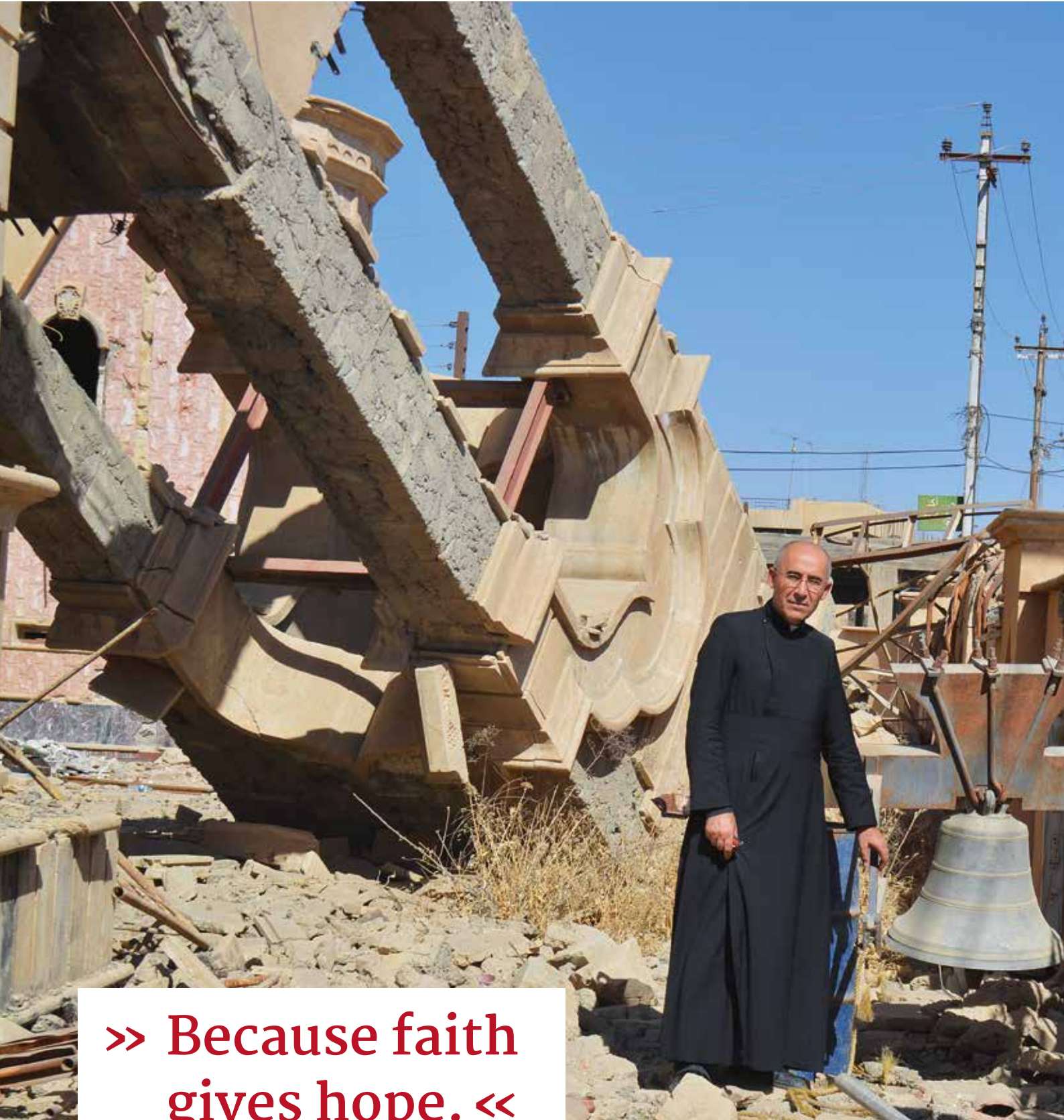




Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



»» Because faith
gives hope. ««

Activity Report 2019

PONTIFICAL
FOUNDATION



Imprint

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First edition.

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ACN Aid to the Church in Need International

Title: The Syrian Catholic priest G. Jahola at the
remains of Mar Benham Church in Bakhdida/Iraq.



Dear friends and supporters,

We must rightly consider 2019 to be a year of martyrdom. The bomb attacks that occurred in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, resulting in the loss of over 250 lives in three churches and several hotels, were the sad climax of a bloody ordeal that Christians were forced to endure in many countries of the world.

Our main concern was the situation in many African countries, where increasing jihadism is becoming a growing threat to Christians. The dramatic situation in Burkina Faso was a particular cause of distress for us this year. The Middle East, the cradle of Christianity, also remains under threat.

However, this news should not lead to sad resignation. On the contrary! More than ever, our faith, our hope and our love are needed. More than ever, Christians throughout the world need our solidarity and our prayers. We wish to embrace needy communities and each person in the world with our fraternal care and love.

Thanks to your generosity, dear benefactors, we were once again able to bring comfort this year through more than 5,000 projects in some 140 countries around the world. Thanks to your help, a new phase of reconstruction of church buildings is beginning in Iraq, which will hopefully give families who have returned to their villages and cities a spiritual home once again.

Thousands of young men all over the world – and this is a reason for hope for the evangelisation – have been able to continue their journey towards the priesthood this year. Countless religious in war zones, in the slums of metropolitan cities and in difficult-to-reach areas of mountains or primeval forests were able to continue their heroic service to the poorest without regard for their own lives. In Russia, the ACN-sponsored, trustful collaboration between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches has borne new fruit.

I also thank God on behalf of all those who, through your support, have been heartened, comforted and placed in a position to become a sign of hope for others. We pray with all our hearts that divine providence, through your generosity, will always stand by us so that we can continue to help Christians in need.

May God bless you through the intercession of Mary.

Kind regards,



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





» I cordially bless you all. «

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

I cordially bless you all.

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

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





About us

**Learn more about Aid to the Church in Need on the following pages:
How we were formed and the history of our success; what we are committed to; our funding priorities in 2019.**



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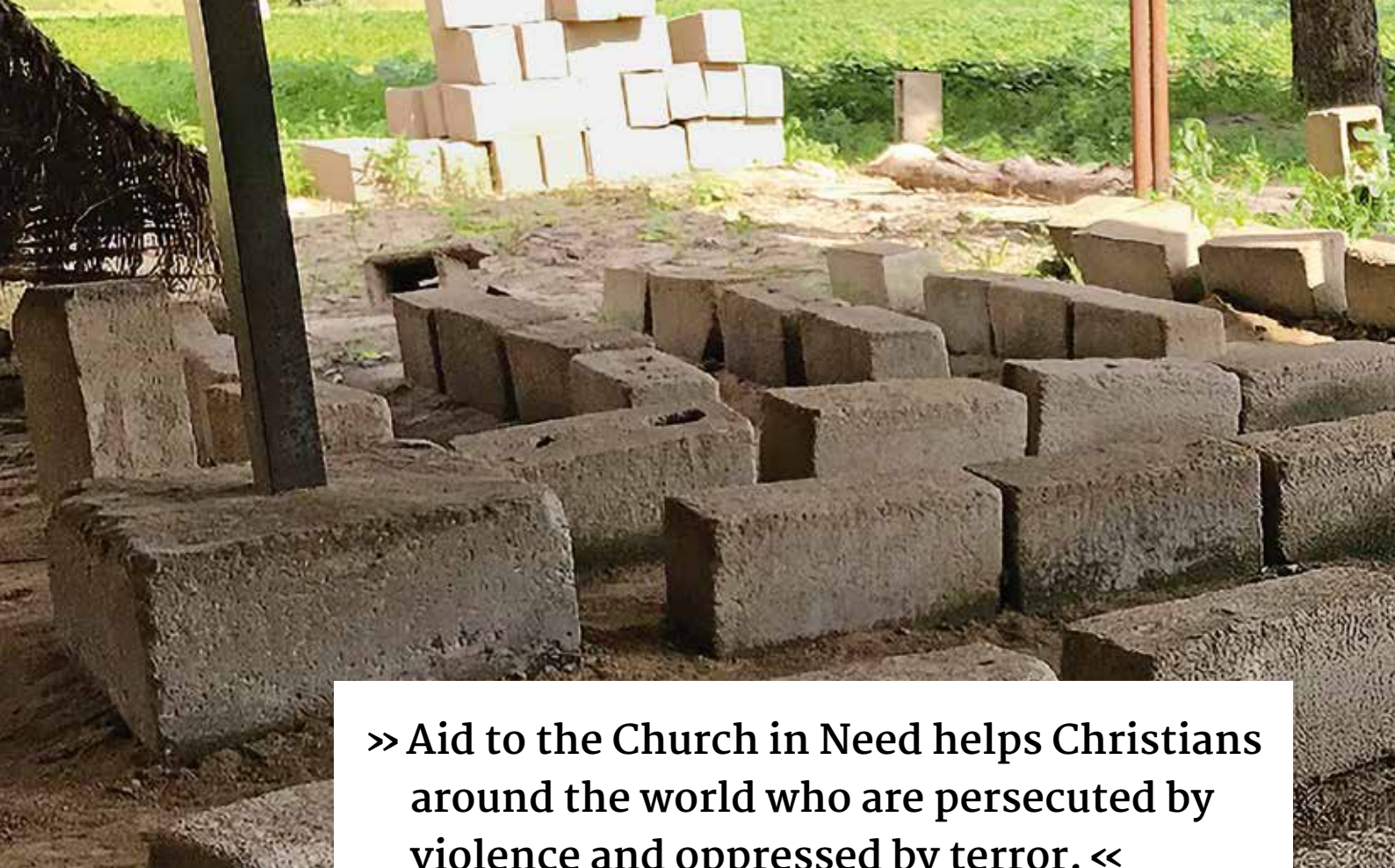
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>> Aid to the Church in Need helps Christians around the world who are persecuted by violence and oppressed by terror. <<

Thomas Heine-Geldern,
Executive President



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

But many do not realise that the Church itself often requires urgent help, mainly in developing countries and among those affected by displacement, persecution or catastrophe. The numbers speak volumes: in our world today, some 200 million people cannot freely exercise their faith. The fundamental right of religious freedom is not guaranteed in more than 80 countries.

