flocked together. Eyes wide open, looking expectantly at the strangers. Mothers threw themselves on the ground or showed us their starving children." By the end of 1966, donations amounting to over 12.5 million German marks had been collected. Approximately 31 million portions of rice and five million portions of milk-based meals had been given to 400,000 children. Due to good harvests, the feedings schemes were then able to be stopped in Orissa, South Bihar and Calcutta.

No ideological confines - Vietnam

At almost the same time as Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was fighting to relieve the suffering of thousands of civil war victims in Nigeria, the situation in Vietnam came to a head. Even today, memories of the '60s all over the world are inextricably linked to the Vietnam War, which lasted until the mid '70s. The photograph of a child burned by an American napalm bomb became a shocking symbol of this violent war.



Supporting the victims: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe stands up for the people in Vietnam beyond all ideological boundaries.

The conflict was based on the struggle for independence, unity and sovereignty in the country with direct intervention from the USA. The US started fighting a war they could not win and which left them with a profound psychological trauma. The number of victims was huge on all sides. But who took care of the victims in Vietnam during the worldwide ideological debate on the legitimacy of the war?

On 27 January 1966, for the first time in their history, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas Internationalis jointly addressed the public: “Hundreds of thousands of refugees need immediate relief. Christian humanitarian aid agencies have been active for years to ease the misery among the civilian population: refugees have been supplied with food, the homeless accommodated, the sick and injured nursed - in the jungle, in the seaports, near the frontlines and in the ravaged areas. But this relief operation needs more and larger funds.”

Funds were provided. Every year, the two main church humanitarian aid agencies were able to raise several million German marks. Both the south and the communist north benefited from the provided aid. The primary concern was the suffering of the people in a divided country in which the medical infrastructure had been destroyed in both parts of the country, where several million people were forced to flee and where all population groups were suffering from starvation. The principle of humanity had to contend with people’s

reservations. When relief goods were also sent to the communist north, representatives of the Protestant Church of Germany were asked why on earth they were getting involved with “communists and persecutors of Christians”.

Hans-Otto Hahn, director of the Ecumenical Diaconia and responsible for the coordination of the Vietnam operation, countered: “Diaconia knows no ideological confines”. The heated debate in Germany created a totally new arena: the media. In a virtually unprecedented manner, members of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe wrote articles for the press, justified themselves, tried to convince people or became themselves the subject of media reports.

During the period between the bombing of North Vietnam in 1967 and the failed peace negotiations in 1972, the Social Service Agency and Bread for the World supported relief operations in North and South Vietnam worth a total of 7.4 million German marks. At the request of the new government, the sister organisation of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Bread for the World, continued its relief work for Vietnam, supplying food and medicine, and funding long-term reconstruction projects even after Saigon surrendered in April 1975.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Bread for the World - two sisters, one idea

Bread for the World is the sister organisation of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe within the Protestant Agency for Diaconia and Development. Close cooperation between humanitarian aid and development aid is thus ensured.

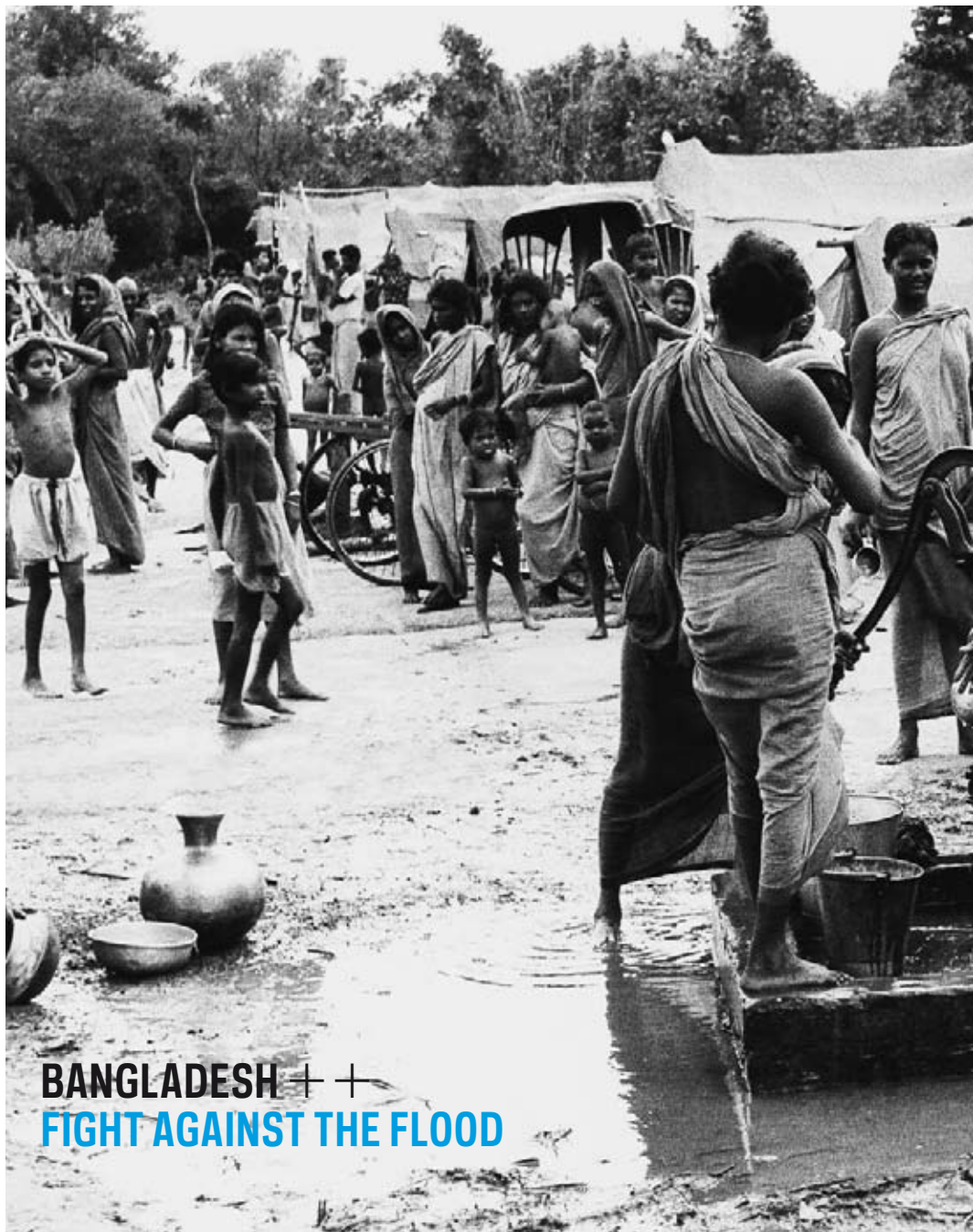
In 1959, the campaign Bread for the World was initiated by church representatives. The goal was to react to the greatest need, wherever on earth that may be. The first donation campaign of the Protestant Churches in Germany and the Free Churches took place on the first Sunday of Advent in 1959. A few years later, Bread for the World was established under the umbrella of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, within Department II of the Ecumenical Diaconia. Over the years, Bread for the World has set up an international aid network - mainly with churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Since the 1960s Bread for the World has been working in close cooperation with Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. Some elements of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's work are funded by the disaster fund of the Bread for the World campaign.

In developing countries, Bread for the World prefers to work with local church-based and non-governmental partner organisations who are committed to ensuring more social justice using non-violent methods. In its policy paper "Justice for the Poor 2000", the Bread for the World campaign sets out its fields of action in a globalised world: maintaining people's natural means of livelihood, ensuring the supply of food and safeguarding health, improving education, protecting human rights, promoting democracy and non-violent conflict management, helping to ensure fair trade worldwide.



In the almost sixty years of its existence, Bread for the World has continuously expanded the scope of its work, remaining true to its philosophy of being more than a donation-collecting organisation by serving as an advocate for the poor.



BANGLADESH + +
FIGHT AGAINST THE FLOOD

THE SEVENTIES ++

Before he was rescued, farmer Abdul Karim from Chilmara in northern Bangladesh sat in the branches of a tree for two days. He is the only survivor of his family. His wife and two children were swept away by the flood. Bangladesh has always been the scene of devastating disasters. In the summer of 1974, continuous torrential rains and the melting ice from the Himalayan Mountains resulted in a flood disaster on a whole new scale.

Bangladesh's war of independence had already caused many people to flee. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was one of the first organisations on hand to help and as part of a network of relief organisations they made an effort to fight against the humanitarian disaster. At home, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe struggled to raise public awareness for the unfolding drama - and battled with negative coverage in the media.

BANGLADESH

MIDDLE EAST

CHILE





Aid for Bangladesh: the ships *Elke Freese*, *Peter Freese* and *Oskland* were handed over to the Ambassador of Bangladesh by Jochen Zieger (left).

Bangladesh - fight against the flood

In 1947, the Partition of India resulted in an awkward geographical situation which gave rise to continuous conflicts. The part of Bengal inhabited by Muslims was united with Pakistan and represented the eastern half of the state. India was situated between the eastern part and the western part of Pakistan. Today, India and Pakistan both have nuclear weapons and are still hostile towards each other. In 1970, the Bengal autonomy movement of eastern Pakistan was militarily supported by India, which resulted in an open war. In the end, eastern Pakistan was separated from Pakistan and became Bangladesh. Mahatma Gandhi's

non-violent conflict resolution policy which had led the Indian subcontinent to freedom gave way to nationalist and religious fights.

The early history of Bangladesh is not merely one of a bloody war. Nature rages permanently here. As monsoon rains, snowmelt in the mountains and hurricanes on the coastline coincide, this repeatedly leads to flood disasters, destroys crops and causes famine. During the Bangladesh Liberation War in the early '70s, the masses of water from the annual monsoon rains hit the people extremely hard. The country became a sad example of how political power struggles further destabilised a region which was very vulner-

able to the forces of nature - and made the relief operation a difficult endeavour for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

The refugee drama

India, 1971. Many people who had fled the war and floods came to the border regions of India. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe played an early role in setting up refugee camps. By then, ensuring sustenance and organising constant supplies had almost become routine. Transporting goods and people, supplying water and providing fuel for generators and vehicles produced ongoing operating expenses. The vehicle fleet of a relief camp can sometimes cause problems - the downside of well meant but ill-conceived aid. Often the vehicles are donated from governments and because each country

prefers to provide its own products, lorries of different brands line up next to each other. Maintaining such a diverse fleet causes enough problems, while acquiring spare parts is virtually impossible.

Everyday life of refugees

International relief efforts were concentrated on refugees in India, as the Pakistani government prevented relief operations in the refugee's home country which could have effectively stopped people from fleeing. In October 1971, the number of refugees amounted to eight million: "They arrive with bicycles, pushing their children and belongings; they come in rickshaws, ox-carts, jeeps, lorries and busses," states a Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe report. Large numbers of



Waiting: refugees from Bangladesh in India meeting an uncertain future.

refugees lived in more than 500 camps which had been set up in India.

The main problem was protecting the refugees against the monsoon rain which had been pouring down on the country for hours and sometimes days since mid-June. When the sun came out in between the downpours, the air became as sticky as in a hothouse. Some of the large tents which had been set up in a hurry were covered with plastic material.

Others were just made from cotton cloths and bamboo, as there were just not enough plastic sheets available. The large tents in the camps were inhabited by 100 people in a space measuring 8 by 24 metres. At best, bamboo mats divided the tents into smaller family units. Each tent had 20 cooking points, four wash units and eight toilets. The water supply necessitated costly drilling operations; the water treat-

ment was handled by special supply vehicles which were financed by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

Refugee camps are always joint operations. The Red Cross Germany, the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief, the Maltese Aid Service and the Johanniter First-Aid Service were responsible for the medical care in the camps. The water supply and sanitary facilities had to be constantly extended to cope with the continuing stream of refugees. Some camps accommodated up to 200,000 people. Via sea, the Social Service Agency brought food, pharmaceuticals and other relief goods to India. Due to a lack of resources, the principle of buying locally wherever possible had to be abandoned. Instead, commodities had to be obtained from overseas and Europe.

The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)

The CCDB was founded in 1973 by the World Council of Churches as the successor organisation of the Bangladesh Ecumenical Relief and Rehabilitation Service (BERRS). After the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, it continued the rehabilitation measures on a long-term basis. The Commission is made up of representatives of the two main Protestant Churches in the country and acts as a national organisation under the umbrella of the National Council of Churches of Bangladesh (NCCBC).

The aid programmes include further training, health care, legal aid, the empowerment of women and relief and emergency aid. Thanks to its well-established network in the region, today it is still an ideal partner for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in the crisis area. Its reliability is an important prerequisite for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's continuing commitment to the Asian region.

As little supervision as possible - as much capacity building as possible

The end of the Bangladesh Liberation War and the birth of the People's Republic of Bangladesh created a new problem: the returning flow of Bengalese refugees back to their widely devastated home country. Organising a controlled return was only the practical side of the problem. The following example illustrates the human side: a young woman in the Salboni camp had fled to save her two children from the war. Her husband had been shot.

The camp had given her the opportunity to live a fairly secure life and she was able to work as a cook. But what would become of her in her own country? She had nothing; her children were doomed to become beggars. The conclusion drawn by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in this case was that a hasty return was once again out of the question; it would have been irresponsible. Only rebuilding the economy could change the unstable situation. A safe future did not require long-term relief but joint reconstruction measures in cooperation with the local people. The best way could only be to provide as little supervision as possible and as much capacity building as possible.

United in a network

A relief operation of this scope could not be dealt with by just one humanitarian aid agency. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe became part of an association of church-based aid organisations. Cooperation of this kind creates synergies. It allows

effective project coordination, guarantees financial support and enables a faster flow of information.

The Bangladesh Ecumenical Relief and Rehabilitation Service (BERRS), which was founded in 1971, was a joint venture of church-based humanitarian aid agencies from Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA, the FRG, the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation.

The local organisation structure was also of major importance. The Emergency Aid of the Social Service Agency - in close cooperation with Bread for the World - created an international network of cooperation partners in many countries around the globe. Local partners help to adapt relief measures to the actual situation, culture and distribution structure.

According to Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's principles, disaster relief needs to respect human dignity, the local legal systems and traditions. This was true also for Bangladesh. Here, young foreign helpers without experience who believed that they could solve the problems on their own would have been unsuitable for this mission. Rather than condoning self-important attitudes of foreign staff, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe relied on partnership and trusting cooperation with local partners who respected the people and delegated responsibility to them. Locally, the BERRS cooperated with the Bangladesh National Council of Churches.



Easing suffering: after providing shipments of food, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was involved in rehabilitation measures.

Reconstruction work concentrated on applying the traditional method of construction using bamboo and straw. Necessary relief supplies of seeds were complemented by measures that encouraged capacity building. Brochures printed in the local language informed the farmers how to handle the seeds and the ripening crops. This information enabled them to identify cereal pests and vermin themselves and react accordingly. Capacity building also meant initiating projects which in time would be taken over by local organisations.

Consequently, BERRS was dissolved on 31 January 1973. Existing programmes which had become long-term development programmes were handed over to the newly founded Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh, which was composed of the local churches.

Natural disasters require prevention

Disasters teach us to plan for the future. In this respect, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided important momentum for preventative measures here. Long-term prevention ranged from clearing silted

waterways to constructing protective dikes, ensuring the resettlement of people, adjusting harvest cycles and changing people's habits.

Preventive measures at the beginning of the '70s included the provision of walky-talkies for better communication and typhoon-warning devices which enabled links with meteorological services in Bangladesh, India and Thailand.

However, mankind will probably never be able to fully control the forces of nature. Bangladesh is a particularly good case in point, with people continuing to be threatened by major flood disasters, hurricanes and hailstorms to this day.

Criticism is inevitable

The combination of a natural disaster, war and the misery of the refugees posed a major challenge. In the summer of 1974, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe struggled to alert the German public to the human tragedy in Bangladesh, as the Germans were busy enjoying their holidays and watching the World Cup in their own country. A comparison was made to Biafra. For the churches this comparison had an unexpectedly bitter aftertaste. They had to defend themselves against accusations from the media that, in contrast to the situation in Biafra where the majority of the people are Christians, they had taken too long to offer their help to Hindus and Muslims.

This was a particularly harsh accusation for the members of Diakonie

Katastrophenhilfe who had been among the first on site and who now felt the very basis of their work was being questioned. Their guiding principle is that disasters equally affect Christians and non-Christians alike, the provision of aid by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is never distinguished according to religion.

THE SEVENTIES + + MIDDLE EAST CHILE

During the '70s, aid for Bangladesh was one of the focal points of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's activities and resources were concentrated here. But emergency situations also had to be coped with on other continents. Year after year the agenda was full, encompassing approximately 100 measures, fundraising activities, direct action or projects. An air of discord continued in the Middle East. In 1973, the military coup in Chile required Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to take action.