Christians are currently persecuted, discriminated against or oppressed in more than 40 countries. Here the Church's infrastructure and the human dignity of the faithful cannot be maintained through their own resources, or if

so, only with great difficulty. In many of these countries, monetary donations are the only source of income for the Church.

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

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

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

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

Sr Annie Demerjian,
project partner, Syria













Church in Need – our name says it all

Over the 73 years since its foundation, Aid to the Church in Need has developed into an aid organisation with a broad range of tasks. Today, we can rightly claim that our name says it all. We now support some 5,230 Catholic projects each year in nearly 140 countries – many of these over the long term. In this way, we frequently remain in crisis areas much longer than other aid organisations.

Of course, this requires not only personnel and logistical resources, but also the necessary financial means. Only through the donations of over 330,000 benefactors in 23 countries are we able to fulfil our mission of providing and promoting pastoral assistance.



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

-  Mass stipends (→ p. 19)
-  Training of priests and religious (→ p. 20)
-  Existence help for religious (→ p. 22)
-  Faith formation of laity (→ p. 23)
-  Construction and reconstruction of church facilities (→ p. 24)
-  Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 25)
-  Emergency assistance in cases of war, displacement, violence and natural catastrophes (→ p. 27)
-  Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 29)
-  Advocacy (→ p. 31)
-  Media support for the propagation of faith (→ p. 40)





» Think of the young people who dedicate their lives to God, to serve Him and the least. «

Father Werenfried van Straaten,
founder of Aid to the Church in Need

The roots of Aid to the Church in Need go back to the period following the Second World War. Europe was in ruins; millions of people were displaced or in flight, often without shelter and plagued by hunger – with refugees from eastern Germany particularly affected.



Into this dark hour was born what was to become the life work of Father Werenfried van Straaten. In 1947, he founded the welfare organisation “Ostpriesterhilfe”, from which the charity Iron Curtain Church Relief, today’s Aid to the Church in Need, arose.

His relief association organised food and clothing for millions of eastern German refugees and provided spiritual care during this time of crisis. Initially the task seemed nearly impossible – especially considering that those from whom he sought donations were themselves victims of the German war occupation in Belgium and the Netherlands.

In his passionate appeals, Father Werenfried preached brotherly love and reconciliation, which ultimately triggered a wave of assistance. Since most people had little money, they donated food, including bacon. Before long, Father Werenfried became known as the “Bacon Priest”.





Charity as concretely lived faith

Under the leadership of Father Werenfried, the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need was repeatedly successful in getting unique aid projects off the ground. For instance, priests with backpacks were sent on motorcycles and in VW Beetles to remote provinces, and chapel trucks were sent as mobile churches to displaced persons.

When the Cold War began in the 1950s, the charity launched an unprecedented campaign to lend support to the persecuted Catholic Church in countries behind the Iron Curtain. In the 1960s, aid programmes were extended to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Thanks to the hundreds of thousands of benefactors of Aid to the Church in Need, annual donations total over 106 million Euros. The foundation is now active throughout the world. This success story proves once again how practical charity grows out of a lived faith.



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



Charity with efficiency and transparency. «

There are numerous charities that look after those in need. What distinguishes Aid to the Church in Need from these organisations? We are the only international Catholic organisation focusing on the pastoral and spiritual support of persecuted and suffering Christians.

Following our inclusion under the Vatican's umbrella, our General Secretariat in Germany and our 23 National Sections have been successful in building a unique bridge between benefactors and those in need.





Each year, we screen more than 7,100 aid project requests from 139 countries.

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

Our General Secretariat supports the fundraising efforts of the National Sections and annually screens about 7,100 aid applications from around the world, which are examined and either approved or rejected by the decision-making bodies. Our head office maintains contact with project partners in 139 countries, ensuring the appropriate use of donations.

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

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



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

Sr Hanan Youssef,
project partner, Lebanon



>> Under the guiding theme >Information – Prayer – Action<, we were able to support more than 5,200 projects worldwide in 2019. <<

In 2019, we received 7,154 applications for aid from all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we received €106.3 million in donations and were able to use these and €4.9 million in donations from previous years to finance activities amounting €111.2 million*. The majority of these funds – 80.4% of the donations – went towards mission-related expenses, i.e. concrete project work, information, media support and prayer activities.

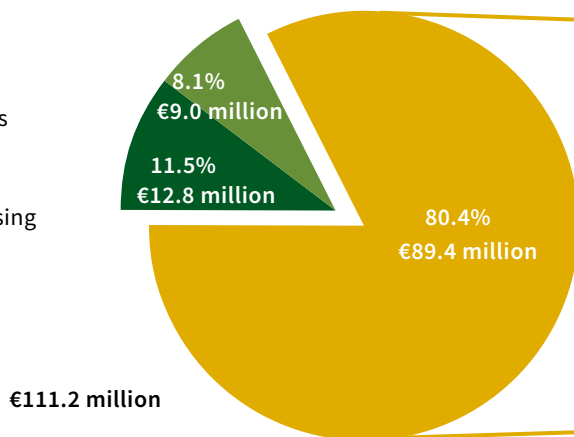
We keep the share of necessary expenditures for administration and fundraising as low as possible at 8.1% and 11.5%, respectively, so that as many resources as possible reach local Christians.

In 2019, we supported a total of 5,230 projects in 139 countries with approximately €75.9 million. With a further €13.5 million, we advocated the needs of disadvantaged and persecuted Christians worldwide by providing information, propagating the faith and advocacy.

Legacies accounted in 2019 for a significant proportion of your contributions for the support of the Church (€20.1 million, or 18.9% of our income in 2019). Together with our project partners of the suffering Church, we remember these departed benefactors with gratitude.

Detailed use of funds (2019)

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



*Other activities, not financed by donations, such as the sale of religious books and other articles, led to an income of €3.5 million (→ p. 30 ff.).



Facts and figures*

Offices in **23** countries

More than **330,000** donors worldwide per year

106,309,350 euros in donations and legacies

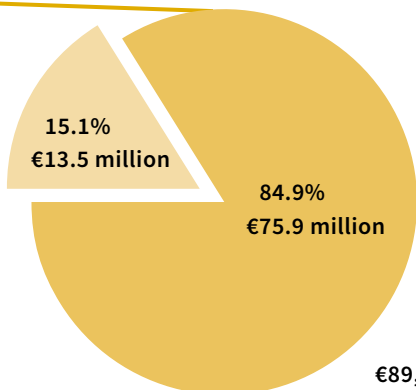
Use of **4,9** million euros in surpluses from previous years

Project partners in **139** countries

5,230 projects supported worldwide

80.4% of the funds used are allocated to mission-related expenses

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



Mission-related expenditures (2019)

- Project work (→ p. 16ff.)
- Information, proclamation of faith and advocacy for discriminated and persecuted Christians (→ p. 30ff.)

€89,4 million

**Valid as of 2019



>> Reconstruction, faith formation and emergency assistance in war zones were our project focal points in 2019. <<









The projects we support are primarily of a pastoral nature. In 2019, about one-quarter of the outlays were used for the construction of seminary buildings and the construction and reconstruction of churches and church facilities.

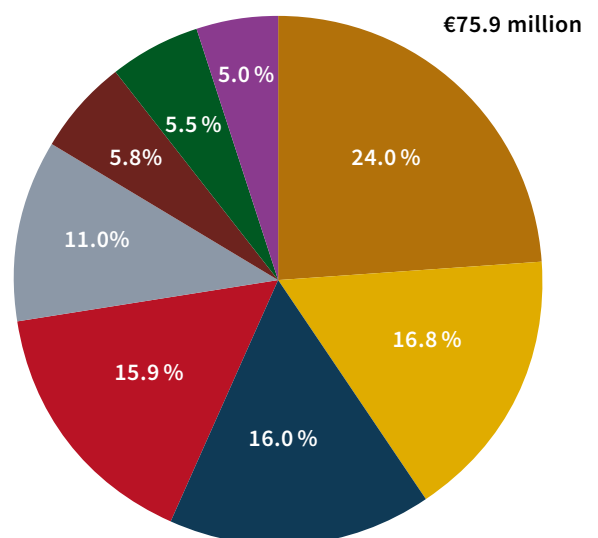
More than a further quarter of our project budget was used for training priests and sisters, as well as for the further education of priests and faith formation of the laity.