Between all frontlines - Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in the Middle East

For decades the disastrous situation of Palestinian refugees has required the international cooperation of humanitarian aid agencies in the Middle East. Especially in the course of the Six-Day War in 1967, the number of Palestinian refugees increased immensely in the neighbouring countries of Israel. Financial relief and medical supplies from Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe were distributed throughout the conflict region. Initially measures were concentrated in Jordan, where Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) planned to set up a camp for 7,000 refugees outside Amman. While UNRWA staff were responsible for the organisation on site,

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supplied the equipment. Hopes of a de-escalation of the violent conflict were never fulfilled. In September 1970, further large-scale relief measures were already necessary.

In its own country, the Jordanian government fought against bases of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), triggering more streams of refugees in the Middle East. In cooperation with Bread for the World, the Protestant Churches in Scandinavia, the Lutheran World Federation, the German Caritas international and UNRWA as the local organisation, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe reacted with a month-long airlift to Beirut and Amman.



1967: Thousands of Palestinians fled during the Six-Day War



Palestinians fleeing: in the 1960s the conflict with Israel once again escalated. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided aid without regard to political frontiers

Until the 80s, Lebanon and also Syria were areas where aid was offered for Palestinian refugees. However much Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe strived to support Palestinian refugees in the camps, it had difficulties soliciting funds for its activities in German. After all, money is more easily raised for victims of natural disasters than for victims of man-made misery and destruction. In comparison to the floods in Bangladesh, the refugee problem was more complex and was as much more difficult to convey via the media. There

was also a political reservation and the accusation of a rather biased stand in favour of the Palestinian side. Great efforts were required to keep up people's willingness to give money over a long period of time. Nevertheless, given that even in 1968 it was common knowledge that a political solution to the refugee problem cannot be bought with humanitarian and financial aid, to this day Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe still provides aid in the Middle East - driven not by political motivations but by the conviction that it is our duty to help those in need.

Help for the politically persecuted - Chile 1973

Two decades later, Hollywood found an impressive image. At a funeral, gloomy military officials nod towards the widower, a landowner and reactionary. They do not offer their condolences, but they give a sign of confirmation: the military coup has begun. Simultaneously tanks appear on the roads of the capital.

This is a scene from the movie *The House of the Spirits*, an adaptation of the novel by Isabel Allende. Her uncle Salvador Allende was overthrown and killed by the military leadership on 11



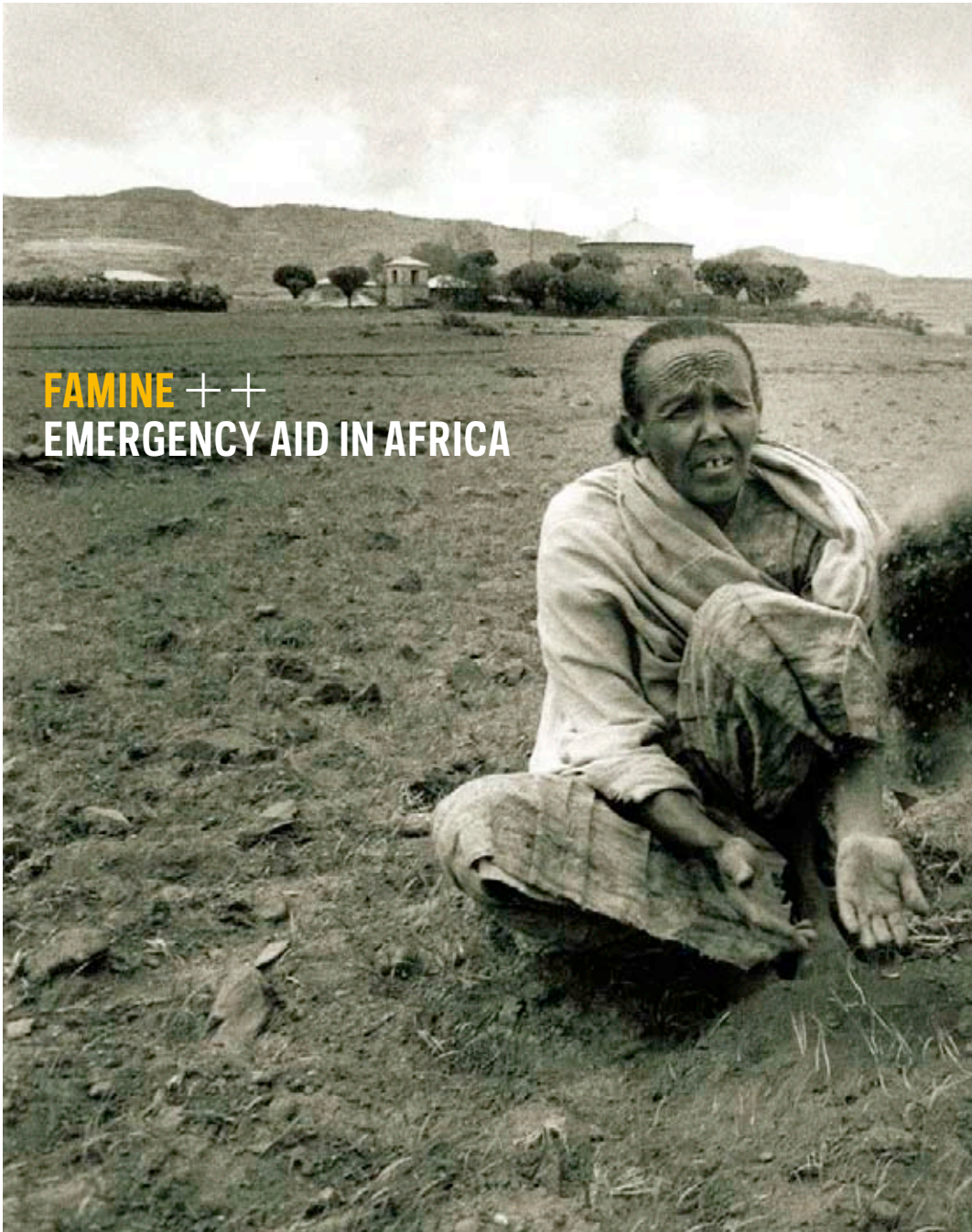
Assault on democracy: the Chilean President Salvador Allende was toppled and shot dead during a military coup in 1973.

September 1973. The socialist government that had been elected only three years earlier was ousted by the military. Under the leadership of General Augusto Pinochet, the military junta established a terror regime: basic rights were abolished, political parties and labour unions were prohibited, people were indiscriminately detained and tortured. Thousands of foreigners, mainly from Latin American states who had come to Chile as followers of Allende, also suffered from the reprisals. They were looking for options to leave the country without having to go back to their own country, since there they would also have to fear political persecution.

On 13 September 1973, the Churches in Chile created a national refugee committee (Comite Nacional de Ayuda a los Refugiados) that maintained information centres and reception camps for people wanting to leave the country. Together with his Catholic colleague, suffragan bishop Fernando Ariztia, he was also in charge of a church relief committee in Santiago that helped Chilean citizens who were victims of political persecution.

Apart from immediate financial aid and pharmaceuticals offered by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, the church also appealed to the public and politicians for the right of entry to Germany for 550 Chileans and 800 refugees of other nationalities willing to emigrate. In the end, 900 people were granted asylum in Germany. During the aftermath, the church relief committee in Chile supported

persecuted citizens who remained in the country. This support lasted until the military government enforced an end to it in December 1975. Once again, as was the case with the support for North Vietnam, the Social Service Agency had to struggle against ideological reservations. But it remained true to its principle of helping people in need, no matter what their religious or political beliefs are. Bishop Frenz, who had to leave the country in early October, had formulated the principles underlying his actions and those of the church in a letter written two years earlier: “Through our work for the refugees and human rights, many of us have fallen into discredit. People don’t appreciate us helping persecuted communists. The inner consequence of our deeds and words is evident only to a few. Those having opposed a Marxist dictatorship will logically also oppose a military dictatorship. The model for our actions is Jesus Christ, not an ideology. We have experienced how ideology can blind people. Jesus Christ opens our eyes to our neighbours. We act accordingly.”



FAMINE ++
EMERGENCY AID IN AFRICA



THE EIGHTIES ++

In the early '80s, people on the African continent were threatened by a long lasting drought. The situation in the countries around the Horn of Africa was also seriously aggravated by the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia. In autumn 1983, the Food and Agricultural Organisation broadcasted the news that 150 million people were on the brink of starvation, but the disaster did not really penetrate into the awareness of the wider public. People in industrialised countries only reacted after seeing children with hunger-inflated bellies on their television sets every evening.

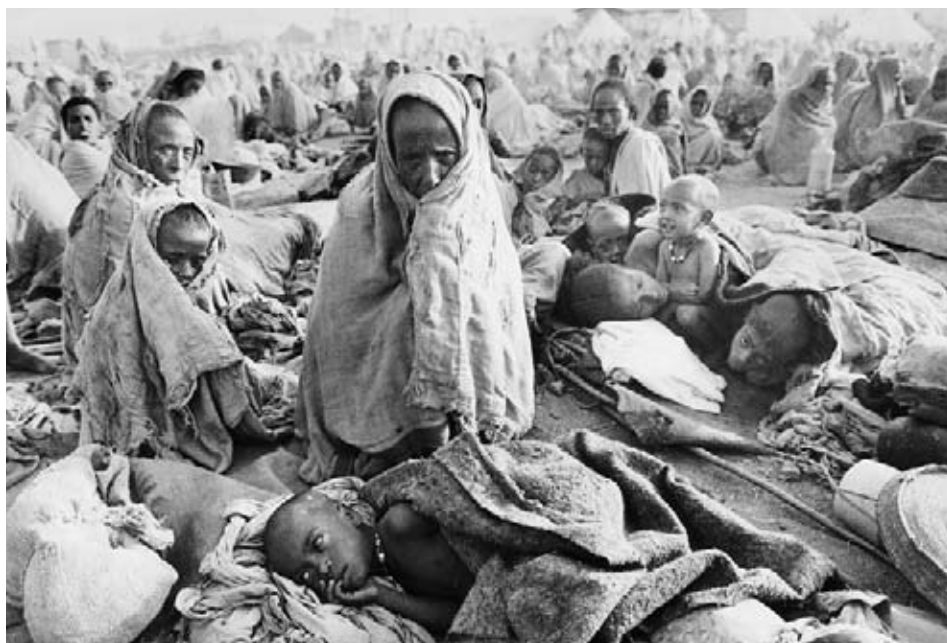
For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Africa became the focal point of its aid campaigns. The '80s provided another decade of further development and experience in the history of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. In 1982, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe became an independent unit within the Ecumenical Diaconia, with Hannelore Hensle as its director.

AFRICA

COLOMBIA

MEXICO

ARMENIA



150 million starving people: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe sounded the alarm and focused its efforts on Africa.

Aid for Africa campaign of German TV station ARD & the Day for Africa

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its sister organisation Bread for the World had been working together in critical crisis regions for years. However, their fundraising campaigns in Germany went unheeded, even though a famine of unheard dimensions was looming: 150 million people were at risk of starvation. Was this figure too abstract? Was Africa too far away? The lack of interest shown by the media and the German and international public was verging on ignorance. Day after day, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe staff looked into the faces of those suffering, met the eyes of mothers full of hope holding their emaciated,

dying children. In order to help systematically, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe depended on huge donations. But how could the interest of the public be captured? Was there a lack of information or no emotional connection?

The commitment of a TV journalist triggered the necessary change. Rolf Seelmann-Eggebert, former correspondent in Africa, had been directly confronted with the misery of the people. As head of programming at the North German Broadcasting Company, he deliberately used the effect of moving pictures. During Easter 1984, he appealed to the public via the ARD to provide Aid for Africa, focusing on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa as well as the humanitarian aid

agencies of the churches, the Social Service Agency and Caritas. The development organisations of the churches such as Bread for the World and Misereor were also emphasised. This sparked an unprecedented media campaign. No matter what kind of programme, haunting pictures of the famine and appeals for help interrupted the scheduled programmes of the ARD. Nearly 100 million German marks were raised which were used for immediate relief and medium-term rehabilitation measures. Another highlight was the Day for Africa in the following year. It was supported by various relief organisations in Germany, Europe and even the USA and provided a broad platform. Under the patronage of the German President Richard von Weizsäcker, they organised events all over Germany on 23 January 1985 to inform people about the acute suffering in the Horn of Africa. The ARD TV channels and radio stations altered their programmes. They covered the events which, despite the snow and rain, attracted a large audience and they appealed for money. As a result, Germany raised 120 million German marks for aid in Africa.

Emergency aid and media - an opportunity and a curse

This positive experience with the medium of television and well directed media campaigns changed the work of relief organisations, including Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. It is true that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is not in favour of staged spectacles and instead relies on long-term information and awareness build-

ing. As successful as the Day for Africa may have been, spectacular campaigns of that kind easily burn more money than they earn. Also, putting oneself in the limelight for the media does not always guarantee credibility. Nevertheless, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, under the leadership of Hannelore Hensle from 1982, had to adjust to the rules of the media society. Faced with a new type of public opinion, the importance of public relations towards donors increased. Today it would be unimaginable for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to work without it. If you want to create public awareness regarding our responsibility towards developing countries or humanitarian crises, you need to make use of professional public relations. Fundraising campaigns need to be supported by the media otherwise they might pass unnoticed. This fact also reveals that it is the media who decide according to their own criteria and logic which crisis is deemed a “major” crisis and which political conflict is deemed a “major” political conflict. The conse-



Swift relief action: food supplies ease the initial dire need.

quences of media policy are far reaching, with the level of consternation created by the media defining the amount of money raised. Especially television as a medium depends on powerful pictures. If misery cannot be turned into images, the interest of the picture-oriented public is hard to arouse or fades away rapidly. Ideological reservations, if enhanced by the media, may even create a negative picture of those in need. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe had to face this fact in Vietnam and Chile in the '60s and '70s. The only way to stand up to people's reservations regarding Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's support for the North Vietnamese people and politically persecuted Chileans was to convince the public with good arguments. Looking back at the '80s this was the decade when Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe learned to cope and cooperate with the media. The Day for Africa is one example. But Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe does not allow the logic of new values to determine their relief work. When the media interest has faded away and long after the short-lived coverage, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe still takes care of many "forgotten" disasters. The need for aid and assistance is communicated to Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe by local partners. The determining factor is the degree of human suffering.

Aid in the ecumenical alliance Churches Drought Action in Africa

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was able to rely on the long-standing experience of Ludwig Geissel for their projects. Though retired in 1981, together with the director of the Ecumenical Diaconia Hans-Otto Hahn and the head of unit, Hannelore Hensle, he was able to win support from the world associations in Geneva (World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation) for a powerful and coordinated aid campaign for Africa. Under the title Churches Drought Action in Africa, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Caritas Internationalis, World Council of Churches Lutheran World Federation and the American Caritas Catholic Relief Service joined forces. Their joint appeal in 1984 was aimed at raising another 100 million US dollars for aid for Africa in addition to the current relief measures worth a quarter of a billion dollars a year. For several months an airlift supplied affected regions with food, pharmaceuticals and relief goods. In December 1984, nearly eight million people in Ethiopia alone, the focal point of the measures, depended on food relief. Feeding centres accommodated hundreds of thousands of children and adults who were sick from hunger. But so many people were suffering from starvation that not all could be saved. Due to the war in Ethiopia, access to those in need was difficult in many regions. Desperate humanitarian appeals both to the governments and the rebels to stop military action remained unheeded.



Giving hope: women in Saiajona camp, a settlement for war and drought victims, waiting for food.

“Dear God, turn these bombs into water!”

This prayer of an Eritrean also went unheard. Instead, bombs destroyed the last



Offering protection: victims attacked by the Ethiopian army escape to a relief shelter

remaining crops. “It is not so much the drought itself but rather other political factors that turn drought into disasters. War, insecurity, ignorance, the struggle for necessary foreign exchange, distribution problems due to lack of vehicles, etc. In short, there’s a shortage of almost everything other than problems!” This was Hannelore Hensle’s summary of the situation in Mozambique, and it was true for most countries in Africa which were affected by drought and political conflicts in the 1980’s and beyond. The country’s resources such as oil were invested in weapons. Wells, roads and hospitals were systematically destroyed. “They simply kill, they simply destroy,” that’s what was reported about the group of rebels called RENAMO, the



A soldier in a pointless war: a fighter of the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

“Bandidos” who terrorised Mozambique. Hunger and war were inseparably linked to each other, but these facts were denied by the responsible governments and forgotten by the general public. Even worse was the fact that the civil wars were partly financed and militarily supported by the great powers. These wars prevented the cultivation of fields and forced to flee. “The refugees arrive exhausted without clothes. Not enough blankets, not enough tents. Those who survived the long distance from the

drought region are often without protection against the heat of the day and the cold of the night,” reported Hannelore Hensle from Sudan, Eritrea and Tigray in February 1985. Here and in other regions, the people often had to start from scratch. Once a camp had been set up, the people often had to flee again when raids started at night. The refugees then had to be taken care of again and provided with the basics, such as housing, food, clothes, kitchen utensils, seeds and agricultural tools.

The guidelines on "Food aid in disaster cases"

The 1980s also set in motion a fundamental rethinking process in terms of practical work. Disaster and emergency relief could not just remain a good Samaritan service, it requires a sustained commitment, cause-related action and prevention measures. Even in cases of drought nature is not the sole cause of the disaster. Humans often contribute their share. Ravaging nature through deforestation gives rise to progressive soil erosion. Ill-conceived agricultural policies render the peasants' labour ineffective.

"Christian love and social service work target those in need, but at the same time must also contribute to eradicating the causes of emergency situations and social injustice and to linking compassion with justice." This appeal by the Social Service Agency was not just aimed at effectively overcoming famine through relief aid from Ethiopia to Zimbabwe, from Ghana to Mozambique, from Upper Volta to Senegal. Such a feat would have been impossible. The main thrust had to be to fight the causes of destitution and thus open up long-term prospects.

Indeed, in many acute situations, food aid from outside may offer millions of people their only chance of survival and is therefore a must for humanitarian reasons - but only as long as necessary. If provided permanently, it does not solve the problems but may in certain circum-

stances even aggravate them. "Gifts" lower the people's determination to help themselves, weaken their initiative, and may cause considerable problems with distribution, destroy local markets and give an additional boost to world market prices.

Therefore, food aid should be replaced as soon as possible, or at least supplemented by investments in agriculture and the production of food. These insights were consolidated in the guidelines on "Food aid in disaster cases" to assist disaster relief practitioners working in establishments of the Social Service Agency. The guidelines stated that it was imperative for food aid to be discontinued as soon as the acute emergency had ended. Equally, even amidst the acute crisis, sustainable projects for food security were to be given priority, and they should continue to be supported later on by development agencies (Bread for the World).

One reason for drawing up these guidelines was the fact that the agricultural policy of the European Union (EU) was generating more and more food surpluses which had to be destroyed or dispatched elsewhere in order to ease the markets of the EU. As the requirement for such disposal rose, so would the interest in food aid for the south. The "milk lake" and "butter mountains" were to be declared as aid and thus got rid of with an easy conscience. Only very rarely did this agree with the needs and customary food requirements of the aid recipients, and just as seldom with ethical princip-

THE EIGHTIES ++

les. Furthermore, there is a real danger of destroying local, national and regional agrarian markets, putting in jeopardy the affected region's food security in the long term.

Commissioned by the Social Service Agency, these guidelines were produced in 1982 by Peter Glasauer and Claus Leitzmann, nutritionists from the Institute of Nutritional Science at Justus Liebig University Giessen. In some years Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe spent up to a quarter of their budget on aid for Ethiopia. Although the bulk of this had to cover emergency humanitarian aid to deal with the dramatic situation, from the outset Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe made plans for reforestation programmes to protect against water and wind



Guidelines: the food aid study conducted Service Agency also raised awareness organisations.

erosion, dug wells and erected grain silos, supported measures to step up food production in agriculture, and supported the strengthening of sales and marketing cooperatives.



Ending starvation: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been developing food aid measures since the 1980s

A key part of these efforts by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was the food-for-work programmes, which enable people to escape from their role as victims. People in need are also the subjects of their own action, with their own dignity and capacity to take care of their lives. The “Food aid in disaster cases” guidelines served to further develop the work of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe beyond just context-specific humanitarian aid.

This study helped to make other aid organisations aware of the issues surrounding food aid, generating a lively discussion which was condensed into a new revised edition in 1988. Even today the countries in the Horn of Africa are repeatedly ravaged by droughts, flooding and insect plagues. They are still the scene of violent fighting over scarce resources. In 1999 and 2000, Ethiopia faced another drought which threatened millions of people with famine. Even today Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is still providing emergency aid in the Horn of Africa - despite the fact that though the world has become accustomed to famine in Africa and other news dominates the headlines.

THE EIGHTIES ++ COLOMBIA MEXICO ARMENIA

With a volcanic eruption and two earthquakes in the 1980s, two very different natural forces raged on two continents far apart - Latin America and Asia. In both cases the same pictures: dead bodies, rubble, homeless people. As in hundreds of other instances, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe immediately provided emergency aid and contributed to long-term rehabilitation projects in the affected areas - fast but well reflected, working conscientiously but without red tape.

A volcanic eruption in Colombia

The snow-capped Nevado del Ruiz volcano spewing out ashes was already a customary sight for the inhabitants of the nearby town of Armero. Having lain dormant for 400 years, the volcano had been active again for two months. Although experts had warned the Colombian government about a potential eruption, the officials were reluctant to inform the public for fear of causing panic.

The eruption took place during the night of 13 November 1985. The volcano released huge quantities of lava that melted layers of snow and glacier ice, producing flood waves that carried away



After the earthquake in Colombia Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe facilitates a comprehensive reconstruction programme.

entire villages. At this point, the warnings came too late. Worst hit by the catastrophe was Armero, where only 5,000 of its 25,000 inhabitants survived. The loss of the town robbed the entire region of its economic centre and its infrastructure broke down completely.

Even today Colombia is still caught in the stranglehold of guerrilla warfare, the drugs mafia and corruption. There is a lack of a strong law enforcement power. In the first few days after the disaster struck, the emergency assistance measures thus remained uncoordinated, and all planned operations to come to the rescue of the victims were agonisingly slow in unfolding. It was precisely during this critical

time that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's network of partners proved invaluable.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's immediate emergency relief was assigned to its long-standing partner organisation,



Capacity building: Colombians are building their future - with the help of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

Proyectos. In cooperation with an Ecuadorian weaving mill sponsored by Bread for the World, warm blankets were sent to the disaster area. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe made sure that emergency supplies were sourced locally. In the long term, trusted partners of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Bread for the World were supplied with funds to initiate sustainable assistance measures in the surrounding areas. House building programmes and income-generating measures were put in place for Armero's survivors, and school tuition was maintained for the 500 children of the town. In the hour of the people's greatest need, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe guaranteed survival, paving the way to the future with support for sustainable projects in the town and other affected places.

Earthquake relief in Mexico

Mexico City, September 1986. One year later, only a few hundred kilometres away, the Mexican capital was twice shaken by earthquakes in the space of 36 hours. Afterwards, the city, which has population of 20 million, was a picture of debris-strewn streets with people desperately searching for relatives. Parts of the city looked as if they consisted only of broken walls and mounds of rubble.

Tens of thousands of aid workers from all over the world made every effort to rescue the victims. The disaster left several thousand people dead and 20,000 families homeless. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided direct financial aid on the ground and assisted with erecting emergency shelters. Interim financial support for homeless families enabled some of the destitute victims to survive.



In ruins: an earthquake in Mexico left thousands dead and 20,000 families without shelter.



Endurance: Hans-Otto Hahn and Hannelore Hensle were committed to the reconstruction in Armenia for many years.

Earthquake relief in Armenia

In contrast, extensive reconstruction measures and efforts to enable the local population to help themselves were the hallmarks of the assistance rendered in Armenia in 1988, at that time still part of the Soviet Union. Its people were hit by a severe earthquake in the early days of December, which devastated large areas and is estimated to have killed at least 25,000 people, although there are no exact figures due to the scale of the disaster. Hundreds of thousands of people were made homeless.

This emergency situation set off a wave of solidarity around the globe. In the first week after the earthquake alone, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe raised 300,000 German marks in donations for the survivors and sent out extensive relief supplies to Armenia.

The director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Hannelore Hensle, went to the stricken area less than a week after the earthquake. This was the first time aid organisations from the West went into action in the USSR. "Some five kilometres from the town of Leninakan (today Gjumri)



Uncomplicated ideas: after the earthquake in Armenia Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe sets up a factory for prefabricated houses at the location.

the signs of disaster become visible. To the right and left of the road are low piles of rubble and partially destroyed buildings, the number of which rises as you approach the town, until the impression is that of a long, grey, unbroken line,” she observes, describing the destruction. Every one of the countless rubble heaps had families standing in front of it with a small fire. After disasters on such a scale, the damage in material and human terms cannot be repaired in a short time. Rehabilitation and reconstruction are part of emergency assistance, but they require a long-term effort, also

financially. Here in lies the dilemma of sustained emergency assistance, given that readiness to help is only inspired by the acute phase of disaster and very rarely by the much-needed post-disaster rehabilitation. Yet it is the latter that entails great expense.

Eighteen Catholic and Protestant aid agencies worldwide joined ranks to conduct a large-scale reconstruction programme, with Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe as the lead organisation in its implementation. Initially 100 houses and two kindergartens were to be built,



Energy and determination: with support from Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe over 200 prefabricated houses were built in Armenia.

using prefabricated construction components in both schemes. For this purpose, a disused factory hall near Etchmiadzin was converted into a production facility and a stone-cutting facility was set up. The houses were to be built with tuff facades not only for improved insulation, but also in keeping with traditional Armenian building practices. In July 1989, the first truck arrived loaded with prefabricated house components.

Four prototypes were sent from Germany, the remaining 96 houses as well as the kindergarten buildings were made locally and erected in two villages. In the following two years, while hundreds of thousands of people had no choice but to

live in miserable emergency shelters, new life began to emerge in the two restored villages. Their rural inhabitants constructed stables to go with their houses and created vegetable gardens. Together with Caritas, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe installed a new production facility for windows and doors in 1991, creating additional sources of income for the local population.

In 1993, the three production facilities were handed over to the Armenian Church. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe also helped with rebuilding hospitals and schools, and erecting workshops and kindergartens.



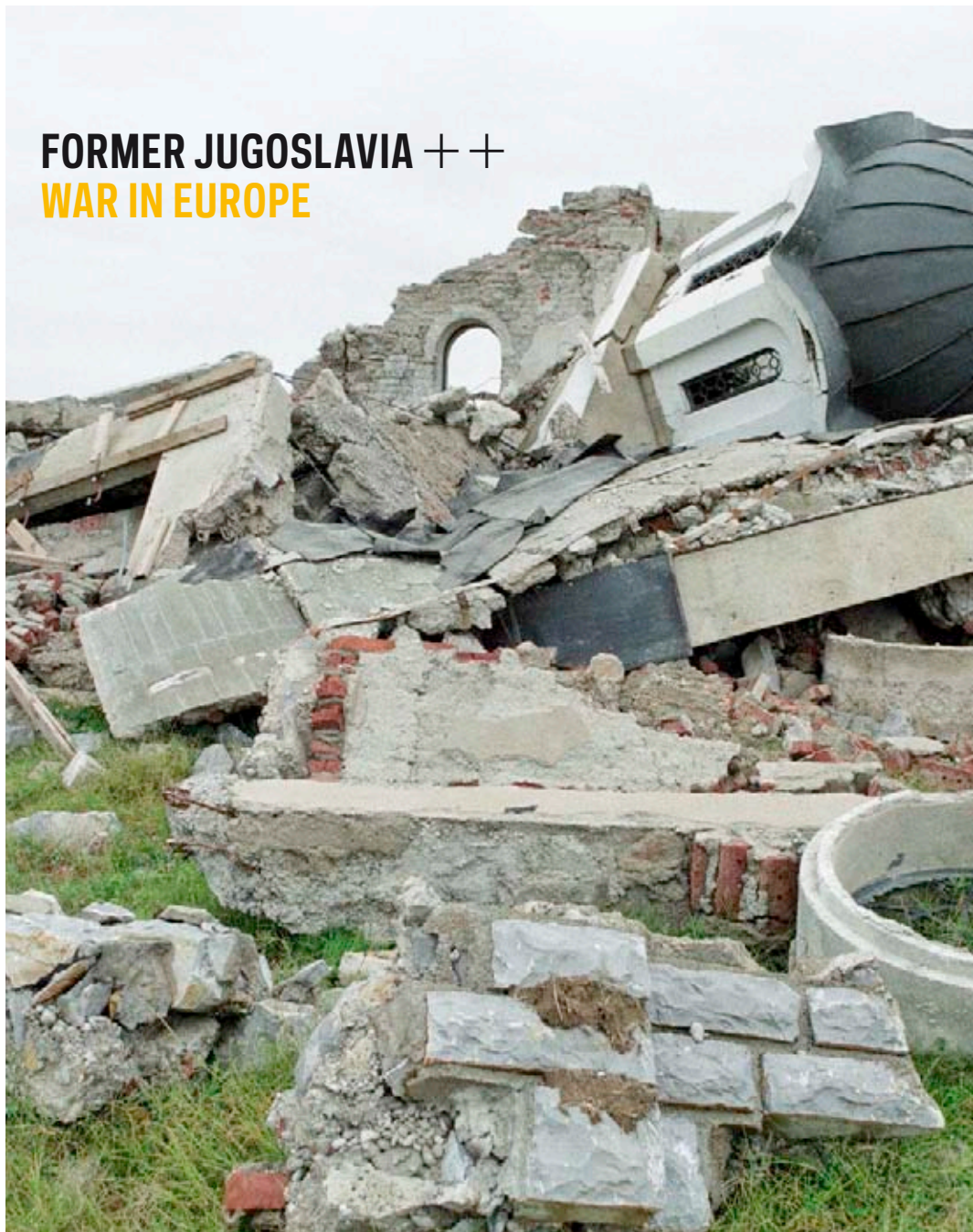
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supported the restoration of infrastructure.



Inauguration of the school in Gyumri in 1989.

In the winter of 1993, it supplied heating fuel and set up a grain mill in one of the villages. In return, the villagers had to agree to provide a children's home with bread through the winter. After the end of the Soviet Union, unlike other aid organisations, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe remained active locally even when Armenia was suffering from the war with Azerbaijan over the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. It maintained a continuous presence in Armenia spanning the period from 1988 to 1997.

FORMER JUGOSLAVIA ++
WAR IN EUROPE



THE NINETIES ++

“Perestroika” and “Glasnost”, the peaceful revolution in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The end of the 1980s initially raised hopes for global peace under the auspices of western democracy. But this longed-for happy ending failed to materialise. As the Socialist multiethnic states disintegrated, the old nationalism came back with a vengeance. Under the cynical guise of “ethnic cleansing,” rape, expulsion and murder held sway right in the heart of Europe.

The war in the Balkans placed Europe on the agenda of the humanitarian aid organisations in the 1990s. For the first time, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was again spending more money on aid measures centred on its own continent than Africa. It was a decisive point in the development of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, which, under the new director of Ecumenical Diaconia, Cornelia Fullkrug-Weitzel, saw its standing enhanced with an enlarged department and more staff.

FORMER-JUGOSLAVIA
FORMER-SOVIET UNION
RWANDA
SOMALIA
TURKEY
LATIN AMERICA





People are not left alone: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe cares for refugees.

War in Europe

With the support of western states, above all Germany, the countries of Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from the Yugoslav Federation. The violent approach of the federal army against the one-time constituent republics marked the beginning of many years of war in the Balkans. In 1992, the centre of the fighting shifted to Bosnia-Herzegovina. With the backing of Serbia's president, Slobodan Milosevic, Bosnian Serbs set about expelling their Croat and Moslem compatriots. History was turned into a weapon and religion became a vehicle for unmitigated claims to power - with

the consequence of a war taking place with ever-changing frontlines and an utterly divided population. "Until the war came, we felt like Sarajevans - now we no longer have a past or a future," said Dobrinka. She was a Catholic married to a Serbian husband and together they had one child - a happy family until the war came and tore it apart.

Hundreds of thousands of people died in full view of their European neighbours. The flow of refugees to other countries and inside the former federation numbered in the millions. In Sarajevo and many other places which were once the seats of multicultural societies, a

fiercely fought civil war raged which caused doubt even among the personnel of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. As Hannelore Hensle said, “What becomes evident again in the former Yugoslavia is that man has not learned any lessons in the 2,000 years of recorded history, and even worse, doesn’t want to. As always, people are categorised in terms of nationality, race, religion, ideology, they are condemned, persecuted, judged and pitied. The human face means nothing any more.” Politicians in the west whose inadvertent policies had conjured up the conflict were reluctant to intervene at an early stage and thus prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. Not until the Dayton Agreement of 1995 was an end of sorts called. But the Balkans did not come to rest, for pacification is not peace itself. The centre of conflict relentlessly moved to Kosovo.

Only one year later, the fighting between the Serbian police and the Albanian militia UCK, which was demanding autonomy, gave rise to Serb-initiated “ethnic cleansing”, turning more than one million Kosovars into refugees. It took NATO’s military intervention to make the Serbian armed forces capitulate in 1999, but this did not ensure peace or living together in peace. Now it was the Kosovars who expelled the Serb and other minorities, among them members of the Roma. To this day the region lacks much-needed stability.