At just under one-sixths, a considerable portion of our funding was also used for emergency aid, including for numerous victims in crisis areas in the Middle East.

An important constant is also our funding of Mass stipends: in 2019, we awarded €12.1 million in Mass stipends to priests around the world.

Aid granted by type of help (2019)

- Construction and reconstruction (→ p. 24) 
- Emergency assistance (→ p. 27) 
- Training of priests and religious (→ p. 20) 
- Mass stipends (→ p. 19) 
- Faith formation of laity (→ p. 23) 
- Means of transport for pastoral care (→ p. 25) 
- Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media (→ p. 29) 
- Subsistence help for religious (→ p. 22) 





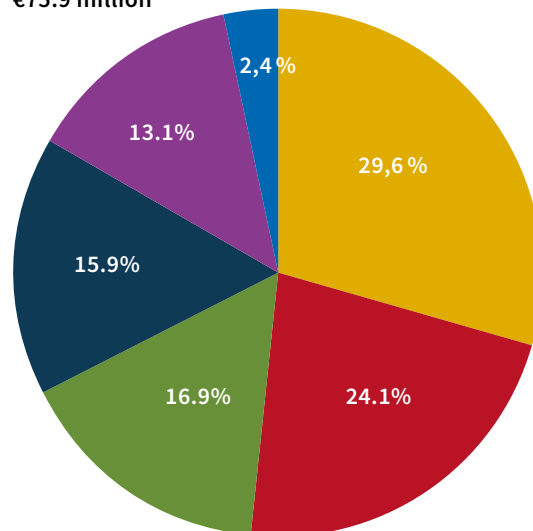
>> Our relief measures start with close dialogue with the local churches. <<

Once again last year Africa (29,6%) and the Middle East (22,1%) were the regions receiving most of our aid, although the focus in the Middle East shifted from Iraq (€5.6 million) to Syria (€7.6 million). After helping rebuild the homes of returning Christians in the region, we began to address the rebuilding of Church infrastructure. Churches and religious houses were repaired and restored – including Al-Tahira Cathedral in Qaraqosh, the largest church in Iraq. In Syria, where the war was still raging during 2019, our aid aimed to ensure the survival of the Christians in the country.

New and dangerous trends are now emerging in Africa. In the north of Nigeria they are already a Church of martyrs. Throughout the Sahel region many missionaries and catechists have paid with their lives for their commitment to Christ. Yet, despite the persecution and oppression, particularly by Islamist terror, the youthful Church in Africa is growing as nowhere else. Last year, in Nigeria, Cameroon and Burkina Faso alone, we supported a range of small projects amounting to 3 million Euros. And the Democratic Republic of the Congo is likewise a priority country for our aid in Africa, receiving

funding of no less than 3.3 million Euros. Another emerging hotspot for our aid was Venezuela. Unlike Brazil, where fundamentalist sects in particular make life difficult for the Church, Venezuela, a once wealthy and potentially still prosperous country, suffers from a bankrupt political system and a lack of basic necessities and medical care. For many people, the Church is the only source of security. Something similar could be said of Pakistan and India, where Islamic and Hindu religious extremism are threatening the lives of Christians.

€75.9 million



Aid granted by region (2019)

- Africa (→ p. 56 ff.)
- Middle East (→ p. 72 ff.)
- Asia/Oceania (→ p. 90 ff.)
- Western/Eastern Europe (→ p. 82 ff.)
- Latin America (→ p. 44 ff.)
- Other



Our task areas

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



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- pp. 30–39 Advocacy, Public relations
- pp. 40–41 CRTN – Media support for the propagation of faith



» Putting the plight of the people before God is part of our mission. «

Father Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation

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



ACN also supports priests in Madagascar.



Mass with Bishop Vieira in Samai, Benin.



Mass stipends



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

In 2019, a total of 1,378,635 Holy Masses were celebrated in the intentions of our benefactors. In this way, we were able to support a total of 40,096 priests – on average, about every tenth priest worldwide.

The distribution of the Mass stipends reflects the conditions of poverty on the continents. In the reporting year, 38% of the Mass stipends went to Africa, 28% to Asia and the Near and Middle East, 16% to Latin America and 18% to Central and Eastern Europe.

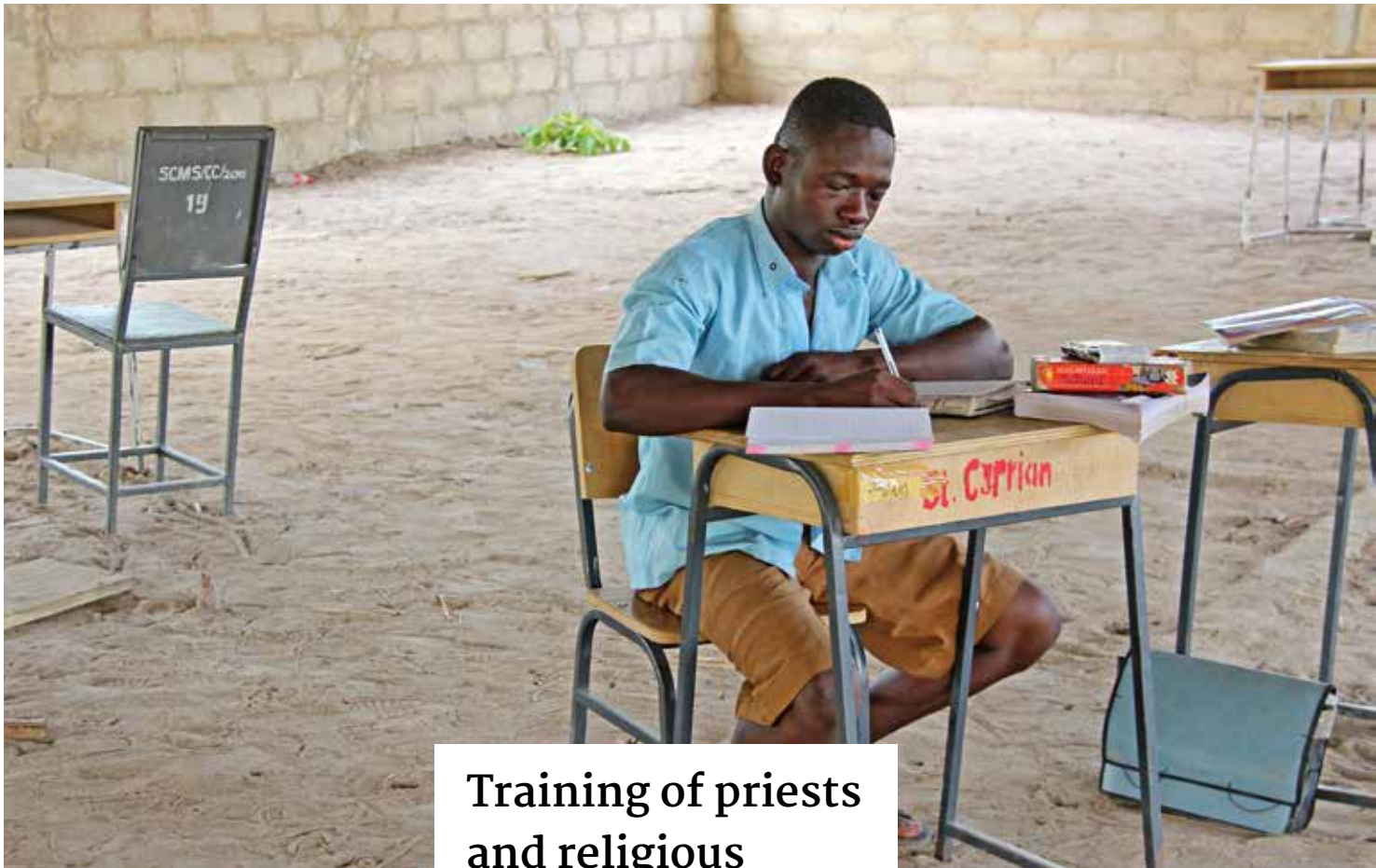
» For some priests, Mass stipends are the only source of income. «

By focusing Mass prayers on deceased or sick relatives, on people who are experiencing life crises or on certain issues our donors may be facing, they take part in the Eucharistic celebration in a very special way. With this kind of donation, many of our benefactors recognise the profound spiritual purpose of uniting their charity with Church prayers. On average, a Holy Mass is held every 23 seconds for the intentions of ACN benefactors somewhere in the world.

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



With Mass stipends, we support the livelihoods of priests worldwide, like here in the Moita Bwawani Mission, Tanzania.



Training of priests and religious



The theological training and qualification of seminarians has always been an important focus of our aid. After all, future priests will ultimately be spiritual pillars and safeguard sacramental life. Therefore, our educational assistance mainly flows into countries where the suitable and continuous training of future priests is endangered or is not adequately ensured due to poverty, war or persecution.