“No cut-and-dried formula for disaster relief”

Immediately after war broke out in Croatia, in the autumn of 1991 Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe sent initial direct emergency aid for the suffering civilian population to the crisis area. At that time, staff at the Stuttgart head office had no inkling that the eruption of violence in the former Yugoslavia would keep them occupied for a whole decade. They only realised that, once again, this was not going to be disaster relief following a “cut-and-dried formula”. Yugoslavia required “all-out pragmatism” and the ability to respond swiftly. The resilience of the staff was called for in the face of ever-changing frontlines, unpredictable refugee flows and constantly broken cease-fire agreements. Emergency assistance was provided even as the fighting took place nearby.

The “German Convoy”

Immediate emergency assistance in the early 1990s proved to be a logistic challenge which was forever new. Television viewers were familiar with images of convoys of trucks slowly crawling across mountainous terrain in the former Yugoslavia. From early 1994 onwards, one such convoy had been entrusted to Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe by the German Foreign Office. The Ministry had provided ten all-terrain trucks from the stocks of the Federal Armed Forces, however the trucks had to be converted for non-military purposes. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was assigned with responsibi-



Logistical challenge: in 1994 Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was responsible for the German Convoy.

lity on the ground, organising the shipment of aid supplied by German aid organisations to central Bosnia. That was easier said than done. At a feverish pace, preparations were made, including conceptual planning, settling insurance



Professional and fast: the logistics of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe proved their worth in former Yugoslavia.

matters, taking on personnel, contracting with UNHCR. These are only some of the aspects which need to be considered in such missions. In January 1994, the time had finally come for the trucks to be loaded onto railway carriers for their shipment from Germany to Zagreb, which was the first leg of the journey and where the trucks were fitted with special-purpose gear. In the shortest time imaginable, a team of drivers and mechanics was hired and the whole unit was sent to its stationing point at Opuzen on the south coast. As early as February, the first transport was on its way to central Bosnia. Once again, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe lived up to their reputation for speed. However, the constantly shifting frontlines, the continuing threat from fighting as well as snow and ice turned the convoy into a risky undertaking. In the winter of 1994/95, one of the trucks veered off an icy road down a slope. However, not only events on the ground but also developments in Germany dealt a blow to the provision of uninterrupted assistance. The German Federal Govern-

ment curtailed the funding pledged for the convoy, forcing Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to stop operating the convoy. Later on, a freight forwarding firm took over the haulage operation. During the 15 months of its existence, the “German Convoy” nevertheless carried more than 12,000 tonnes of essential supplies to the crisis area.

Efforts to raise people's confidence in their own strength

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's assistance to Bosnia, and later on to Kosovo, was based on the concept developed in 1993 of “rehabilitation of habitat and livelihood” as the main pillar of the relief work. Central to this was the realisation that isolated

measures produce little effect for the people. Instead, at the same time as securing the people's survival, new habitats and livelihoods had to be created, infrastructure put in place and self-sufficiency guaranteed, all in keeping with the principle of capacity building: “Only on the basis of a reasonably well functioning community can peaceful co-existence grow, mutual confidence arise and normality return. Farsighted emergency assistance does not limit itself to the dire need of the moment. It has to lay a foundation that will restore the people's trust in their own strengths and will be an essential prerequisite for living together without resentments.” (Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe Annual Report 1996).



Donation Seal of Approval from the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI)

With a growing number of appeals for funds in the midst of an increasingly complex landscape of humanitarian aid organisations, how does one decide whom to give to? The German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI), which has been in existence since 1893, has awarded the DZI seal to selected humanitarian charity organisations since 1992, and to environmental and animal protection agencies and cultural organisations since 2004. In its demand-oriented social welfare archive, DZI keeps records on approx. 2,100 charitable aid organisations. The information is scientifically evaluated. On this basis, DZI responds to enquiries from private individuals, companies, government agencies and the media.

The DZI seal is awarded after careful examination and only for a period of one year. The core values of the award criteria are truthful and serious public relations and verifiable, economical and statute-conformant use of funds. The DZI seal offers donors a guarantee that their money is in good hands and that it will be received by those who need it. Since 1992, DZI has given its donation seal of approval to Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe each year.



Learning to walk again: a workshop for artificial limbs in Split in 1994.

Initially, hotel complexes and tourist villages were turned into refugee centres. In the years that followed, houses and apartments, communal buildings, hospitals and kindergartens were rebuilt or newly constructed, refurbished and fitted out. Some 30 villages were re-connected to the power grid. Whenever the frontline appeared to hold, the measures would start.

During the construction work, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supported the inhabitants with regionally sourced build-

ing materials and food - a guiding principle of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's operations. All ethnic groups were equally supported, with the involvement of local community leaders such as priests, imams and village administrators. Such joint action was designed to prepare the foundation for living together peacefully in future. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's philosophy was "It is futile to apportion blame. It is not only the Serbs, the Bosnian or the Moslems who are to blame. West European diplomacy, too, has failed. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's



Well-deserved retirement: retired people in a reconstructed old people's home.

assistance must not be used as a smoke-screen for politicians in the west to hide their inaction.” (Annual Report 1994)

In February 1994, Hannelore Hensle saw with her own eyes what had been achieved in the Neum and Ravno regions: “Last year we were able to start repairing the stables and equipment sheds, and supply seeds. The spring sun makes the cold wind go unnoticed and brightens up the green of the winter wheat growing in the low-lying fields sheltered by the hills. Stalks of grain rise as symbols of hope amidst the war. The seeds are growing.” Nevertheless, the signs of destruction were hard to overlook: the ruins of churches and mosques, devastated houses and schools. The destructive machinery of war had been wielded in a ruthless manner, but the clouds of depression began to give way to the ray of hope that was reconstruction. Every little success counted. Scenes like these were so encouraging: “A little old lady flitting around, a young child darting past. In next to no time our two trucks were sur-

rounded by people who clapped in delight at the sight of carrots and onions,” recounted a staff member of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in 1994, amazed at the sight of such joy lighting up the faces of the people when they got their first fresh vegetables in months. Elsewhere refugees proudly moved into the houses

they had repaired themselves thanks to the assistance rendered by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. But just as the worst need seemed to be banished in this area, a new tragedy was in the making in Kosovo. Here, too, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helped, using the same methods that had proven a success in Bosnia.



DIY reconstruction: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helps people to rebuild their lives themselves.



At home again thanks to the reconstruction programme of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

Strategies of context-specific emergency assistance

The “programme for rehabilitation of habitat and livelihood” served as a model that was further developed within the organisation as a strategy for context-specific, sustainable emergency assistance. Today it is an integral part of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s approach. The extensive level of assistance rendered in former Yugoslavia led to a further development of its work based on these experiences. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s innovative programme met with international approval and the UNHCR recommended it be emulated by other aid organisations. As a result, it provided orientation for more than 80 per cent of the organisations involved in the reconstruction work in Bosnia. This once again highlighted the crucial im-

portance of independence and neutrality in the work of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. Despite this success, the German government discontinued its funding of the programme at the end of 1998 because political interest had shifted elsewhere. With media interest having waned too, insufficient donations were then received for Bosnia and it was no longer possible to continue the programme. What mattered now was to help the refugees living in Germany to return to their devastated native country. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe once again rose to the challenge.

Responsibility does not end at the airport - aid for refugees returning to Bosnia and Kosovo

In view of the unstable situation in the former Yugoslavia, Diakonie Katastro-

phenhilfe“ warned against an over-hasty return of the refugees currently living in Germany. As early as 1996, its 10-point programme called for the return process to be carefully coordinated. Such return should only take place once the reconstruction process in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and later on in Kosovo, had started and was adequately funded. Particular importance was attached to maintaining ethnic-religious rights. A peaceful co-existence in the home community had to be ensured.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe emphatically insisted on the right to stay in Germany for people in cases of hardship, such as former refugee camp residents, severely traumatised persons and those at risk due to “bi-national” marriages. “In view of such circumstances, German responsibility simply cannot be allowed to end at the airport in Sarajevo,” stated one of the guidelines in the 10-point programme of 1996, which later became equally valid for refugees from Kosovo. Having turned the whole region into crisis area over the last ten years, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia tested the strengths of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s staff to the limits.

Around the globe, 155 programmes were undertaken in 1999 alone, demanding the full efforts and resources of this small team of people. In retrospect, Hannelore Hensle wrote, “If I wasn’t sure how much our work means to the people, if I wasn’t confident of the untiring commitment of all our staff, I would have long given up.”

THE NINETIES ++ FORMER-SOVIET UNION RWANDA SOMALIA TUKEY LATIN AMERICA

In the 1990s, aid measures were urgently needed in Europe and its neighbouring countries. Nationalism had sprung up in various places, causing problems beyond Yugoslavia. In the collapsing Soviet Union and its successor states hundreds of thousands of people were on the brink of starvation. Other focal points of this decade were Rwanda, Somalia, Turkey and Central America - in all these countries aid was provided by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe quickly and with minimal red tape.

Emergency aid for the former-Soviet Union

Over the course of three long winters, from 1990 to 1993, the western world witnessed the social decline of the former Soviet superpower. The planned economy and comprehensive public social services had been abolished but a new order did not yet exist to take their place. Millions of people lost their employment or went without wages for months, with no protection from a social safety net. Moscow alone had half a million people living below the poverty line. More than 100,000 went hungry in the winter of 1990. As usual, the absence



Giving hope: After the political changes in 1989/90, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe committed itself to the countries of the former USSR.

of a social safety net hit the old, sick and children. Calls for help came from all over the disintegrating USSR. Who should be helped first? A swift response was needed to supply aid for survival to at least the worst hit areas. In addition to the extensive earthquake relief programmes for the survivors of the Armenian earthquake, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe launched its "Aid Campaign for the Soviet Union", later renamed "Humanitarian Aid for the CIS" (Commonwealth of Independent States) following the political developments in the former Soviet Union.

Setting out from Bremen on their journey to Armenia, the trucks of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe were loaded with 40 tonnes of emergency supplies - dried milk and baby food, pasta, pulses, rice, tinned meat, sugar, margarine, tea and oil. A few days later, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe sent out a THW (German Technical Aid Agency) convoy to deliver food parcels to

Ukraine. At the same time, three communities in Latvia received 20 tonnes of baby food, tinned food and clothes. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe commissioned the Red Army's airfreight division to fly emergency aid to Volgograd. With the help of Baden-Württemberg's social service ministry large quantities of medicine were sent to Ekatarinburg, to be "paid for" in roubles by the city.

The proceeds were in turn allocated by an interdisciplinary committee of the city, the health/social services ministry and church representatives for social welfare purposes. The funds were used, for example, for the complete refurbishment and fitting out of the "Special Child Centre", an institution for the disabled. In time for Christmas, a truck made its way to what was still Leningrad, carrying food parcels for the old and chocolate for the children as festive gifts. In addition to emergency food aid, Diakonie Katastro-

phenhilfe supported hospitals, social service establishments and the organisation of vacation programmes for children.

Where necessary, it provided vehicles to transport the food, helping spontaneously wherever the need arose thanks to people's generous readiness to donate. The amount of donations received totalled 11.6 million German marks. Besides Russia, attention was also focussed on the Baltic and central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan), Siberia and the Caucasus - here particularly the Armenian earthquake disaster area and the crisis areas of Azerbaijan and Georgia. From 1995 onwards, aid for Chechnya and the victims of the war which had broken out there joined this list.

Continuing aid for the "forgotten continent"

The historic events in eastern and south-eastern Europe in the 1990s captured the world's attention. Africa moved away from its place in the limelight during the previous decade. The media usually only remembered the "forgotten continent" when spectacular images of starvation or excesses of violence were published. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe did not follow such fluctuations in remembering the disasters that had happened. Unaffected by media interest, it maintained aid for Africa as one of its priorities. In the 1990s, Rwanda and Somalia were among the countries where Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe dedicated its efforts to providing context-specific and sustainable humanitarian assistance.



In the 1990s the conflicts in Africa disappeared from the focus of the public. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe remained in the country.

++ NETWORKS AND COOPERATION

As well as more than 60 years of experience in humanitarian aid, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe also has a large network of national and international partners. It is only by joining forces with others that we respond to global disasters and crises. Through various alliances we give a voice to people in need and stand up for humanitarian issues in the political and church arenas.

++ **International partners in aid work**

The ACT Alliance, of which besides Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe many of our local partners are also members, is one of the biggest church-based alliances for humanitarian aid and development worldwide. ACT is short for Action by Churches

Together and provides assistance in 140 countries with approx. 1.1 billion euros of aid per year. The goal of the alliance is to better coordinate the aid from churches worldwide and to make it even more effective through common standards.

Member of
actalliance

We also cooperate closely with the Catholic relief organisation Caritas international.

Cooperation partnerships furthermore exist with Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe Austria and the Social Service Agencies in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland.

++ **Support through public funds**

For part of its projects Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe receives public funds, without which it would be virtually impossible to provide the help we give in many crisis areas of the world - especially for the “forgotten disasters”. The German Federal Foreign Office (AA) awards grants for projects, particularly for emergency relief after natural disasters and in conflict regions like Syria or Mali and for disaster prevention. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is a member of the Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee of the Federal Foreign Office.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) primarily promotes projects for transition assistance to facilitate development

and the formation of structures, for example for displaced persons in Somalia or disaster prevention in the Palestinian territories.

ECHO is the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department. Cooperation is governed by a partnership contract which enables Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to apply for funding for humanitarian aid projects.

++ Cooperation in professional associations and umbrella organisations

The Development Policy Association of German Non-Government Organizations (**VENRO**) unites around 120 German relief organisations. Since 1995, VENRO has been committed to ensuring human rights and safeguarding the natural basis for people's livelihoods and global justice. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is active in the working group dedicated to humanitarian aid.

VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is an association of 83 European non-governmental organisations in humanitarian aid. VOICE engages in dialogue with the European Union regarding emergency relief, disaster prevention and the principles and quality of humanitarian aid.

APRODEV was founded in 1990 as an umbrella association of Protestant relief organisations from 13 countries in order to represent their interests towards the European Union. 16 aid agencies currently belong to APRODEV. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is engaged in the working group focussing on humanitarian aid.

In the **Aktionsbündnis Katastrophenhilfe** (Action Alliance disaster relief) the experienced worldwide active humanitarian organisations Caritas international Germany, German Red Cross, UNICEF Germany and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe joined together in order to call for help and collectively engage in humanitarian advocacy in the event of major disasters.



Forced to flee: the genocide in Rwanda left almost one million dead.

“Effectively filling the holes, not just patching over them” - Rwanda and Somalia

The conflict between the two ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi, had been smouldering in Rwanda since the 1960s. In the summer of 1994, the situation escalated. Hutu militias carried out merciless attacks, sometimes supported by the Hutu population. In a very short time, 800,000 people lost their lives. All over the world, people looked on as this genocide unfolded in which “victims” often became the “culprits” and the “culprits” soon became “victims.” In fear of violence and revenge, two million people fled to neighbouring countries.

Burundi, Tanzania, Zaire (today: Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Uganda had to cope with a great number of refugees. The relief work of Diakonische Katastrophenhilfe formed part of “Church World Action - Rwanda”, which was founded by the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation in response to the appalling level of need. Both in Rwanda and in its neighbouring countries, mainly Tanzania and Zaire, the suffering population and the displaced people had to be taken care of. A psychosocial counselling programme was set up to help the traumatised people.

In 1996, clashes erupted between Zairian rebels and Rwandese Hutu militias. The Rwandese refugees on the border between Rwanda and Zaire came under fire from all sides and were strategically used by the parties at war. Even today using refugees and displaced persons as a tactical political manoeuvre is a characteristic of many wars. In view of serious threats, the provision of aid for refugees and the Zairian population had to be repeatedly interrupted and was only sporadically possible to a limited extent.

In November 1996, the importance of flexibility and swift action in emergency aid became clear when the news spread that hundreds of thousands of people

were returning to Rwanda from the refugee camps along the border. Emergency shelters had to be moved and mobile stations providing the people with initial aid had to be revived.

In order to help on a long-term basis, apart from refugee work, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was also involved in the procurement of seeds, agricultural tools and in the reconstruction of infrastructure. It was important to help the people to get started again - people who were faced with the devastation of their former homes. Social work and reconciliation measures were implemented to enable the people to overcome the traumas and to build up new social relationships.



Easing suffering: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supported a number of refugee camps in Rwanda.



Easing suffering: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supported a number of refugee camps in Rwanda.

Another focal point on the African continent - even to this day - is Somalia. On her journey through this country in May 1992, Hannelore Hensle observed “The situation reminded me very much of Biafra. Both then and in Somalia today, you can see that political, economic and power interests take precedence, even over the lives of the people!”

Civil war broke out in Somalia in 1989 in order to topple the dictatorship of Siad Barre. In 1991, the dictator was driven out but the fighting went on. In 1992, there was a famine to content with on top of the bloodshed. Hundreds of thousands of people died. Together with Hans-Otto Hahn, Hannelore Hensle went to Somalia to assess the situation in May 1992. “A girl is laid next to an elderly, emaciated woman on a blanket

spread on the floor. Her face is screwed up with pain and she starts crying. Hunger is painful. But there are no tears, there is no sound. The hunger keeps sapping all her energy,” described Hensle in her report to Stuttgart. This impression and also other horrifying scenes led to the decision that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe should become operational itself with emergency relief measures. More help was needed in addition to the airlifts of relief supplies that had begun in the beginning of the year and were reinforced from May onwards. In order to provide efficient assistance, the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas international pooled their resources. In August 1992, they set up a joint office in Mogadishu with the name Diaconia Caritas Germany (DCG). The motto of this mission was: “Effective- ly filling the



In the refugee camp: Somali civil war victims.

holes, not just patching over them.” In concrete terms, this meant strengthening ongoing activities, developing and expanding these activities, and revitalising existing Somalian structures and institutions so that they would function again. Helping people through

capacity building was an effective form of emergency relief. The office was initially planned for just a short period of time but became a long-standing institution. This happened for a variety of reasons, mainly because of the lack of local structures. The aid intervention of the UN was discontinued in 1995, the UNOSOM troops left the country and with them most of the international aid agencies. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe remained

in the country. When Caritas had to withdraw its physical cooperation because an Italian physician was shot dead, sister organisation Bread for the World took up its place as the second partner at the end of 1996. The DCG office became the DBG - Diaconia Bread for the World Germany.



Caritas and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe invest in medical care and an educational centre in Mogadishu/Somalia.



The guiding principle for the work of the project office was and still is that the relief measures should be based entirely on humanitarian principles, regardless of clan-ship or other distinguishing factors. Thanks to these strictly observed principles, the DCG, and later also the DBG, won a great deal of trust among the population and, perhaps not so much the love, but at least the respect of the various clan leaders.

Today this is still very much the biggest guarantee of safety, as far as such a thing is even possible in a torn country. The Somali staff members of the DBG were deliberately selected from among the various clans to form a micro-cosmos of society. Following the abduction of staff from the International Red Cross and the French organisation ACF (Action against Hunger), it was thanks to the help of the DBG team that a safe release was able to be negotiated.

The earthquake in Turkey

More than 14,000 deaths, at least 44,000 injured, around 35,000 missing, roughly half a million homeless people - this was the result of an earthquake in Turkey in August 1999. "Entire residential areas with apartment blocks crumbled. The track of devastation stretches for kilometres along the coast....," is how Hannelore Hensle described her impression of the situation shortly after the earthquake. "In Golcuk 3,524 people died, some 1,890 people are still lying under the rubble and about 1,000 persons are missing. [...] What is mainly needed, according to the staff on the ground, are winter clothes and food [...]. So far 15 tented camps for about 25,000 people have been set up [...]. The mayor of the town requests a more permanent form of assistance. He would



Homeless: after an earthquake in Turkey in 1999 hundreds of thousands of people had to be taken care of.

like to build a new town and is asking if we can help.” The number of affected citizens in this densely populated area between Imit and Ducze was estimated at over 500,000 people.

In November 1999, another earthquake hit the region and a further 10,000 people lost their homes. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided assistance by drawing on its tried and tested cooperation with the Turkish aid organisation Anatolian Development Foundation (ADF), Caritas Germany, HEKS (Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Churches in Switzerland) and Caritas Switzerland. In Germany, people’s readiness to help was enormous, even more so due to the good relationship between the German and the Turkish people. There were three phases of assistance. After the first phase of immediate emergency aid, which in-

cluded the provision of water, food, blankets and clothes, the second phase consisted of a further six months of emergency and winter aid in the form of weather-proof tents, heaters, mattresses and winter clothes.

The third phase ran until 2002 and involved the reconstruction of schools, health centres and orphanages. In 2001, some of the reconstruction projects supported by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe were already able to be inaugurated: ten primary schools, two health centres, a dispensary and an orphanage. “As we continued our tour,” wrote Hannelore Hensle in her travel report, “I suddenly felt a hand touching mine. I turned around; it was the mother of a child that had been fatally hit by a girder. We walked together for a while, hand in hand.”



Learning in a tent: schooling continued thanks to the help of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

More disaster prevention - Hurricane Mitch

“I am in the midst of an ocean of tears, helplessness, mourning and pain ...” These were the words with which a member of staff from the National Council of Churches in Nicaragua described the situation after Hurricane Mitch had raged through Central America at speeds of 240 km per hour. Tens of thousands were left dead or injured in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador. The hurricane devastated large parts of the infrastructure and agricultural production, resulting in 20-year setback in the development of these

countries, which were already among the poorest in the world. Within the first hours of need Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe offered its help in conjunction with its partner organisations in the region, providing food, medicine, makeshift shelters and basic daily supplies. At the same time, the aim was to enable farmers to resume agricultural activities as quickly as possible by giving them seeds in order to prevent the threat of a famine.

Large-scale deforestation, ecologically harmful slash-and-burn agriculture and monocultures had damaged and eroded the soil over decades, leading to landslides, which were now burying entire



Protection against erosion in Haiti: through a “cash for work” project Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe built stone walls to counteract soil erosion in the mountains of Petit Goave.



Forests being cleared for the cultivation of monocultures destined for export to the world's developed countries.

villages. A harmful agricultural policy had driven the mostly indigenous small-scale farmers to dangerous sloping terrain that was unsuitable for agriculture. These were the factors that led to Hurricane Mitch generating such a magnitude of destruction. To this day, this is why Diakonische Katastrophenhilfe tries to contribute to active landscape conservation, soil preservation, slope stabilisation and reforestation in Central American countries and to inform municipalities about risk analyses and emergency plans. “Disaster prevention” and “municipal self-organisation to cope with disasters” are the banners under which we endeavour to promote sustainability.



Reforestation as a countermeasure.

German-German disaster relief work growing together

The 1990s also brought about the unification of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its counterpart in the former GDR. The Protestant church of the GDR was involved in the foundation of the cam-

paign Bread for the World in 1959. Although Bread for the World was meant to operate as an all-German campaign, the geo-political situation did not allow this. In the East, the campaign went its own way, but contacts between the organisations still continued through global alliances. Even during the peak of



Hannelore Hensle

(Born in Freiburg, Breisgau in 1943)

Hensle joined the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany in 1969 and participated in the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe airlift campaign for Biafra. She worked in the Children's Village in Gabon where children from Biafra were cared for. After this she was involved in disaster relief, for example in Angola. From 1982 to 2005 she served as the director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. In this position she played a key role in the development of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's expertise and was instrumental in establishing Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe as a distinct brand. Under the leadership of Hannelore Hensle, some 150 projects per year were implemented in around 50 countries, amounting to a volume of between 20 and 60 million euros.



Günther Otto

(born in Floha, Saxony in 1928; died in Radebeul in 2010)

Otto was a pastor and for many years an authorised representative of Bread for the World in the GDR, an organisation which, due to its resources at that time, only provided emergency relief. From 1948, Otto studied Protestant theology in West Berlin and took over his first parish in Wernsdorf, Saxony in 1955. In 1968, he transferred to the Inner Mission in Radebeul and then to Bread for the World in 1980. In the GDR, he was renowned for his talent for organising extensive donations in kind despite the chronic shortages in the GDR. In 1991, shortly before retiring, he oversaw the merging of the campaigns in East and West.

the Cold War, the church-based humanitarian aid agencies were in fact platforms of exchange between East and West, although this was hardly opportune. One of the particularities in the GDR was that, unlike the West, Bread for the World did not provide long-term development cooperation. Instead, Bread for the World in the GDR exclusively helped in the event of a disaster. The Bread for the World organisation in East Germany had to operate independently because it was not possible to convert the East German mark. This meant it could only be active abroad by assisting the German Red Cross in the GDR. Most of the aid recipients were thus not aware that they were being supported

by the East German part of Bread for the World. It was a problem for the church-based relief work that there were frequent attempts to link their work with the public development service called the “Solidarity Committee”, which also brought weapons into third world countries. Usurpation attempts by the state were part of the daily agenda, but the independence and particularly the obstinacy of the campaign, which was suspiciously eyed by the State, was maintained in the GDR until 1989/90. It was the reunification that finally paved the way for the unification of the campaigns in the East and the West, which took place in 1991.

ACT Alliance

Aid Campaign for Hungary, Joint Church Aid, BERRS in Bangladesh, Churches Drought Campaign in Africa - time and again the humanitarian aid provided by the churches has been particularly effective when organised as a globally coordinated effort. In 1995, following numerous discussions, the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Council joined forces to create Action by Churches Together (ACT) as a permanent structure for cooperation between Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches and their humanitarian aid agencies. In 2010, ACT became ACT Alliance, uniting the global emergency relief alliance ACT international with the development network ACT Development.

Today, the global alliance comprises approximately 140 churches. In times of crisis, they jointly determine the level of need, the amount of funding and the allocation of funds and, finally, the implementation of measures on location. Every year, the alliance mobilises donations amounting to around 1.5 billion US dollars. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is a founding member of ACT and contributes a major part of the funds. Through ACT Alliance, the impact of the worldwide humanitarian aid activities of the churches has been improved. In nearly all countries there are partners in place who receive support and training from national offices and ACT Alliance in times of crises.



FLOOD OF THE CENTURY ++ FLOODING IN EUROPE

THE YEARS AFTER 2000 ++

The Zwinger and Semperoper buildings were engulfed by the floods, Dresden's main station resembled a lost island in the sea and numerous other cities and towns were under water. In summer 2002, a veritable flood of the century hit parts of Germany, the Czech Republic, Romania and Russia. Germany experienced its most serious disaster since the end of the Second World War. 20 people lost their lives in the floods, thousands were made homeless. For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe the relief campaign launched in response to the flooding marked a record in its history: a total of around 60 million euros were collected in donations. People from as far afield as Mozambique and Georgia showed their sympathy by sending donations.

Complex and long-term relief projects continued in the Sahel region in countries such as Somalia and Sudan where the crises had reached a chronic level. Such cases are deemed ongoing disasters and are largely ignored here at home – this, too, is characteristic of our times. If you want to tackle new challenges, you have to enter into new territories. To meet the demands of a globalised world, the Protestant Churches in Germany and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe reacted by founding the Protestant Agency for Diaconia and Development. Based in Berlin, the new agency helps to bring together the tasks and fields of work of the Bread for the World campaign and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, united under the umbrella of the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany, with the Protestant Development Service (EED).

GERMANY

CZECH REPUBLIC

RUMANIA

RUSSIA

SUDAN

SOMALIA

INDONESIA

INDIA

SRI LANKA





Effects of the flood of the century: in Grimma the entire Schulstraße was under water in 2002.

Flood of the century in 2002: new dimensions of natural disasters

It was a fundamental change of perspective: images of temporary shelters, despair, need and worries about survival had long been a thing of the past in Germany. Large-scale disasters seemed impossible in a high-tech country in the heart of Europe, giving us the impression that we could control the forces of nature. Over the course of many decades this view of ourselves and the world became ritualized. A reaction of horror regarding the need experienced by others was usual practice. However, the 12th August 2002 shattered all of these

complacent notions. While in its earlier days it had spoken of “faraway neighbours” in need, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe suddenly found that aid was needed by its very own neighbours in Germany. The “reality of the unthinkable”, as described in a Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe document, hit Germany with full force. Days and days of heavy rainfall, particularly in the Ore Mountains and Giant Mountains, had completely saturated the ground, causing the water to flow down into the valleys unimpeded. The level of the rivers rose at a surprisingly fast rate. The Vltava, Elbe and numerous smaller rivers burst their banks. In August the flood wave affected mil-

lions of people, particularly in Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, arriving with full force. Entire cities were flooded, fields were swamped and harvests were destroyed, bridges collapsed and disruption was caused to telephone lines and railway tracks. Over 300,000 people lost their homes. The water swept away their houses or flooded them, destroying furniture and household items.

“Lack of disaster prevention in Germany”

The disaster prevention organisations in Germany were not prepared for this scale of destruction, let alone to provide sufficient resources on location for communication structures, people and aid supplies in the now affected areas. The Germans had allowed themselves to feel too safe in the previous decades, leading them to take their largely unproblematic life for granted. As one of the first aid organisations on the scene, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided the flood victims with emergency shelters, blankets, food and clothing. They had the major advantage that facilities run by the church and Protestant social service organisations already existed everywhere. The church-operated information centres in Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt immediately provided a solid network for giving advice to flood victims and paying out financial aid - the network

of the church worked. The first stage of aid offered by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe included psychosocial and pastoral counselling, donations in kind and the payment of financial aid up to 300 euros for the head of the household and up to 200 euros for each further family member. This was provided as emergency relief without the need for any proof of means and with no conditions attached. The second stage saw families receive a contribution towards repairs from Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. Based on criteria agreed with the German Red Cross and Caritas international, the money was made available for repairing houses and buying new household items. Families received up to 15,000 euros. Children’s day-care centres, old people’s homes and other social institutions received such contributions, for example in Döbeln, Saxony. The water flooded into the Protestant nursery school in Döbeln on the banks of the Mulde river with an almighty force, flooding the cellar and the entire ground floor.



The extent of the damage caused by the flood in 2002 was worse than initially thought.

It was only by sheer luck that no children were injured. One week after the disaster, relief workers had already repaired the shell construction of the walls and floors. Diggers cleared away the silty sand from the wooden playground area. Until the restoration works had been completed, a swiftly erected container nursery school was set up to accommodate the children. The third stage gave reconstruction aid to home and apartment owners as well as small businesses. Amounting to over 44 million euros, this accounted for the largest part of the aid provided by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. Approximately 17,000 applications were processed by staff. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe focused on supporting social institutions and organisations serving the public good. Individual winter aid and support for cases of social hardship also formed part of its relief programme.

Coordination of flood relief

No two disasters are the same. When dealing with a disaster, you are always trying to bring chaos into order - something which a disaster relief veteran knows only too well. The practical coordination of the entire relief operation on location fell to the responsibility of project consultant and qualified engineer Stefan Schroeer, who over the last 30 years had built up a wealth of experience in many disaster regions around the world. When he received the call at home in Cloppenburg, Lower Saxony asking him if he wanted to manage the coordination office in Dresden, he immediately went into action. "Disasters always mean chaos. If there had been no chaos with the affected local people overwhelmed by the situation, then they wouldn't have had a disaster," he says, describing the initial situation in the flood areas. The most im-



After the flood: in Pirna a house has to be refurbished after the flood in 2002.

portant thing was to be able to communicate. A telephone and computer are basic requirements in order to be immediately contactable for the flood victims. The Internet played an important role. Information could be spread more quickly and communication was organised with affected people or partners. Looking back, 2002 was a good example of how new information technology can speed things up and enable more direct communication in disaster relief operations.

For five years Stefan Schroeer led a team of up to 40 persons that functioned really well despite the high level of pressure. What impressed him the most: “As a result of the flood, relationships between people became closer again.”

Following the initial emergency relief and repair work, Schroeer’s team especially advised the affected people on rebuilding. The aim was to ensure that when the next flood disaster happens, the damage would be as minimal as possible. Their consulting and advice focused on the use of construction materials for new buildings that do not become saturated with water and the installation of flood-proof heating and electrical systems. Simple practical advice was also provided, for example that the electronics for controlling lifts should not be installed in basements. Thousands of people took up this offer of help

Reducing economic consequences

Disasters have wide-reaching consequences, causing far more than just di-



Between files: Stefan Schroeer coordinated the flood relief operation in 2002 from a temporarily constructed flood office.

rectly visible damage. If a family loses its livelihood, no longer has a regular income and is unable to repay loans and debts, this chain of events will ultimately result in seizure of possessions and a deep-running change in life situation with psychosocial consequences. To prevent such a downward spiral from occurring, it was important for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to target its aid at those directly affected and also to address the long-term impacts. Rebuilding and recovery therefore also meant protecting owners of small and medium-sized enterprises against debt. Many medium-sized business owners had secured their bank loans with property or machinery. To prevent lines of credit from being cancelled due to the loss of these securities, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided help with the often tough negotiations with the banks. For example, family W. were protected in this way against the loss of their home and the livelihood of their business. Mr W. had taken out a loan for his shop in the high street of a small town on the

Elbe river and used the family home as security. When the house was swept away by the flood, they were faced with the cancellation of the loan and foreclosure proceedings. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helped by providing a loan and successfully supported Mr W. in his negotiations with the bank. The debts were cleared and the family were able to restart their lives.