Thanks to the generosity of our benefactors, we were able to fund a total of 16,206 seminarians in 2019. The continuing education of God's servants is also an important concern to us. In the reporting year, we sponsored the continuing education of 452 priests who themselves will train seminarians and thus maintain the qualitative level of priestly formation in their home countries over the long term.

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



Scholarship holders from the "Sisters of the Holy Family" out of Cape Palmas, Liberia.

In 2019, we were also able to award 245 scholarships to priests who, for example, are pursuing a doctorate or an additional course of study. In terms of continental distribution, 29,4% of our scholarship holders came from Asia, 45,3% from Africa, 19,2% from Latin America and 6,1% from Eastern Europe.

The library for 120 students of the St Cyprian Minor Seminary, Ghana.

Sister Cécire with schoolchildren at the Kigali Health Centre.



Safeguarding

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

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

Our project partners only receive aid from ACN after submitting a written commitment to safeguarding. This aid is withdrawn if possible or actual cases of abuse are not adequately pursued.

Safeguarding requirements also apply to ACN's own employees, who are required

to comply with ACN's safeguarding guidelines and also receive regular training on them.

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



>> We are working worldwide to improve the protection of minors and other wards. <<

Regina Lynch,
Project Director



Children drawing in the Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, Uganda.



Existence help for religious



ACN supports nuns at the convent of St. Mary Queen of Angels in Valencia, Venezuela.

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


In 2019 alone, we supported 13,862 religious sisters from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America in their valuable work.

>> We recognise a successful aid project when people are once again free to live their faith. <<

Regina Lynch, Director of Projects



Faith formation of laity

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

With our help, more than 24,428 laypersons were supported in their faith formation in 2019.



Faith Formation for Youth in the Archdiocese of Hyderabad, India.

>> It is our duty to support our brothers and sisters in faith. <<

Dolores Soroa Suárez de Tangil, benefactress, Spain



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

Philipp Ozores, Secretary General

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



Construction and reconstruction of church facilities



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

Where the Church is growing, e.g. in Africa, Asia and Latin America, help is often needed to build up a new infrastructure. Therefore, Aid to the Church in Need provides assistance for the construction

and reconstruction of churches, monasteries, pastoral centres and mission stations, thereby safeguarding and promoting the pastoral work of the Catholic Church worldwide. From our 70 years of experience, we know that in slums, even the smallest chapel can give people a spiritual home.

1,315 such buildings were constructed or repaired with our help in 2019 alone.



Means of transport for pastoral care

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

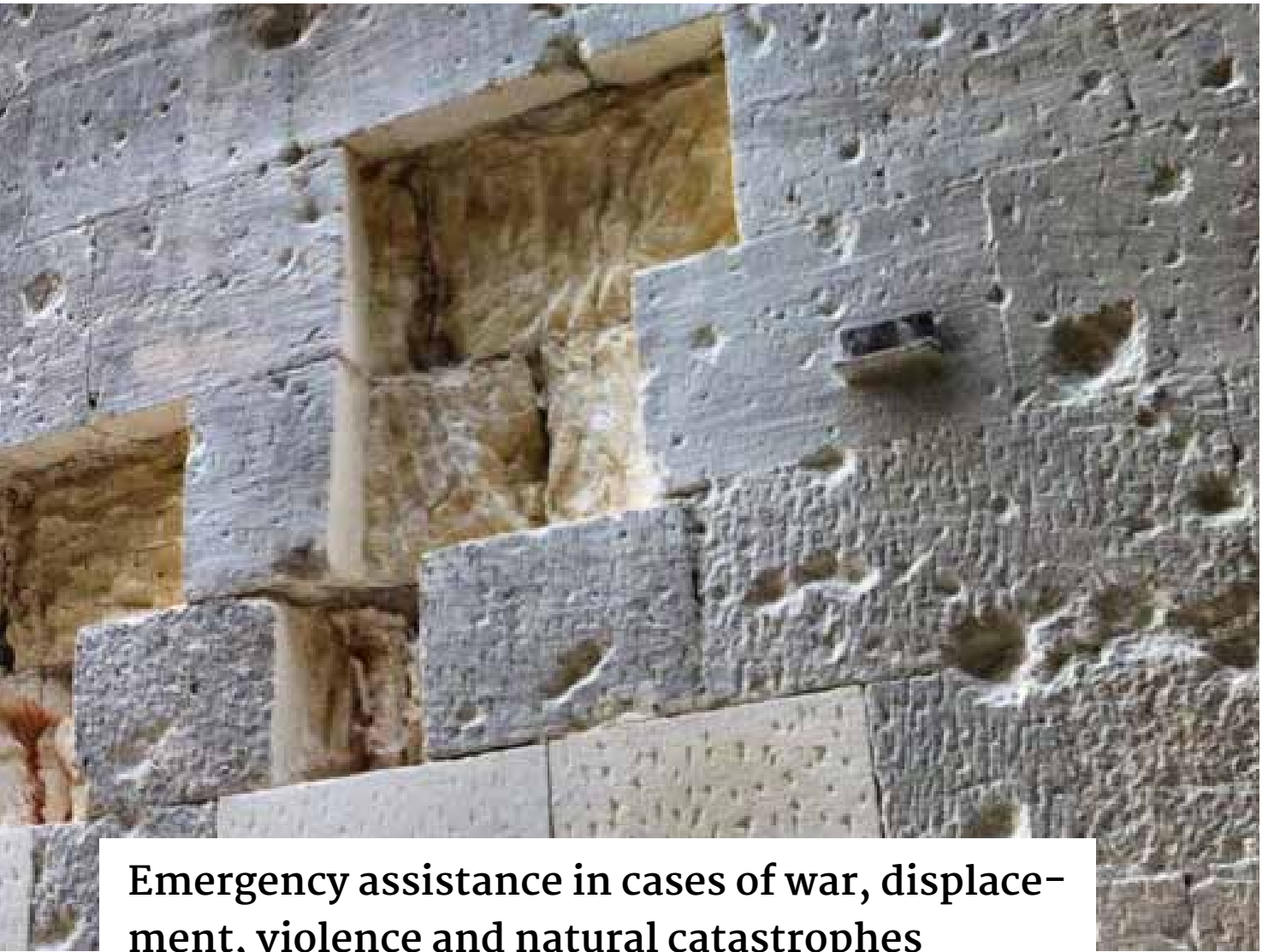
We receive applications to fund vehicular purchases from every continent. Applications include requests for the purchase of trucks, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, boats, or in particularly difficult mountain regions, mules. In 2019 alone, 266 cars, 119 motorcycles, 266 bicycles and 12 boats were financed.






» For us, the greatest conceivable catastrophe would be not to act. « Philipp Ozores, Secretary General





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

 Emergency assistance for refugees is deeply rooted in the history of our relief organisation. Already in the 1950s, the founder of Aid to the Church in Need, Father Werenfried van Straaten, carried out pioneering work in supporting displaced persons.

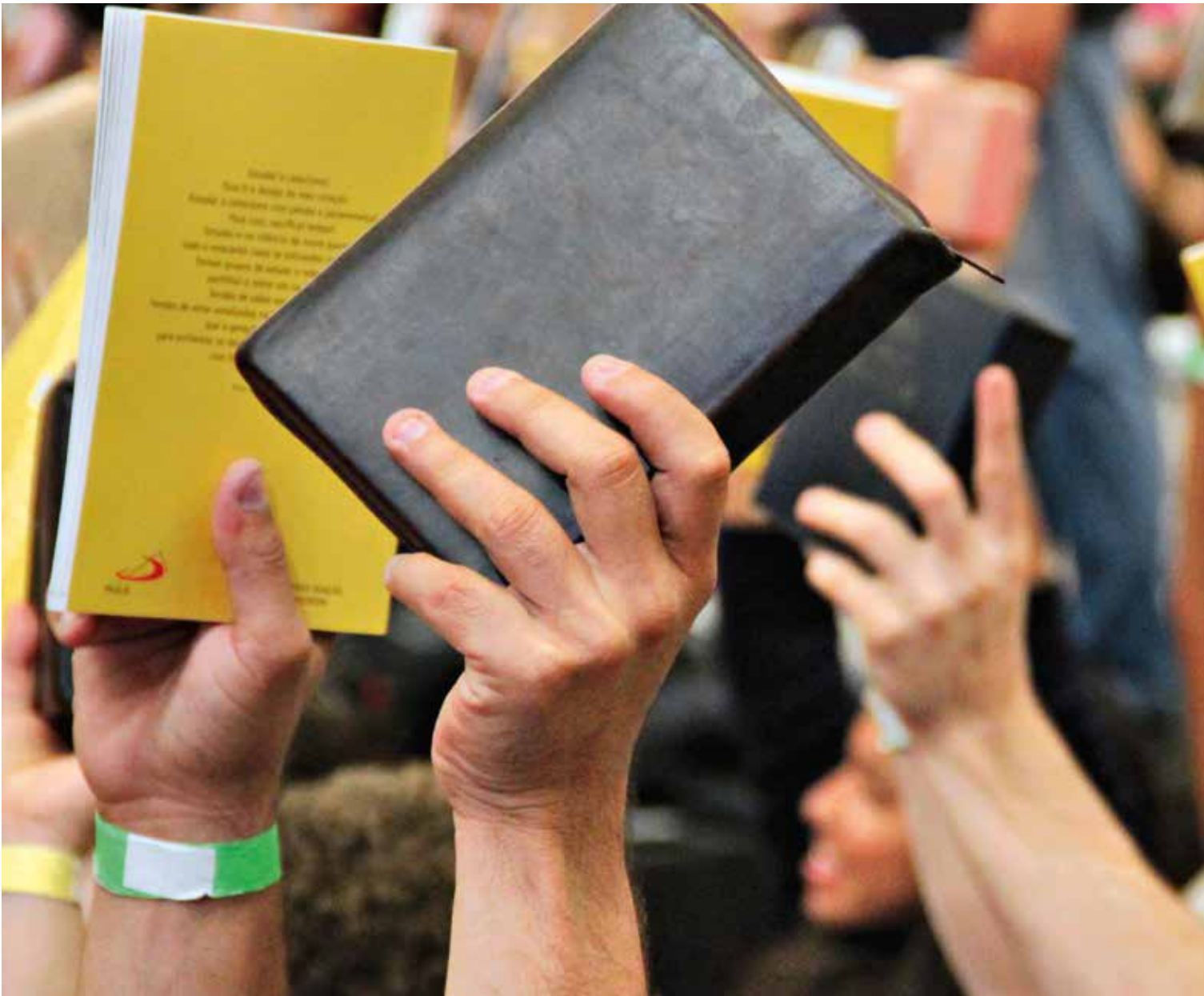
in many other parts of the world as well: whether in Mindanao in the Philippines or in northern Nigeria, where Islamist terrorist groups are perpetrating acts of violence against the Christian minority, we stand by those who have not been able to save anything but their bare lives.

The bitter truth is that there are more refugees worldwide than ever before. 70,8 million people are currently fleeing war and violence around the world; of these, 16 million alone are in the Middle East.

Our great financial commitment to refugees and displaced persons in the Middle East is not only a response to their pressing need, but also a contribution to stop the wave of Christian emigration and thus ensure the continuity of Christianity in the region (for more information, see the Middle East chapter starting on page 72).

But we support Christians who have been persecuted and expelled for their beliefs

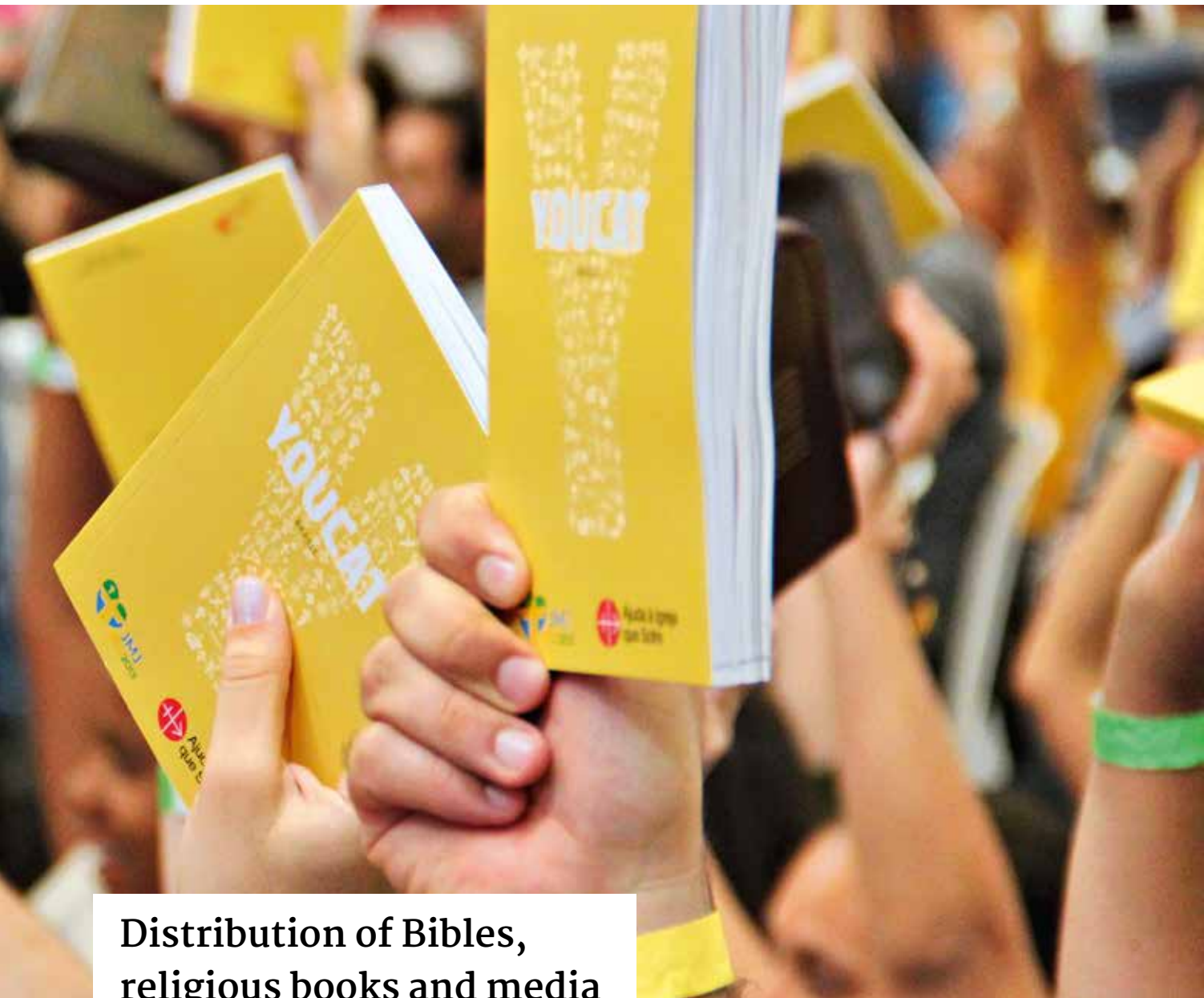





» For some children the Bible is the only picture book that they can get hold of. «

Fr. Martin Barta, International Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Foundation





Distribution of Bibles, religious books and media

 “Go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation,” Jesus said. Aid to the Church in Need takes this assignment literally. For instance, since 1979, our organisation has been a publisher and global supplier of the Child’s Bible, which has been translated into 191 languages and has already been distributed more than 51 million times. Often in poor countries, the Child’s Bible is the first book that children receive in their own language; frequently, it is the only picture book that the little ones can get hold of in their entire lives.

In 2019 alone, 1.7 million religious books were produced and distributed with the help of ACN.

In addition, Aid to the Church in Need promotes YOUCAT, the illustrated Youth

Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is now available in 72 languages. Since 2016, our foundation has also been the publisher of DOCAT, a modern translation of the social teachings and doctrine of the Catholic Church. You can find more information about YOUCAT and DOCAT on pages 38 to 39.



Distribution of the YOUCAT to prisoners in Venezuela.



» We give persecuted Christians a voice. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of
Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

In accordance with the motto of our founder “Inform, pray and act”, our communication work gives a voice to those who often no longer have one. We present the pressing issues of the Church locally and serve as advocates for persecuted Christians vis-à-vis other bodies, we create the Religious Freedom Report, and prepare public relations reports for print, social media and audiovisual products.

These materials are provided to the National Sections to forward to the local media, including radio and television stations. With information campaigns, publications, events and conferences, the 23 National Sections advocate the welfare of the Church around the world. We also assist with the construction of radio stations and oversee the training of media professionals in the service of evangelisation.

As the “advocate of Christians”, we raise the voice for disadvantaged and persecuted Christians in many urgent cases.

We have already been able to galvanise key people in positions of responsibility with our plea for more humanity and charity. Much of our advocacy work is made possible by maintaining contacts on visits of project partner delegations and also by providing high-quality information. As a result, over the past few years, we have gained a high level of trust and a good reputation among politicians from the EU and other parts of the world. This helps us to launch projects and win over fellow campaigners.



Advocate for Christians in need



With a donation volume of 110 million euros, a good deal of need can be alleviated, but more is required to create a real difference in the world. One means of leverage is to inform and spur to action of governmental and transnational agencies that can then support larger aid projects. Around the world, ACN acts as an advocate for altruism and for suffering Christians. With success: In May 2019, our foundation was awarded the “Path to Peace Award” by the UN Mission of the Holy See in New York for its commitment.

For us, the award is a great incentive to continue to strive for cooperation and to meet influencers who can inform the world of opinion leaders in the media and at events about the plight of Christians, thereby mobilising them for dialogue and action. Archbishop Bernardito

Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, praised ACN as “the leading organisation in the world putting words to the persecution Christians are suffering in certain places.” The “Path to Peace” award was accepted by ACN Executive President Thomas Heine-Geldern. In his acceptance speech, he emphasised that the honour belongs to “those Christians who, just because of their faith, are persecuted, oppressed, discriminated or silenced. Tonight, in lending them my voice, my hope is that their martyrdom is a little less silent.”