The European dimension of the flood

Outside of Germany the flood particularly affected the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Russia. Here, too, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided aid and was represented by partner organisations. When the Vltava burst its banks in August 2002 and large

areas of Prague, Pilsen, Karlovy Vary and other cities were flooded, over 220,000 people had to be evacuated. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe worked together with the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church of the Bohemian Brethren within the framework of the church network ACT Alliance, providing financial aid amounting to over one million euros. 900 volunteers were sent by the Church of the Brethren to the disaster area. They secured the dikes with sandbags and gave psychological support to the affected people. ACT Alliance supported people in rebuilding their lives by helping with the cleanup operation, drying out and repair work.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe also contributed a share of 875,000 euros to a cross-border aid campaign in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. This provided 2,900 families with food, medicine, household goods, hygiene items and construction materials. Social facilities such as nursery schools and old people's homes also received help with rebuilding. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe reacted similarly in Romania and Russia.



In Eastern Europe, too, entire cities were under water after the flood in 2002.



Aid supplies for Bangladesh: Cyclone SIDR destroyed villages in the coastal region of South Khali.

The flood and climate change

The media saw the Elbe flood as further proof of the critical extent of climate change. This was repeatedly emphasised on front pages, in talk shows and special report programmes. The flood was presented as merely a first harbinger of further disasters and indeed controversial opinions were expressed on the subject. Researchers of all backgrounds conducted their scientific debates, with the public looking on in wonderment. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe actively involved itself in discussions. Its relief workers were able to speak from their own experiences all over the world, reporting on situations where they had been directly confronted with the reality of climate change. Many facts spoke for themselves.

Over the course of the past decades, natural disasters have increased in frequency and intensity. According to Münchener Rückversicherung (Munich Reinsurance Company), the number of natural disasters doubled between 1960 and 2003. The ECHO, the European Union's humanitarian aid department, says that since 1975 there has even been more than a five-fold increase in natural disasters. It is probable that climate change has played a significant role in triggering this development and that this trend will worsen in the future. It is a deadly trend. According to the UN, natural disasters will be responsible for 100,000 deaths a year in 2050. Already today, 97 percent of all those who die as a result of natural disasters live in poor countries in the southern hemisphere, where large parts of the popu-

lation are becoming increasingly poor due to globalisation. They have no reserves for handling such disasters. Their poverty is reflected in the places where they live. Pushed to the proverbial edge, poor people live in the areas most threatened by natural disasters in the world. In physical terms, this means they do not live behind the dikes or at protected elevations, but in front of them, where they are directly exposed to floods and storms. Climate change thus has a clearly social component, as the poor are far more vulnerable in the event of a disaster.

In view of this global trend, in 2005 Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe decided to launch a special programme for “Disaster prevention in the age of climate change”. Dozen of pilot projects have since been implemented totalling several million euros. The initial focus region was the Bay of Bengal. Projects were successively started in other regions of Asia as well as in Africa and Latin America. Since the

1980s at the latest, disaster prevention may well have been a standard element in humanitarian aid, but what was important now was that it would be integrated into our programme work in a more systematic and sustainable manner. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is thus a driving force and part of an international development in which humanitarian aid is increasingly also viewed as disaster prevention.

Guidelines for disaster relief in Germany

The experiences of 2002 determined the entire decade. Seven years after the flood, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe adopted its “Guidelines for disaster relief in Germany”, documenting just how much this flood in Germany influenced our self-image, processes and cooperation with the network of the Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and free churches. The flood made it necessary for a re-evaluation of



Cultivation of mangroves: As a result of the tsunami on the day after Christmas in 2004, the Indonesian ecosystem was also damaged. Forestry engineer Putri Balkis plants a mangrove seedling in the river delta of Ulee Lheue.

the situation, with the realisation that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe needed to be prepared to organise extensive aid in Germany on the scale it provided in 2002, when tens of thousands of applications, enquiries and donations were suddenly received. Even at the end of the decade the agency was still busy dealing with the damages incurred. By introducing its guidelines in 2009, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe continued its tradition of always questioning itself and seeing it-self as a learning organisation.

The guidelines not only described the organisational aspects, they also outlined the three-stage aid system used in 2002. Comprising emergency relief, assistance with repair work and help with rebuilding, it set out tried-and-tested courses of action and responsibilities. The guidelines read as a well thought out emergency plan for an entire country. When an enormous flood hit Germany and its neighbouring countries once again in 2013, although not quite on the scale of 2002 but close, the people were prepared. “The network of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and the church sprang into action just like with the flood in 2002. The Guidelines for disaster relief in Germany proved their effectiveness,” summarised the president of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe looking back on events, emphasising: “In just a short time an extensive aid campaign was initiated. However, we were only able to help thanks to the huge willingness of people to send donations and their trust in our ability to provide sustainable and effective aid.”

From 2000 onwards ++

SUDAN
SOMALIA
INDONESIA
INDIA
SRI LANKA
AFGHANISTAN

Africa remained a focus of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's work in the early 2000s. Countries in the Sahel region such as Somalia suffered for decades from droughts, wars and violent conflicts, all of which mutually intensified the situation. Global climate change became noticeable here through the increasing frequency of dry periods, social order completely collapsed at the same time.

Providing aid for the victims of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 was the biggest task tackled by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe this decade. Confronted with the question of “humanitarian intervention” combining humanitarian aid with military operations or military peacekeeping, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe positioned itself clearly against this. Inevitably, this resulted in a lower level of engagement in war-torn Afghanistan.



At the facility set up by aid organisation DBG, each refugee receives two plates of rice to feed their family.

The forgotten ongoing disasters in Sudan and Somalia

Hardly any other region in the world is so severely affected by humanitarian crises as Africa. In the last decade, Diakonische Katastrophenhilfe decided to make Africa the geographical focal point of its work. In the Sahel region, the savanna belt south of the Sahara which stretches from Somalia in the east to Mauritania in the west, multiple related disasters have occurred and are still ongoing. The region is often plagued by

droughts which result in devastating shortages of food and drinking water. This is compounded by wars, civil wars, attacks by militia groups and other violent conflicts which force populations to flee. Especially in Sudan and Somalia, the populations have not been at peace for decades. Most people have never experienced in their lifetimes what it means to live in peace. In 1956, Sudan gained its independence, but unfortunately since then it has been involved in decades of civil war, only interrupted by peace between 1972 and 1983. Even the

founding of the independent state of South Sudan in 2011 did not bring an end to the battle for the country's rich oil resources.

Health stations and midwives

Even though there is no quick and tangible solution, the reason that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe continues to provide aid is illustrated by the following story. The many patients who are being treated by Sebastian Marial Dut at the health station in Warkunjuk, South Sudan have been on their feet since sunrise. For example, the two-year-old girl with her mother who are now standing in front of him. The doctor assesses her with a stethoscope and feels her sto-

mach. Like many children here, the two-year-old is suffering from chronic malaria combined with a respiratory infection. The doctor prescribes the girl with a cough syrup, which the mother can likewise obtain from the health station. The station consists of three bamboo huts with a cleanly swept, shaded area in the middle which serves as a waiting room.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe cares for approximately 60,000 patients annually in its health stations. Desperately needed midwives are also trained here. The mother and infant mortality rate in South Sudan is one of the highest in the world. Until now, for a population of eight million there were just ten trained midwives. In addition, local partners of



Systematic help: an aid worker from partner organisation DBG speaks with displaced persons in Mogadishu and collects their data.



A Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe health station in Rumbek, South Sudan.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in Sudan provide aid supplies to war refugees and displaced persons in Bahr-el-Ghazal, South Sudan and the Western Upper Nile province.

Thanks to its partner organizations in South Sudan, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was able to continue providing support even after the Sudanese President Omar Hasan al-Bashir expelled several foreign aid organisations from the country in 2009. This was his reaction to his arrest warrant for war crimes and crimes

against humanity from the International Criminal Court in The Hague. In this oppressive situation for the many victims of drought and war, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's concept of working together with local partners proved its success. The provided support was not perceived as foreign intervention - something which can quickly happen if foreign aid is organised as an independent undertaking without considering the local context and drawing on the wealth of local knowledge, networks and connections.

Darfur in a continuing crisis

One of the worst disasters in the world occurred in the crisis-hit province of Darfur in Western Sudan. The decades of conflicts between different ethnic groups reached a peak in this area neglected by the central government. Over two million refugees were forced to flee. African ethnic groups who have settled here are confronted with Arabian nomads, all competing for the scarce water supplies and grazing land. In 2003, two Arabian rebel organisations declared war on the Sudanese government and thus also on the inhabitants of Darfur. Rebels, the Sudanese army and the militia groups they support have been fighting with each other ever since. All efforts to resolve the conflict have so far failed. The local partners of Diakonie



Water supply: in a refugee camp near Garsila water is distributed to 3000 displaced families.

Katastrophenhilfe provide the Darfur refugees with water, food and tents. They have also provided basic healthcare. For example, this came to the aid of the 22-month-old Abdul Gafar Isaak, who weighed a mere eight kilos - far too little for his age. At the Hassa Hissa refugee camp near Zalingei, he and many other suffering children were nursed back to health with the help of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

Surviving without a state system in Somalia: partner organisation "Daryeel Bulsho Guild" provides impartial aid for everyone

Somalia has been engaged in an intense civil war since 1992. The state system has completely collapsed. A central government and law and order authorities no longer exist. The power vacuum is being increasingly filled by rival clans and gangs. Compounding the situation, the country suffers frequent droughts and flooding. The lack of infrastructure and the political uncertainty make it extremely difficult for aid organisations to do their work here. Nevertheless, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supports partner organisations as best it can with their projects. A long-term and successful partner is the organisation DBG (Daryeel Bulsho Guud) in Somalia. It evolved from the project office founded in Mogadishu in 1992 by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas international. Since 1997 it has operated with the support of Bread for the World under the name DBG (Diakonie Brot für die Welt Germany).



Distributing food in Somalia: partner organisation DBG prepares the distribution of food in Mogadishu. The country continues to suffer under the consequences of the ongoing civil war.

The independent Somali aid organisation established in 2004 decided to keep its nationally well-known abbreviation DBG, but translated it into Somali as “Daryeel Bulsho Guud”, which roughly means “help for everyone”.

It is through its strictly impartial engagement for all groups of the population that DBG succeeds in helping everyone. Even its workers come from all of the various clans. Cooperation with military parties is something the organisation strictly refuses. DBG provides refugees and drought victims with food, drinking water, blankets, tents and medicine. It also runs health centres and sets up emergency schools. Farmers along the Shebelle river receive rice, sugar, oil and beans as their payment for repairing irrigation systems. A particularly sustain-

able form of aid is the building of shaft wells. Solar energy powers the pumps, keeping the operating costs extremely low. DBG also supports training projects, for example like Faduma Adan’s project in Mogadishu, where women are offered sewing and computer courses at her development centre. The often widowed women have the possibility of supporting and feeding their families through their own work. Faduma Adan reports that after they have completed the courses, their services are sought after.

High risk for aid workers

This aid which is crucial for the survival of many people is provided by the DBG workers under extremely difficult and risky conditions. In 2006 and 2007, Mogadishu was heavily bombed when

fighting took place there between Islamic rebels and the weak transitional government. The DBG office also sustained heavy damages and one worker even lost his life during an attack. The substitute office in an outlying area of Mogadishu was then robbed one year later. Many workers also lost their homes. “I live with my family under a tree,” said Mohamoud Mohamed Kheire, the former DBG deputy director, describing his personal situation.

Shortly after, he was shot and killed by hired assassins working for one of the militia groups, who suspected all staff employed by aid agencies of being spies. It was often with great difficulty that help reached the suffering population, as militias or pirates would ambush the aid shipments. Nevertheless, DBG never gave up. The aid shipments were transported under cover of darkness. Thanks to the courage of the drivers, DBG continued to distribute water, food, mosqui-

to nets and plastic tarpaulins to the displaced people of Mogadishu, many of whom often found refuge just a few hundred meters away from the DBG office. Volker Gerdesmeier, who was the director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe from 2008 to 2011, sees a general problem behind such cases: “I see a fundamental reason for the growing threat to international aid organisations in the way they have been used as a tool by politics and in the “global war on terror” since September 2001. If we and our partners are no longer seen as a neutral helpers, but rather as an organisation of white men who wish to push forward western politics, then it will become very dangerous for all of us.” For Gerdesmeier, the conclusion is perfectly clear: “We need to give more weight to international humanitarian law and create the scope for manoeuvring it requires. Only when international law is truly effective are we able to do our work.”



Volker Gerdesmeier

(Born in Freiburg, Breisgau in 1968)

He studied political science, history and ethnology in Freiburg, Hamburg, Paris and Madrid, and water and sanitation in Loughborough, Great Britain.

After working for seven years at Misereor, initially as a desk officer for West Africa and then as head of the liaison office in Chad, in 2008 he took over as Director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. In 2011 he returned to his home town of Freiburg and has worked there for Caritas international ever since.



After the tsunami, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe's relief work included building 238 houses in the Indonesian community of Salamanga near Sigli.

The 2004 tsunami disaster in Asia

At the end of 2004 another disaster occurred with a completely different character. One of the strongest marine earthquakes ever registered created destructive, metre-high waves that affected people living all around the Indian Ocean. The media interest in this flood disaster, or 'tsunami' taken from the Japanese word, as well as people's willingness to send donations took on unimaginable dimensions. The gigantic flood waves hit on 26 December 2004, the day after Christmas, affecting the coast of Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Maldives, Somalia and other countries in the Indian Ocean. The tsunami claimed over 230,000 lives, the majority of which in Indonesia. Two

million people lost their homes and many also lost their livelihoods.

High media interest and willingness to help

People's enormous willingness to send donations was triggered by the unprecedented level of media reporting, which was in one way very positive for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. The donations amounting to over 40 million euros for the victims of the tsunami helped to provide swift and comprehensive emergency relief. Survivors in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Somalia received food, clothing, plastic tarpaulins, mats and tents immediately after the disaster. Medical and psychological aid also arrived quickly. There was even enough money for re-

building houses and schools, desalinating arable land, buying new fishing boats and additional start-up funds for merchants and tradespeople. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its partner organisations were able to look back on a very successful relief operation. For example, helping Usman A. Wahab. The 40-year-old fishmonger in Banda Aceh on Sumatra sets up his stand against the grey backdrop of the former port every morning. His earnings are sufficient enough to feed him, his wife and their young daughter. He received support from a partner organisation of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, the self-help organisation for tsunami victims “Forum Bangun Aceh” (FBA). They provided him with a loan worth around 200 euros, enabling him to buy a refrigerator for his fish and

goods. Usman A. Wahab must pay this amount back gradually over time.

Mangrove reforestation as disaster prevention

Disaster relief is more than providing just emergency relief. The tsunami particularly raised many questions. The tsunami only had such catastrophic consequences because the local people were not prepared for such a disaster. There were no protective measures in place and any natural protection had been overexploited. This is why, from 2005, directly after the tsunami in Indonesia Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helped to support projects aimed at regenerating the environment after the tsunami, such as the reforestation of the mangrove forests. “The mangroves protect the land and the population, they work like wave breakers. They also form an important basis for the livelihoods for the people here,” explains forestry engineer Putri Balkis. With her organisation “Lembaga Panglima Laot Lhok Kuala Cangkoï” (LPLKC), she worked on the reforestation of 40 hectares of mangrove forests in the Aceh province. Approximately 50 workers from the neighbourhood planted seedlings and cultivated new mangrove seedlings in their self-established tree nursery. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe covered the costs. It will take 20 to 30 years until there is a fully intact mangrove forest here. The inhabitants will then be able to catch crabs, muscles and shrimp and gather honey again. At the the coast with good protection against tidal waves.



New prospects: Usman A. Wahab from Banda Aceh, Sumatra can feed his family again.



Sustainable protection of the ecosystem: In the Ulee Lheue river delta in Banda Aceh women prepare the mangrove seedlings planted four months ago for transport .

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supports projects like these systematically and views this type of engagement in a global context: The tsunami in 2004 drew attention to climate change and has made prevention a key topic. “To prepare ourselves for the effects of climate change, we had to position ourselves differently,” says Peter Rottach, a Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe representative for the topic of prevention and consultant to project partners around the world. After the flood in Germany in 2002 and the tsunami in 2004, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe decided to take responsibility at its own initiative and invest more information

work, time prevention. Although global climate change and the man-made causes of global warming resulting from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil are largely attributable to western industrial nations, it is mainly others who are shouldering the consequences. Particularly in South East Asia and especially in countries around the Bay of Bengal climate change is causing trouble for the local population. Rising sea levels, the consequence of the melting of the Himalayan glaciers and the destruction of coral reefs are already noticeable. Tropical cyclones, flooding and landslides are increasing in frequency.