But nothing moves our work forward more than the personal experiences of those affected. That is why once again in 2019, the ACN Public Affairs team took part in international congresses, symposia and conferences, where the situation of Christians was mainly presented with concrete witness reports, in line with the

motto “Do good and talk about it”. For example, we were able to help establish a close cooperation between the EU delegation in Pakistan and the local Church which will address the problem of discrimination against religious minorities in textbooks.





Monsignor T. Grysa (representative of the Holy See), Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, Nigeria, and Dr Thomas Farr of the Religious Freedom Institute in March at the United Nations, New York.

February

At the invitation of the World Jurist Association, ACN representatives travelled to Madrid to discuss the global situation of religious freedom.

March

In Rome, ACN informed EU representatives to the Holy See about the current state of long-running conflicts, such as in Nigeria and Syria, and their serious consequences.

April

ACN hosted a conference at the European Parliament entitled “Syria, the day after”. The topic was the deteriorating situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Bishop John Darwish of Zahlé provided first-hand information on this issue, on the basis of which concrete aid measures were subsequently adopted.

May

Together with Patriarch Louis Raphaël Sako of Iraq, ACN participated in a series of meetings with EU ambassadors and senior humanitarian aid officials at the European External Action Service. During these meetings, the precarious situation of Iraqi Christians was discussed.

August

The United Nations established the first “International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief”. The initiative was launched through meetings between UN representatives and ACN at the Iraq Conference organised by ACN in 2017.



September

ACN travelled to Rome to brief the EU Embassy to the Holy See in Rome on the situation of Christians in Syria and the devastating consequences of the EU embargo. ACN prepared documents for this purpose, which were distributed via the embassy to all EU Member States, as well as to NGOs working in Syria.

October

ACN representatives presented the report “Persecuted and Forgotten?” at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, as well as in Prague and Budapest. At the request of the Hungarian government’s Hungary Helps programme, ACN hosted a meeting in Königstein between ACN project directors and Hungary Helps representatives to assist the organisation in the planned geographic expansion of the relief effort.



“More persecuted than ever!”: Presentation on Christian persecution in the Basilica of St. Bartholomew in Rome in October.



Presentation of “Persecuted and Forgotten?” at the British Foreign Office by John Pontifex (ACN UK) in London in November.



M. Szymanski (ACN International) at a conference on religious freedom in Europe, held in Prague in November.



Persecuted and forgotten?

The “Persecuted and Forgotten?” report is prepared by the ACN’s UK national office. It documents the most striking developments in twelve key countries where Christians suffer persecution and discrimination, including northern Nigeria, Syria and Pakistan.

The new edition comes to the sad conclusion that the persecution of Christians reached a new peak during the reporting period. The report also makes it clear that Christian women, in particular, are victims of discrimination and persecution. They are victims of abductions, forced conversions and sexual violence.

Archbishop Bernardito Auza paid tribute to ACN for its “Persecuted and Forgotten?” and “Religious Freedom Worldwide” reports at the “Path to Peace Awards” ceremony in New York: “These are the best reports available to describe

the ravages of anti-Christian hostility and the status of religious freedom in 196 countries,” praised the Archbishop.

The report is available in English at: persecutedchristians.acninternational.org





Public relations

Whether media relations, global meetings, events, conferences or campaigns – ACN’s actions and public relations work in 2019 were once again highly diverse. Here we present some of the events organised by the ACN headquarters or some of its 23 national offices.



Papal blessing for ACN initiative

On 15 August, during the Angelus prayer in St Peter’s Square, Pope Francis blessed 6,000 rosaries as a gift to the faithful in Syria. “The rosaries, made at the initiative of ACN, are a sign of my closeness to our brothers and sisters in Syria,” said the Pope. Earlier he received a delegation from ACN and praised the work of our charity: “I thank ACN for everything you do. When we pray with the people in Syria, we come close to them.” On 15 September the Pope also blessed an icon with the motif of “Our Lady of Sorrows, Consoler of Syrians”.



Impressions of the “Night of the Witnesses” in France.

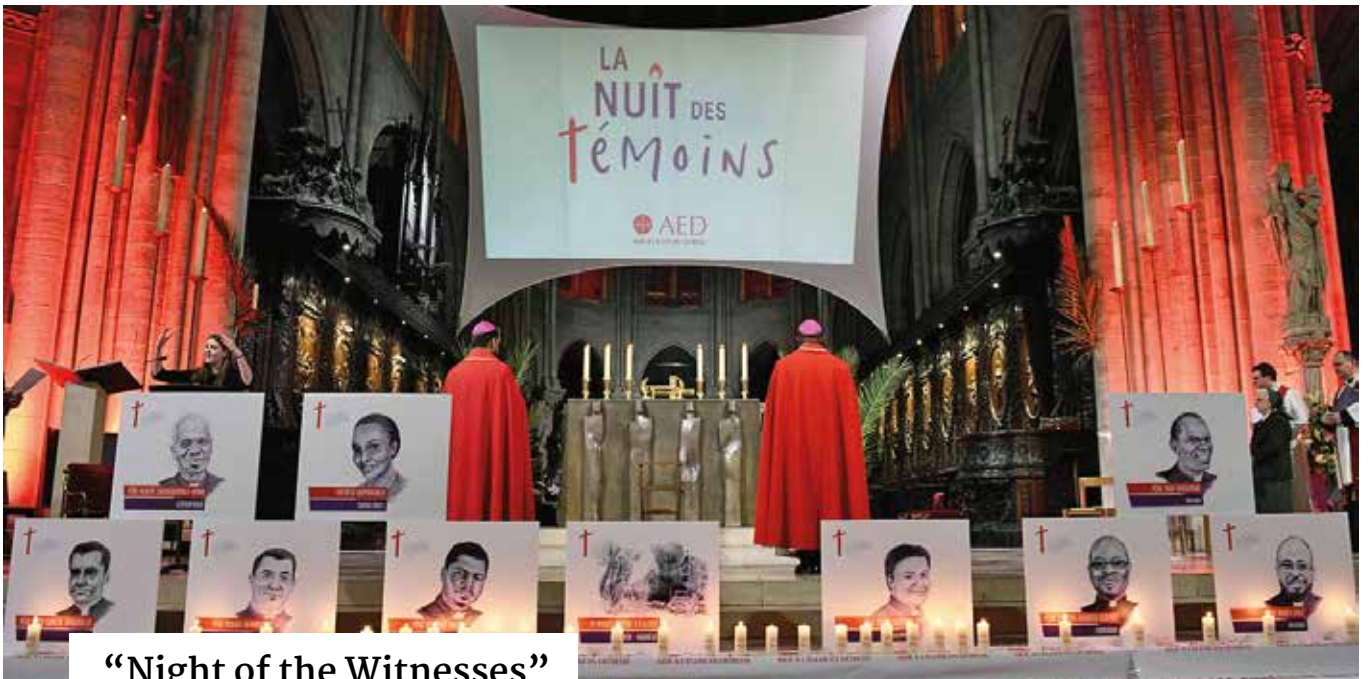
Syrian children pray for peace.



Comfort for mourners in Syria

In 2019, ACN launched a campaign entitled “Comfort my People” to provide spiritual support to the bereaved families of war, murder and abduction victims. The project was organised and implemented together with the local Catholic and Orthodox Churches and was intended as a sign of brotherhood between the various Christian denominations. The relatives of the

victims received a rosary blessed by the Pope, a Bible or a cross as a gift. In addition, the icon of “Our Lady of Sorrows, Consoler of Syrians”, also blessed by the Pope, was brought to Catholic and Orthodox parishes to give comfort to the faithful there. ACN called on believers around the world to be close to the mourners in Syria through prayer and solidarity.



“Night of the Witnesses”

For the eleventh time in 2019, ACN’s French national office organised the “Night of the Witnesses” (La Nuit des Témoins). The evening events are designed to commemorate the victims of religious persecution through prayers and the personal testimonies of those affected. The main event, which was repeated in other

French cities throughout the year, was held for what was foreseeably the last time in March 2019 in the Notre-Dame Cathedral of Paris, which was severely damaged in a fire only a few days later. Guests of honour in 2019 included Archbishop Fridolin Ambongo Besungu from the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country where violence

has been rife for decades, Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas from India, where fanatical Hindu extremists are increasingly attacking other religious communities, and Sister Mona Aldhem from Syria. Meanwhile, the “Night of the Witnesses” is also held in other countries where ACN is present, including in Germany, Spain and Italy.



“Red Wednesday”

As in previous years, churches, cathedrals and symbolic public buildings were again illuminated red in 2019 to commemorate the victims of religious persecution worldwide. This time the initiative launched by ACN took place in fifteen countries on four continents. The record

was set in the Philippines where in addition to Manila Cathedral, 2,050 parish churches were illuminated in 68 dioceses. In the United Kingdom, 120 buildings were illuminated red. “Red Wednesday” was also celebrated in Washington, Prague, Lisbon, London,



Frankfurt, Berlin, Rome, Vienna, Amsterdam, in several places in Canada and Australia, and for the first time ever in Budapest. The monuments and churches were bathed in deep red light, becoming a sign of solidarity for persecuted Christians all over the world.



World Youth Day in Panama

The World Youth Day in Panama City in January 2019 was the major event of the year for more than 122,000 young people from 155 countries. The highlight of the event: The meeting of the faithful with Pope Francis in several worship services. ACN enabled youth from the Holy Land, Haiti, Malawi, Bangladesh, Egypt and Albania to participate in World Youth Day. Through a sum of 100,000 euros, we were also able to support the production of rosaries that were

made by Christians in Bethlehem and distributed to World Youth Day participants at the request of the Pope. The prayer beads are much more than just an aid for pilgrims’ personal prayers, as two hundred Christian families in the Holy Land were also able to live on this major order for one year. Prisoners, refugees and the unemployed were also involved in the production of the rosaries and were able to benefit from the initiative.



YOUCAT Foundation 2019

As its publisher, we are pleased that we were able to continue the YOUCAT success story in 2019. So far, the Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church has been published or planned in 72 languages and the children’s edition, YOU-CAT for KIDS, in 28 languages. The “Faith Course”, published for the first time in

the autumn of 2019, was developed from the YOUCAT Study Guides. The free YOUCAT Daily app has also become a hit with young people. A daily topic from the catechism is delivered via smartphone in five languages. YOUNG MISSIO, a course for young catechists who want to pass on their faith to other



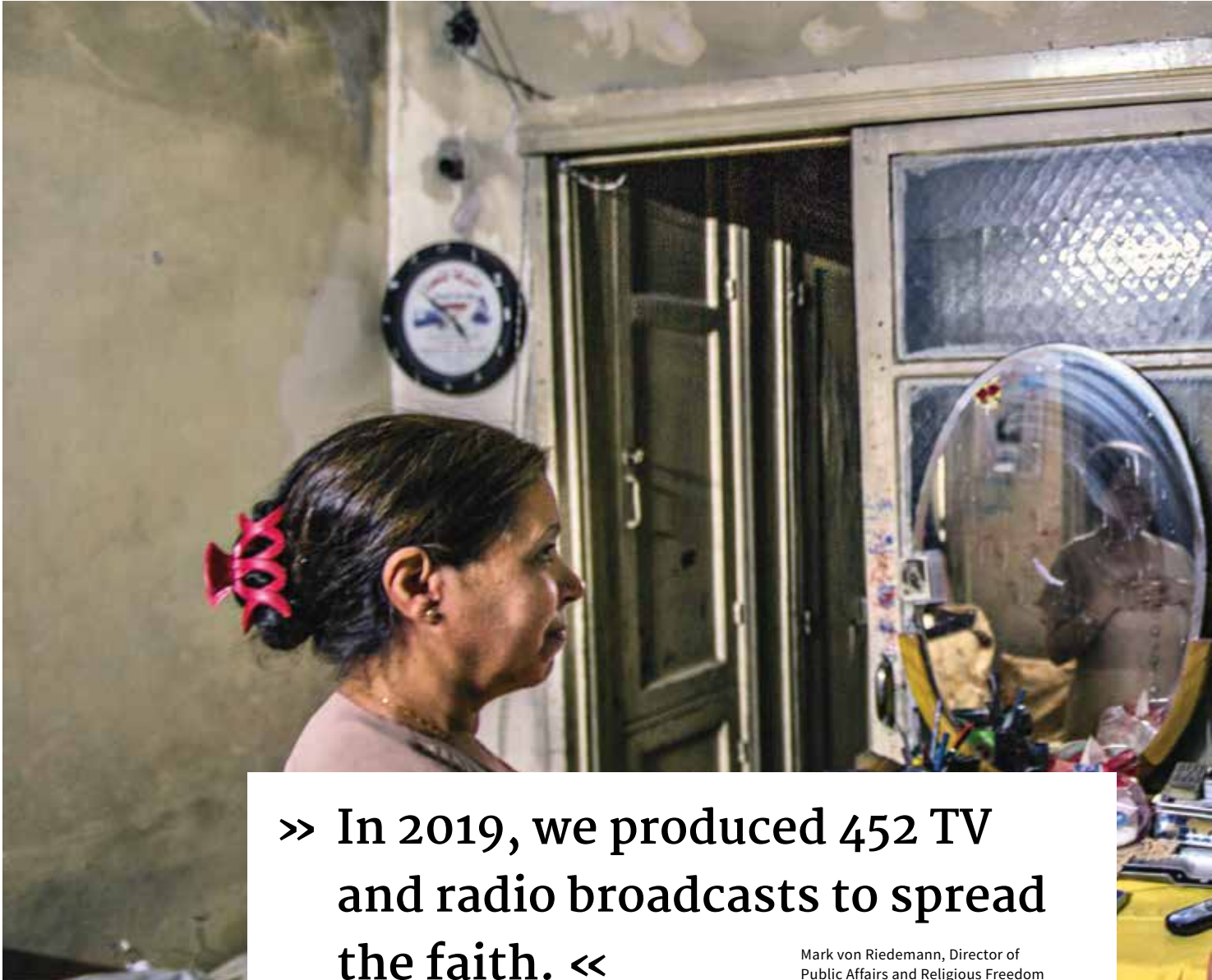
The new YOUCAT Faith Course complements the YOUCAT and encourages reflection and discussion about faith.



young people, is currently being prepared. To help with pastoral work, ACN has enabled a special edition of YOUCAT for Africa and DOCAT for Latin America. The World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019 became the prominent kick-off to a social doctrine learning initiative in Central America.

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





» In 2019, we produced 452 TV and radio broadcasts to spread the faith. «

Mark von Riedemann, Director of Public Affairs and Religious Freedom

Behind the Catholic Radio & Television Network (CRTN) is a modern production studio specialising in reports and documentaries on the Catholic Church in remote areas. The broadcasts primarily serve to support evangelisation efforts and promote solidarity with the suffering Church. Additionally, they further publicise the work of Aid to the Church in Need. Through our network, we are able to provide productions to TV and radio stations around the world. In 2019, the studio produced 452 TV and radio programmes in all language versions, which were then broadcast on 133 TV and 475 radio stations. In addition to documentary films and interview broadcasts such as “Where God Weeps” and “Donde

Dios Llorra”, we were able to produce a considerable number of short films for special ACN fundraisers.

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



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

 CRTN achieved record distribution in 2019 with documentary films alone: the broadcasts reached 133 television stations worldwide. These included seven TV stations in North America, ten in Europe, 82 in Latin America via SIPCATV, 27 TV channels in Russia via Blagovest-Media, four in Asia and three in Africa.

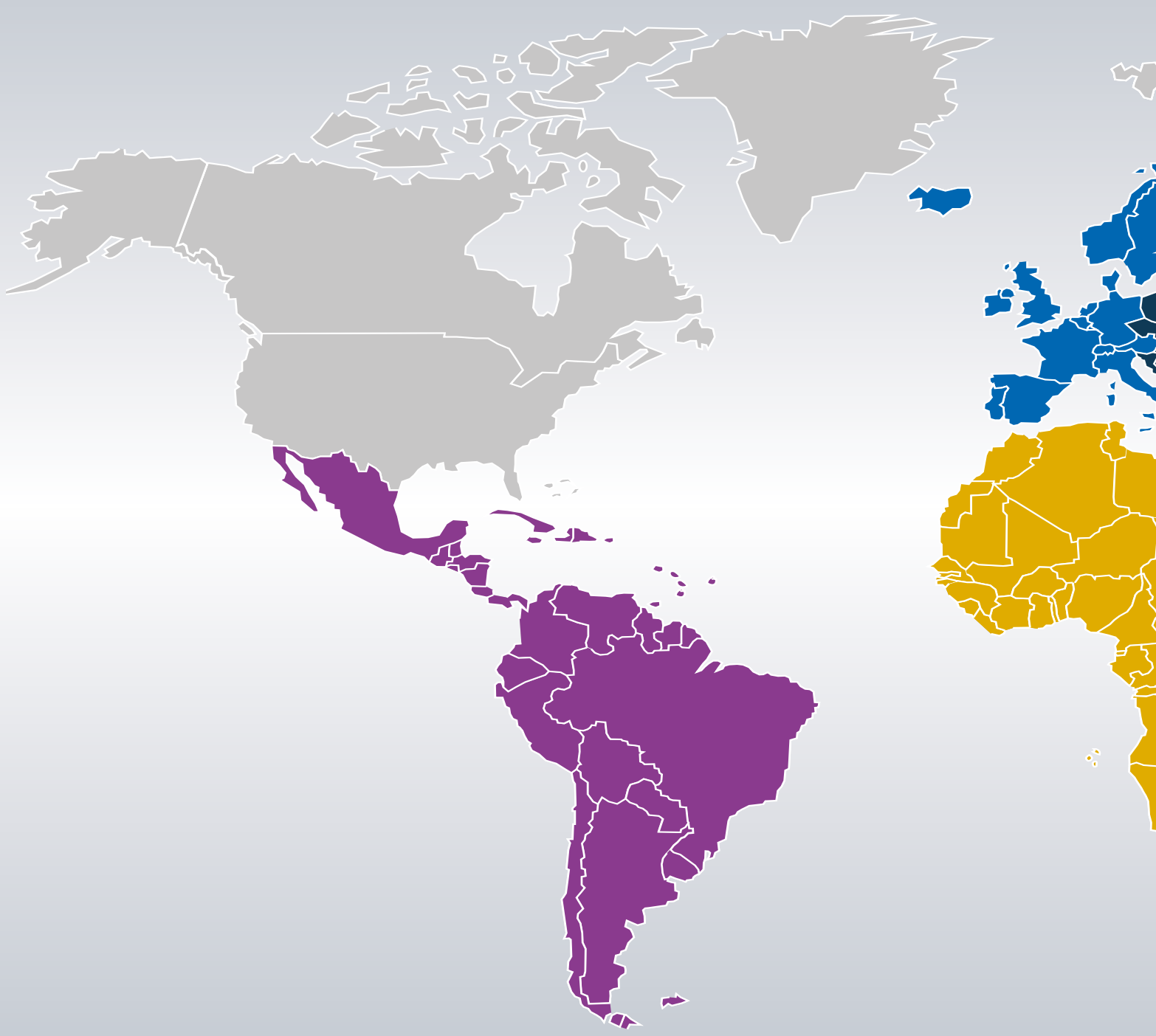
Every day, broadcasts reach tens of millions worldwide. In addition to production and distribution, CRTN also supports a number of worldwide TV distribution initiatives through consulting and programming services. What's more, CRTN established the global Catholic television resource network crtn.