Determined: foundation of the Climate-Alliance

For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, disaster prevention means doing much more than just offering advice and training. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, for example, workshops were organised with local partners and risk charts were created to provide the basis for what needed to be done first and where in order to reduce the vulnerability of the people and prepare them. It is not enough to build cyclone shelters or install early warning systems in other regions. This had all been discussed prior to the large-scale environmental disasters of the decade. What was decisive was to make prevention a “mainstream topic” in disaster relief. This meant keeping the focus on disaster prevention, taking it into account in every area of work and in all decisions at Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. This also included developing systematic action guidelines for prevention work with partners. This took prevention work to an entirely new

level, as documented in the key papers “Backgrounds and Components of Disaster Risk Reduction” (2008) and “Training Manual on Risk Assessment for Partner Organisations” (2011).

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe also stands for an understanding of prevention that goes far beyond concrete measures on location. A global responsibility exists for climate disasters, since the way in which nature is handled in Europe also has an impact on the world. Therefore, you cannot support reforestation projects in Asia without putting limits on your life which is being lived in prosperity. In view of the challenge that climate-change poses for the environment and society, over 110 organisations thus joined together to form the “klima-allianz deutschland” (Climate-Alliance Germany). Together, they are committed to establishing a political framework which will result in a dramatic reduction of greenhouse gases in Germany. In 2007, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was among the founding members of climate Alliance.



Mangroves as coastal protection from waves and soil erosion.

Together, they are committed to establishing a political framework which will result in a dramatic reduction of greenhouse gases in Germany. In 2007, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was among the founding members of Climate Alliance Germany

who want to get rid of subsidies for fossil fuels, reward energy-saving households and relieve the burden for low wage earners. The alliance stands for the ambitious promotion of building refurbishments, a climate-friendly change in transport policy, ecological road construction, raising European climate targets and involvement in global climate policy.

Being part of such an alliance means entering into new territory. Never before had Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe decided to do such advocacy work in its own country and to support concrete environmental goals in this way. Founding the alliance was a milestone because it introduced a truly global perspective into the discussion on disaster prevention, connecting events around the world with our own actions at home. It is not a matter of charity, it is about justice. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe called for this again in the Khulna Declaration in 2009 together with Bread for the World and partners from 12 countries in the Asia Pacific region.

The declaration linked climate change, the fight against poverty and protecting the poor against disasters. It articulated “the voices of the vulnerable communities”. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helped to carry these voices to Europe. The 2007 Climate Alliance Germany and the Khulna Declaration in 2009 are examples of how Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe carried out its mandate in advocacy of the poor more clearly. For this reason, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Bread for the World opened a joint office in Brussels in 2008.

This enables Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to hear about current trends in the European Union at an early stage, making it possible to influence developments. The office brings together colleagues from the headquarters and worldwide offices of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its partners with German MEPs, experts from the European Commission, Council, the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Communities, networks and the media. Of course not all of this was entirely new. However, the nature and scale on which support for the poor was organised, how we networked internationally, the creation of our own lobby structures and lobby organisations, and the way in which our demands were brought into the political arena all took on a new quality - always as a representative of international humanitarian principles.



Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier speaking with Peter Rottach about disaster prevention.

Overwhelming media interest here, “forgotten disasters” there

In the years of the great natural disasters with people showing an overwhelming willingness to make donations and a high level of medial interest, another phenomenon also became more apparent. Many people in Germany and other European countries made donations because some of the affected regions such as the coastal resort of Khao Lak in Thailand or beaches in India were popular holiday destinations, particularly during winter in Central Europe. Over 600 German holidaymakers fell victim to the tsunami. Amateur videos of the disaster

quickly spread via the internet. In contrast, the media reported in far less detail about the wide-scale flooding in Bangladesh and northern India in that same year or the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Darfur in Sudan. If Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe followed the logic of attention economics and media interests, it would soon be faced with a dilemma. The guiding principle for a church aid agency therefore remains to focus on the needs of the affected people and their specific requirements, rather than concentrating on the media impact of a disaster. For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, this renewed experience with a large media response to a natural disaster

Why are there forgotten disasters?

Forgotten disaster are deadly: If the people of the world look away, the result is a lack of donations and less political effort invested in solving a humanitarian crisis. A disaster becomes forgotten if it no longer has the right “format” for the media. The intensity of reporting (CNN effect), the strategic political interest of the rich donor countries and the strength of the respective humanitarian lobby are influencing the level of involvement in disaster cases. News reporting in particular is discontinued if there is nothing new to report. Crises spanning several years or decades that no longer provide dramatic films and photos are deemed as only marginally newsworthy.

Forgotten disasters are increasing. The European Union takes this phenomenon into account with its annual Forgotten Crisis Assessment. Vulnerability, media reports and existing aid are supplemented by independent assessment and presented in an index which names crisis cases which most people are not even aware of. Independent of political agendas, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been fighting to prevent numerous humanitarian crises from being forgotten, for example in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as in Colombia, Somalia and Pakistan. It focuses on helping partner organisations in these regions, carries out advocacy work and tries to bring fresh stimulus to the public debate also via the media.

ter was a reason to consciously devote itself to “forgotten disasters”.

This goal was set down in writing in 2004 by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its close partner Caritas international in a common policy statement: “Jesus’ commandment to help people in need is an obligation for us and is meant for everyone. It does not allow any differentiation in nationality, ethnicity or religious affiliation. Just as little does it allow a differentiation of important and less important disasters. Therefore, we also provide assistance in crisis areas that receive neither attention nor support from media or governments.

New donation markets and players

Non-government organisations (NGOs) are increasingly active in disaster relief and development cooperation. This often

takes the form of small or even tiny initiatives that follow the need to provide direct aid first hand. Sometimes it can even be individual people who are moved by the images they see on the internet or television and simply decide to set out to provide help on location.

Particularly the big media disasters with their emotive pictures result in an uncoordinated level of actionism, which can actually be counter productive in the crisis region. Haiti after the earthquake in 2010 is an example of this. Rarely before, reported the German newspaper Die Zeit retrospectively, had a country been inundated with so much aid and “foreigners with helper syndrome”, ultimately crippling the country through their attempts to help. The aid could not be adequately coordinated and the Haitians were provided with aid supplies and money with the result, that



After the devastating earthquake on Haiti in 2010, a “Cash-for-work” project helped to clear away the rubble and debris.

is was virtually impossible to interest the local people in long-term reconstruction and development projects as a form of self-initiative. It was easier to rely on the money that was quickly donated by the foreigners. Now there is a lack of media interest, donations are no longer being made and the aid workers from many NGOs have gone.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe adopted a different approach and is concentrating on its proven partnership principle. Donations go to local partner organisations who know the situation well. Aid is not only provided to address short-term needs; instead, it is embedded in a wide-reaching concept of prevention, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Long-term prospects are being developed in cooperation with sister organisation Bread for the World.

Nevertheless, these sustainable approaches, which are also represented by many other aid organisations, increasingly find themselves competing for donations against individual relief workers as well as small and even tiny organisations. In the past, humanitarian aid from Germany had been organised for decades by the large state and church organisations and the German Red Cross. The new situation, sometimes described as “diversification”, sometimes criticised as secularisation”, demanded a new structure. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe took these changing times into account. One step involved modernising donor administration while another step was to sure that Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

made use of all available channels for receiving donations. Compared to the early days in the 1950s when donations were often received in letters by post, nowadays a number of secure and convenient options exist, ranging from text messages to online donations. Two donation alliances were also formed. The first, Aktionsbündnis Katastrophenhilfe (Action Alliance Disaster Relief), comprises Caritas international Germany, the German Red Cross, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and UNICEF Germany. The second, Bündnis Entwicklung hilft (Alliance Development works), was founded in 2004. It is an alliance of the seven aid agencies Bread for the World, Christoffel-Blindenmission, Kindernothilfe, medico international, Misereor, terre des hommes and Welthungerhilfe.

These alliances are a direct reaction to the disasters of 2002 (flood) and 2004 (tsunami) which received a high level of media coverage. Tough competition between aid organisations ultimately prevents them from being effective. All organisations therefore wanted to pool their resources - a development which was also in the interests of the media, as sometimes they no longer knew which donation account they should be giving out to people. During television galas shown on German television stations ARD and ZDF, for example, viewers were provided with just one joint donation account. The money was divided up later without any deduction of administrative costs according to an arrangement agreed between the alliance partners.

“Humanitarian intervention” is not a solution

For the aid agencies, the years after 2000 intensified the issue surrounding their involvement in “humanitarian intervention”. The terror attacks on New York on 11 September 2001 and the USA led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq also confronted Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe with this problem. It provided aid in both crisis areas.

The term “humanitarian intervention” means the deployment of the military for humanitarian operations and/or also for the protection of humanitarian aid organisations. Particularly in conflict regions, civil-military cooperation calls into question the essential neutrality of the aid organisations. This is reflect-

ed in a statement made by the American Secretary of State Colin Powell, who described NGOs during the Iraq war as “such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team”. After an extensive debate, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe decided to unambiguously reject any involvement in such operations: “The past results of this type of intervention policy in conflict areas such as Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq do not give us much hope that it can create stable national structures,” maintains the President of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel. “This applies particularly to countries, for which the national state has never been a viable concept. In addition, in times of globalisation states generally lose control and organisation options. Her decades of experience in highly complex political and



Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel
(Born in Bad Homburg in 1955)

After studying Protestant Theology, Politics and Education, she worked as a human rights representative of the Protestant Church in Germany and Deputy Director of the Berliner Missionswerk. In January 2000 she took over the management of Ecumenical Diaconia in the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany.

Since organisational restructuring in 2012, she has been the President of Bread for the World and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in the new Protestant Agency for Diaconia and Development and also CEO of the entire agency since 2014. Since 2002 member of the Steering Committee of ACT Alliance and therefore instrumental in the development and qualification of the international church aid network and in decision making processes.



Distribution of food in Afghanistan: partner organisation Afghan Development Association distributes food in the district of TakharRustaq.

military conflict areas have helped Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe to reach the conclusion that the best way to protect its employees by achieving acceptance and trust in the population.

Close cooperation with local partner organisations is particularly important, making it possible to take action in places where international UN aid agencies are not permitted to intervene, for example in parts of Afghanistan, or in a country where they had to shut down operations due to reasons of safety, such as Iraq.

If necessary, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe consciously refrains from accepting

donations if the use of the funds cannot be guaranteed as independent and in line with the principles of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe. “That would make a mockery of our neutrality. The first principle of humanitarian aid - not only, but especially in war areas, for example Afghanistan - is to observe the basic rules of impartiality and independence and neutrality.

This clearly communicates to the population that aid and support are not to be equated with the exertion of political influence or as representing the interests of political actors,” emphasises Michael Frischmuth, the Head of Asia and Europe Desk.

NEW CHALLENGES
AHEAD ++





OUTLOOK ++

For over 60 years Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has helped wherever the need was greatest - from natural disasters to violence and displacement. And yet the world has not become a better place. Disasters will continue to happen. The "war on terror" since the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York 2001 is still ongoing. It is the same with the war waged by fundamentalists against those who believe and think differently in their own countries and throughout the world. The violent conflicts conducted in the name of religion and ideology in countries such as Sudan and Somalia have often become complex and are not transparent, combining hostilities and disputes over resources between different clans and ethnic groups.

Humanitarian suffering is also on the rise as a result of global warming in many already poverty-stricken regions in the Southern Hemisphere, such as Bangladesh, Haiti and the Philippines. To help populations in extreme need regardless of their nationality, religion, origin or political affiliation, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is reliant on the continuing willingness of many people to send donations. This is the only way it can follow its path between different clans and ethnic groups.

EMERGENCY RELIEF WORLDWIDE

AFRICA

ASIA

EUROPE

EURASIA

LATIN AMERICA



Men from a “cash-for-work” programme clear the rubble from a severe earthquake in Haiti in January 2010.

In the future, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe will be able to draw on the vast experience it has gained from the last six decades and react to current challenges. In recent years, it has increasingly focussed on the close interlinking of acute emergency relief, prevention work and long-term reconstruction aid. This can be seen in its close collaboration with sister organisation Bread for the World. The international church aid network ACT Alliance has also been increasingly adopting this approach over the last few years.

When the need is chronic: long-term aid for forgotten disasters

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is currently reacting on two problem areas which will continue to require its attention. Around the world, highly complex, chronic disasters are becoming increasingly frequent in which famines, natural disasters, wars and never-ending circles of violence mutually cause and reinforce each other in “failed states” such as Sudan, Somalia or Haiti. The severe earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010 hit an extremely poor country with insufficient government and social structures. It will

continuously be devastated by hurricanes and flooding. The earthquake killed or severely injured over one hundred thousand people, leaving more than a million homeless. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provided many thousands of families with emergency parcels, tents, blankets, tarpaulins and water canisters. Just three weeks after the earthquake, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe began a cash-for-work programme with its partner organisations as a form of reconstruction aid. Tools were flown in from Germany to help the people with clearing away the rubble and rebuilding their homes. Collapsing government structures and the lack of a social network made the work more difficult for many aid organisations. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was fortunately able to draw on decades of experience on the Caribbean island and support a proven church network on location. “We are already on location before a disaster, thanks to our local partners,” says Daniela Simm, who is responsible for

Latin America and the Caribbean, describing this fundamental approach. Emergency relief then progressed to long-term aid by providing people with advice on how to build houses that are resistant to earthquakes and storms, distributing seeds, agricultural consulting and erosion prevention measures.

Long-term aid and political answers are also needed in countries like Somalia and Sudan in the African Sahel region. Here, emergency situations arising from natural disasters and armed conflicts in the absence of state order have developed into chronic, long-term disasters. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe continues to concentrate on this key area, which formed the focus of the first decade after the year 2000. In 2011 a serious famine hit Somalia. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe aided some tens of thousands of victims of famine and civil war in refugee camps at the edge of Mogadishu and in the bordering countries of Kenya and Ethiopia. Together with partner organisation



Martin Kessler
(born in Pforzheim in 1963)

has led the programme section of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe since August 2011. Martin Kessler studied agricultural engineering and initially worked as a consultant in waste management. Since 2001 he has worked for various humanitarian aid organisations in disaster areas in Africa, India and Pakistan. From 2011 he was responsible for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s projects in Sudan,

Indonesia, the Philippines and in Europe before being appointed as the Director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe.

“ACK Christian Community Services of Mt. Kenya East”, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe distributed drinking water and food vouchers to especially needy families. To reduce the backbreaking work for the weakened women of carrying water, often over distances of many kilometres, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe financed hundreds of tanker truck journeys to bring drinking water to the people and their livestock. The continuing civil war and repeated attacks by Islamic militias made it very difficult for the aid organisations to carry out their work. Thanks to local partner organisations, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe was able to continue its aid projects.



Water station at a refugee camp in Mogadishu: partner organisation DBG helps on location.

Severe natural disasters caused by climate change

Another trend is the increasing frequency and intensity of severe natural disasters such as droughts, floods and storms caused by global climate change. We have also experienced this in Germany first hand. During the last twelve years, people living by the Elbe, Danube and their tributaries have suffered two severe flooding disasters. In the Southern Hemisphere, tropical cyclones and flooding have been more frequent and severe in recent years, causing extensive damage. One of the most severe tropical storms in history, Typhoon Haiyan, devastated parts of the Philippines on 7 November 2013. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe ensured emergency relief for the victims and helped to establish long-term prevention by building storm-proof houses.

In light of growing environmental problems, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is increasingly promoting prevention measures that require long-term commitment and close cooperation with development agencies. “The topic of prevention has become an even bigger focus for us. We’re investing more in prevention in order to keep the damage to a minimum in the event of a disaster,” says Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, describing this strategy. “In these times of global warming, resulting in an increasingly rapid succession of disastrous changes in different regions, we need to set up more early warning systems and the people need to analyse the risks of the region in



After the 2013 flood Stefan Schroeer and his team advise the victims on construction and financial issues.

which they are living. This is done by working in close cooperation with us and also through developmental projects run by Bread for the World and other organisations.”

After the severe flooding of the Elbe, Saale, Danube and their numerous tributaries in June 2013, which affected people from Bavaria to Schleswig-Holstein, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s experience and the network it set up following the 2002 flood disaster proved invaluable. Reacting immediately, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its flood aid office in Magdeburg drew up a three-stage plan comprising the tried- and-tested elements of immediate emergency relief, assistance with repair work and

help with rebuilding. Cooperation with the local Social Service Agencies of the Protestant Church was smoothly established and ensured a wide local network. In many areas prevention measures had already taken effect following the previous flood disaster. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe concentrated its efforts on supporting the socially underprivileged who were not covered by the government aid network and small- to medium-sized enterprises. As a long-term protection measure, the flood aid office provided advice on disaster-resistant construction. The flood aid office in Magdeburg was set up for three years to cover the time until the rebuilding work was complete.



Support for families: Rhada Abeid Al Haifid fled with her husband and five children from the city of Daraa.

The current crisis in Syria

Since 2011 the people of Syria have been suffering under the civil war between the Assad regime and various rebel groups. The humanitarian need is becoming greater from year to year and millions of Syrians have fled to the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, providing aid to the refugees of the Syrian civil war was another focal point of its work in the last years. For a long time it had no choice but to concentrate on the refugees outside of Syria, since it was impossible to gain access to the over one million peo-

ple displaced within Syria. The continuing fighting and the restrictions on access enforced by the Syrian government prevented aid agencies from reaching those within the country. Since September 2013, it has been possible to provide aid for refugees within Syria via a partner organisation. In addition, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been supporting thousands of civil war refugees in refugee camps in Jordan with tents, accommodation containers, ovens and blankets. Children are given school materials such as exercise books and pens as well as warm winter clothing. Syrian refugees in Turkey and Lebanon who have managed to find accommoda-

tion themselves, albeit of a very basic nature, also receive winter supplies, hygiene kits and in some cases rent allowances. Many refugees have experienced horrific war crimes and are seriously traumatised. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provides safe rooms for children so that they can play undisturbed and begin to process the horrors of war. It also supports refugee children with attending school so that they can experience at least one aspect of a normal life again. In cooperation with a partner organisation, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is running a successful project in Berkayel, a small Lebanese city north of Tripoli. Working

together, Syrian and Lebanese women provide refugees with warm meals every day in the surrounding camps.

After their long journeys, refugees are undernourished and pregnant women, breast-feeding mothers and small children in particular require healthy and nourishing food. Syrian women can make a small living for themselves and their families in this way. The work also helps them to deal with their war experiences. As an end to the Syrian conflict is not in sight, this will remain a focal point for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its work over the coming years.



Project partner IOCC organises the distribution of food in a tent camp near Tripoli.

Impartiality, sustainability and disaster prevention

To counteract the tendency towards interested development policy, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and its sister organisation Bread for the World follow their principles as church organisations. Focussing on the needs of the people who are suffering is a key element, as is ensuring that aid is provided on an impartial basis. Help is to be given to people regardless of their country, origin, religion or political affiliation. For Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, this requires taking a clear position with regard to the wishes and demands of politics. It means rejecting “humanitarian intervention” and refraining from any collaboration between the military and humanitarian aid organisations. However, many aid agencies view this as a viable option.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is steadfast in its rejection - on the basis of its fundamental beliefs and its experience that the best way to ensure protection for employees of the partner organisations in the field is to maintain impartiality and neutrality.

Over the coming years, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe will be particularly concentrating on further developing and improving the sustainability of the aid it provides. Its new target is “Disaster Risk Reduction”, i.e. the prevention of disasters. The goal is to make regions less vulnerable to disasters before they actually happen. “We want to break the vicious circle of moving from one disaster in a region to the next,” says the Director of



Martin Kessler was given wood for a prayer cross by a village elder during an official visit.

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Martin Kessler, explaining the new principle.

To achieve this, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has drawn on its many years of experience to produce a professional risk assessment programme for assessing the vulnerability of communities to disasters. The plan is also to further develop this concept. Using maps, communities can indicate their vulnerability, for example in the event of a flood or cyclones.

This enables especially vulnerable areas to be defined as well as families who are particularly at risk. By highlighting areas that are especially at risk and people who are particularly vulnerable, this makes it possible to identify the parts of a community that would be most endangered by disasters. Disaster prevention measures can then be introduced in a targeted manner, for example combining cereal cultivation and livestock breeding in order to establish a drought-resistant agricultural system or instigating mangrove reforestation.

Day to day life at Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

Martin Kessler, Director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, talks about the daily challenges of his work in an interview.

→ What would be a typical work day for you? Do you hop on the next plane whenever there's a disaster and join in with the work in the field?

← My typical work day isn't all that different from that of most people who work in an office in Germany! I read emails, participate in coordination meetings either in the office or via Skype, read meeting minutes, sign documents - just normal office work really. It is more the content of my work that differs from "normal" office work. From our headquarter in Berlin we organise aid for countries like Somalia, South Sudan, the Philippines and other disaster hot spots around the world, all of which are usually associated with large-scale human suffering.

To provide aid in an efficient and effective way, this requires professional organisation with clearly defined standards and structures that work together in perfect coordination in emergencies. That's why I don't travel to the affected country immediately after a disaster happens. Through our partner organisations, our offices abroad and other networks we have structures and professional aid workers

in virtually every country who can be immediately on location to provide help in the event of a disaster. Here in Berlin, we work as a team to coordinate the relief work, organise information, logistics, communicate with local partners and of course collect donations, which are essential for the aid programmes.

→ How did you become an aid worker? Is it something you can study?

← Nowadays there really are various ways you can study to become an aid worker. As well as private universities and further education programmes, there are now European degree programmes at several state-run universities that offer a specialisation in humanitarian aid. Some of our employees come to us with this basic knowledge after having studied at university. Nevertheless, practical experience gained in the field is absolutely essential.

I studied agriculture with an international focus before I got involved in disaster relief work. I then worked for various organisations, initially in logistics, then later as a project manager in countries such as Sierra Leone (civil war), Sudan (civil war), India (conflict region of Kashmir), Pakistan (earthquake) and Kenya (drought). In total I worked for almost 10 years in the field before returning to Germany. My technical training as a qualified car mechanic

always really helped me during my work. When faced with problematic situations, I was able to find practical solutions that worked under the conditions - a basic requirement for surviving in a context in which virtually nothing is normal.

→ How do you personally deal with constantly working against disasters that will never end?

← The way in which we personally deal with suffering on this scale is a real issue for humanitarian aid workers. When you're here in Berlin, you don't see the direct consequences in the field. However, as most of us have seen disasters and suffering with our own eyes, it is always emotionally challenging. I find the recurring conflicts the worst because they always affect the people in the same way: death and violence, displacement, rehabilitation, and then it starts all over again. South Sudan is a current example. We all had high hopes that things would begin to stabilise after more than 20 years of civil war. But just three years later the situation in the new country is just the same as it was before.

South Sudan is a current example. We all had high hopes that things would begin to stabilise after more than 20 years of civil war. But just three years later the situation in the new country is just the same as it was before. What I mainly see then is the personal suffering of those affected, who in most

cases are not responsible for the situation in which they find themselves. I try to help these people as much as I can and draw strength from this.

→ What was personal proof for you that your day-to-day work is bearing fruit? Can you give us a particular example?

← On many of my project trips, I've had the opportunity to personally meet some of the people in need. When you look into the eyes of a child who finally has something to eat in their hands after suffering long periods of starvation, you know you are doing the right thing.

In Somalia in 2011, the year of the great famine, I was confronted with the sight of starving children in a hospital. If you've never experienced this, you can't even begin to imagine what it's like. At the same time, I had the opportunity to watch the distribution of food organised by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe in a refugee camp. For me, that was the best and most impressive form of proof that we are doing the right thing.

→ As Director of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, what are the most important goals that you want to achieve?

← We are currently observing an extreme increase in violent conflicts around the world, which is a source of great concern for us. Sadly, we are

often only able to provide limited help because we don't have enough resources to ensure an adequate level of aid. In many cases, access to the affected population is also restricted because the parties to the conflict do not respect the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality and humanity. Improving understanding for this is one of our continuing challenges - in fact it has been for over 60 years.

The foundation of these principles was laid more than 150 years ago with the first Geneva Convention. We are still working to continually improve our aid in order to provide help as efficiently as possible in accordance with internationally recognised standards, above all in places where people are living in extreme suffering. We want to dedicate more of our efforts to the so-called "forgotten disasters", in other words crises in which often millions of people have been refugees for decades, but sadly only receive little interest from the media.

ced specialists. They have a precise knowledge of the local difficulties and make the right decisions. These professional aid workers live and work in an environment often characterised by extreme conditions, large-scale misery, death, despair, limited safety and psychological pressures. We do not want to expose volunteers to this.

Our local partners, however, do count on local voluntary involvement, indeed. In the local communities, for example, there are disaster prevention committees in which many people get involved. People who want to support Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe on a voluntary basis can do this in their own community. For example, drawing attention to forgotten disasters by handing out information or organising donation campaigns to support our aid work.

➔ It is possible to sign up as a volunteer and help with your work?

← Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe does not send European volunteers abroad. There are many reasons for this, but first and foremost it is a question of professionalism. Providing help in crises the way we do through partner organisations requires highly qualified, experien-

60 years of help - but is this an appropriate occasion to celebrate?

Over the last 60 years, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has provided aid in response to numerous floods, earthquakes, wars, famine disasters, floods of refugees and epidemics. But is this an appropriate occasion to celebrate? It is certainly an opportunity to look back at six challenging decades in which Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has achieved a lot with the help of its supporters. Or as Ludwig Geißel aptly put it back in the 1960s: “We have tried to do everything in our power to save people in accordance with our Christian mandate.”

In the early days of our humanitarian challenge, Germany was entrenched in its own disaster, the experience of war, displacement and hunger. With the passing of time, this experience has increasingly faded away, but it still embodies a guiding principle of timeless significance. Our own prosperity and the certainty of leading unscathed lives can by no means be taken for granted, as the floods of 2002 and 2013 showed us in Germany. This also gives us cause to concern ourselves with the fate of others and to take global responsibility. Drawing on 60 years of experience, for Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe providing humanitarian aid means the ability to organise, the willingness to cooperate, taking on risks and taking up advocacy.





Principles of Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is active worldwide, wherever the need is greatest. Its work is based around the following guiding principles:

- As a result of disasters, wars and crises, people find themselves in situations of need which they cannot overcome by themselves. The aim of humanitarian aid is to alleviate the suffering of these people.
- All people have the right to humanitarian aid and humanitarian protection, just as they have the right to give humanitarian aid and provide protection.
- Aid and protection are given regardless of origin, religion, nationality, political conviction or other distinguishing features.
- Humanitarian aid must neither be dependent on political and religious views nor must it promote such views. The only criteria for determining the priority of aid is the need of the people.
- Emergency relief work must respect the dignity of the people. It must respect the prevailing rights and traditions in the area it is provided. The implementing organisations commit themselves to accounting for their actions towards the recipients of the aid and those whose donations they accept.
- Emergency relief is first and foremost survival aid. It includes self-help efforts and tries to reduce vulnerability to disasters. Therefore, measures of emergency prevention, disaster precaution and medium-term rehabilitation must be included from the start.
- In addition, emergency relief makes great efforts to progress to long-term measures of “help for self-help” and development promotion. Right from the start we try to integrate local partners in the planning and measures. Rather than focussing on a supervising role, disaster aid strives to focus on enabling the local population.
- Aid supplies must be used according to need and must be in line with local standards. Preference must be given to local procurement wherever this is possible. The nature and scope of the assistance must be appropriate to each situation of need within the realms of what is possible.

How Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe works

From earthquakes to floods, droughts, wars and displacement, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supports people who are victims of natural disasters or political crises and who cannot overcome this hardship on their own. Founded in 1954, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is the Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany. It is guided by the Christian image of man and our general responsibility for God's Creation. Together with Christianity around the world, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe provides unconditional humanitarian emergency relief - regardless of the origin, political, religious and cultural affiliation of the affected persons.

Together with its sister organisation Bread for the World, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe belongs to the Protestant Agency for Diaconia and Development. Cooperation with Bread for the World ensures the transition from acute need in a disaster to the provision of long-term assistance. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe ensures immediate emergency relief and reconstruction, while Bread for the World takes care of providing sustainable help.

++ We ensure survival

Immediately after a disaster, what people need above all is food, medicine, water, blankets and tents. We buy relief supplies locally whenever possible. This reduces costs through short transportation distances and bolsters the local economy.

++ We build the future

Very often a disaster destroys the entire foundation of people's livelihoods. We help them to take their lives back into their own hands, assist them with rebuilding their houses and provide initial aid by giving them seeds for trade and agriculture.

++ We prevent

As a result of climate change, the frequency and intensity of hurricanes, storm tides and droughts are increasing. We mitigate the consequences of such extreme and often devastating weather by reforesting mangroves, planting seeds that tolerate salt or droughts, enhancing irrigation systems and providing well coordinated disaster management on site.

Frequently asked questions addressed to Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe

1. Can I help with a foreign assignment?

In crisis areas, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe usually works with local partners whose staff policy it cannot influence. Therefore, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe does not place people in internships or assignments abroad. In certain cases, however, the local situation requires the assignment of our own staff in order to maintain the neutrality of the assistance measures or to support local structures with professional staff. As a rule, the selection for this is done via job advertisements.

2. Does 100 percent of my donation reach the people in need?

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helps as swiftly and unbureaucratically as possible, while at the same time managing the donations responsibly and in an economical manner. The aid programmes have to be planned and implemented correctly. This requires a certain administrative effort. The proportion of these administrative costs (about five per cent) is consistent with criteria for the awarding of a fundraising certificate issued by the German Central Institute for Social Issues. The fundraising certificate must be applied for every year. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been awarded the fundraising certificate every year since 1992.

3. How can you guarantee that the donations aren't used improperly?

In order to help in an efficient way, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe collaborates closely with experienced local partners. They know best where and when what kind of help is needed. The reliability of the partners and the quality of relief measures are subject to strict standards, as stipulated for professional humanitarian aid in the international church network ACT Alliance. The partners are obliged to prove the efficiency of their measures.

4. Who is supported by Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe?

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe helps all victims of natural disasters, war and displacement - regardless of their origin, nationality, religion or sex. The crucial criterion for help is solely the extent of the emergency. Aid is primarily addressed at the weakest people in a society, i.e. families with many children, single parents, the old and the sick, and people with disabilities. The loss of their homes and belongings hits them especially hard. In most cases they no longer have the resources to get back on their own two feet without help from outside.

5. Can I specifically support an individual project?

For organisational and donation-related reasons, it is not possible to support a specific project. However, calls for donations generally relate to the provision of help for a very specific crisis area and are labelled with an individual reference word like “Iraq” or “West Africa”. Earmarking the donations in this way ensures that the money is used exclusively for the programmes with the specified purpose.

6. Are there particular aid projects for children?

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe supports children as part of its regular projects. These always take into account the special needs of children. Food supply deliveries, for example, contain special food for babies and small children. Women and children are the first to receive protection from threats and persecution. The situation of children cannot be viewed separately from their environment. The social environment, and above all the family, is of particular importance in all projects, since mothers, fathers and other relatives also care for the well-being of their sons and daughters. It is therefore the case that by helping families, you are helping the children, too.

7. Can I help with donations in kind?

Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe does not accept donations in kind for its worldwide projects. We generally buy aid supplies such as food, hygiene products, clothes and tarpaulins for shelters in local and regional markets. This way we ensure that aid supplies meet the particular needs of the situation and correspond to the circumstances and the customs of the people. Furthermore, the costs are lower and the regional economy is strengthened.

list of abbreviations

AA	Foreign Affairs Department
ACT	Action by Churches Together
ADF	Anatolian Development Foundation
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
DBG	Daryeel Bulsho Guud (Help for all), originally Diaconia Bread for the World Germany
DRK	German Red Cross
DR Kongo	Democratic Republic of Congo
DZI	German Central Institute for Social Issues
ECHO	European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid
EKD	Protestant Church in German
EU	European Union
FBA	Forum Bangun Aceh, self-help organisation for tsunami victims
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GIZ	German Society for international Cooperation - the predecessor organisations 'Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the German Development Service (DED)' and 'International Vocational Training and Development (InWEnt)' merged in January 2011.
HEKS	Humanitarian Aid Agency of the Protestant Churches in Switzerland
LPLKZ	Lembaga Panglima Laot Lhok Kuala Cangkoï. Indonesian Help Organisation whose work includes the reforestation of mangroves as a prevention project in the province of Aceh.
NROs	Non Government Organisations
ÖRK	Ecumenical Council of Churches
THW	Federal Agency for Technical Relief
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner für Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Found
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
VENRO	Association of German Development Non-Governmental Organisations
VOICE	Voluntary Organisation in Cooperation in Emergencies

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Natural disasters, war and displaced persons – for 60 years Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been in the field worldwide, wherever the need is greatest. We are the humanitarian aid agency of the Protestant churches in Germany. Over the past six decades, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe has been one of Germany’s most important emergency and disaster relief organisations and has set standards worldwide.

This book summarises Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe’s work, charting the conflicts of the past decades from a humanitarian perspective. It provides an insight into the reasons why now more than ever before emergency aid should be viewed as a combination of prevention, immediate emergency relief and recovery. Natural disasters are drastically gaining in frequency and intensity, while the world’s hotspots increasingly demand humanitarian and political answers. Recently, armed conflicts have grown in both number and brutality worldwide. These conflicts are often accompanied by limited access to the people who are suffering and limited safety for the humanitarian workers. In the face of this situation, help regardless of religion, skin colour or nationality and independent of political interests, is a courageous example of loving our neighbour.

**A revealing report examining the challenges
of humanitarian assistance in the past six decades.**

Donation Account

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Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Caroline-Michaelis-Straße 1
10115 Berlin, Germany

contact@diakonie-katastrophenhilfe.de
www.diakonie-katastrophenhilfe.de

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