org 20 years ago, which gives Catholic producers and television stations the opportunity to facilitate the presentation, exchange and distribution of Catholic programmes worldwide.

In addition, we have compiled a web catalogue containing 376 productions. In 2019, 296 producers and 171 television stations used this service, which is unique in the Church. A CRTN newsletter, a CRTN Facebook page with 2,215 followers and the CRTN YouTube channel round off our media service.

The CRTN YouTube Channel has had just 2,16 million views.





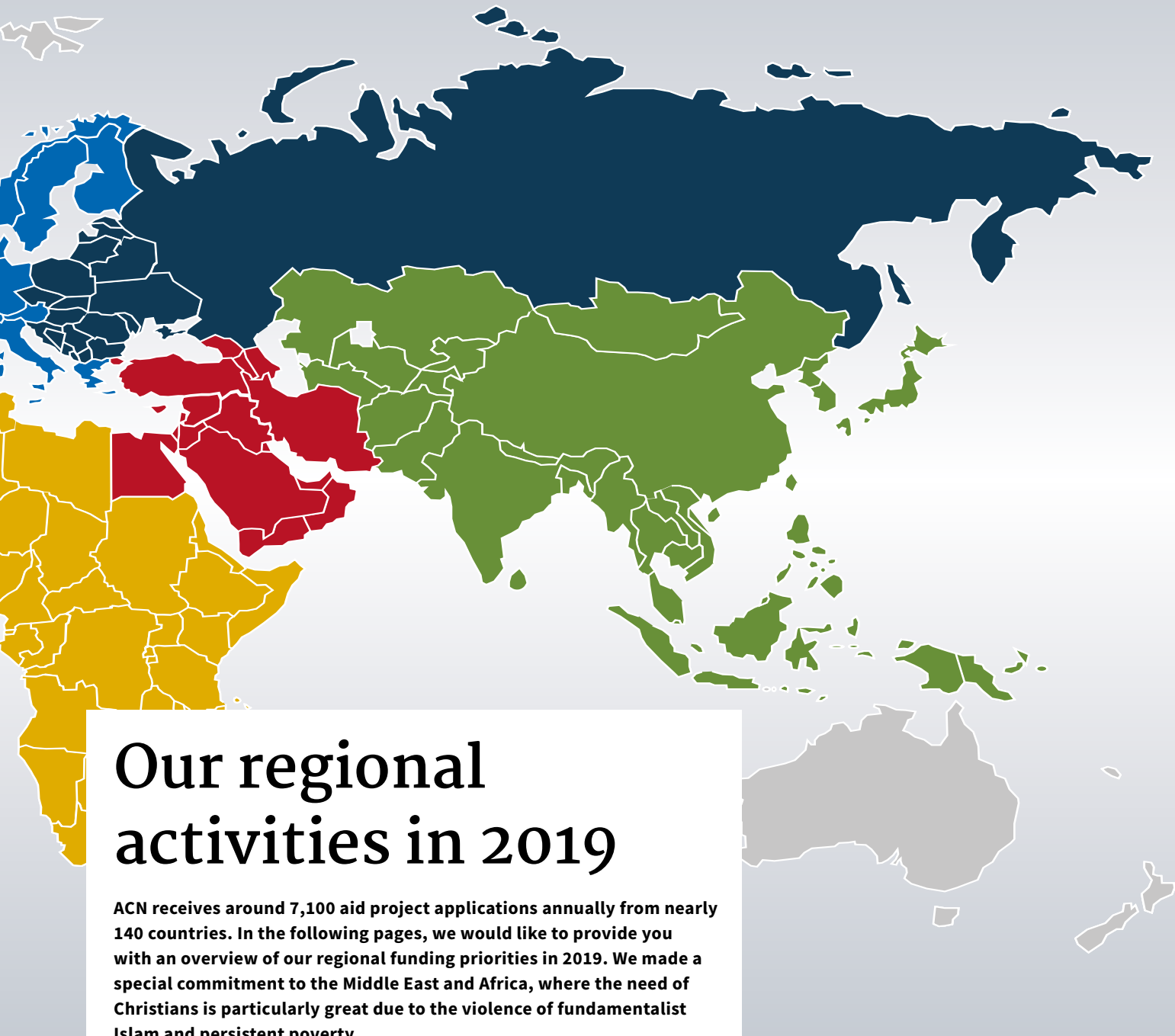
p. 44 Latin America

- S. 46–47 Nicaragua
- S. 48–49 Venezuela
- S. 50–51 Brazil
- S. 52–53 Peru
 - S. 54 Haiti
 - S. 55 Chile



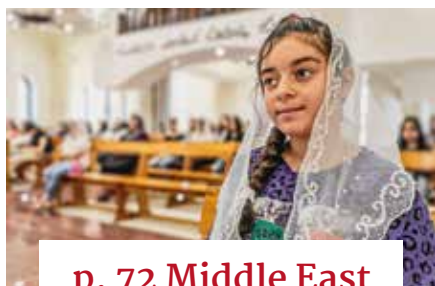
p. 56 Africa

- S. 58 Mauritania
- S. 59 Burkina Faso
- S. 60–61 Ghana
- S. 62–63 Nigeria
 - S. 64 Cameroon
 - S. 65 Zambia
- S. 66–67 Ethiopia
- S. 68–69 Democratic Republic of Congo
- S. 70–71 Madagascar



Our regional activities in 2019

ACN receives around 7,100 aid project applications annually from nearly 140 countries. In the following pages, we would like to provide you with an overview of our regional funding priorities in 2019. We made a special commitment to the Middle East and Africa, where the need of Christians is particularly great due to the violence of fundamentalist Islam and persistent poverty.



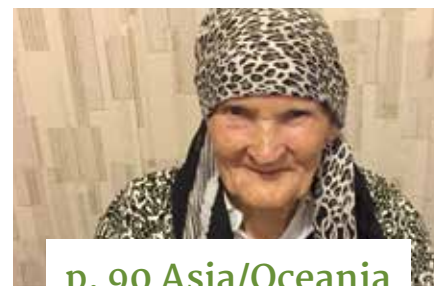
p. 72 Middle East

- S. 74–77 Syria
- S. 78–81 Iraq



p. 82 Western/ Eastern Europe

- S. 84 Refugees in Western Europe
- S. 85 Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia
- S. 86 Romania
- S. 87 Ukraine
- S. 88–89 Russia



p. 90 Asia/Oceania

- S. 92 Kyrgyzstan
- S. 93 India
- S. 94–95 Pakistan
- S. 96–97 Philippines
- S. 98 Sri Lanka
- S. 99 Papua New Guinea





Latin America

Latin America was a continent in turmoil in 2019. In Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina and Nicaragua, people demonstrated against violence, corruption, mismanagement and exploitation. They demanded social equality and the observance of basic human rights. In this situation of growing unrest, faltering governments and teetering institutions, the Church is the only mainstay for many people. After all, with nearly 500 million Catholics and despite the spreading influence of cults, Latin America is still the continent with the highest number of Christians. ACN helps the Church to ease suffering in local communities and offer hope to the faithful.

Most of the problems in Latin America are home-grown. As a rule, only the elites, foreign corporations and investors benefit from the wealth of its great natural resources, which include oil and lithium. Destitution is growing rapidly; more than 30% of Latin Americans live below the poverty line – and the rural population feels particularly left behind. The Church also suffers under these catastrophic conditions. In the year under review, we received 1,307 requests for aid from the American subcontinent, most of them from Venezuela and Brazil.

the political and social problems on the continent. But it can help relieve the needs of the Church and give new hope to the faithful. Whether through

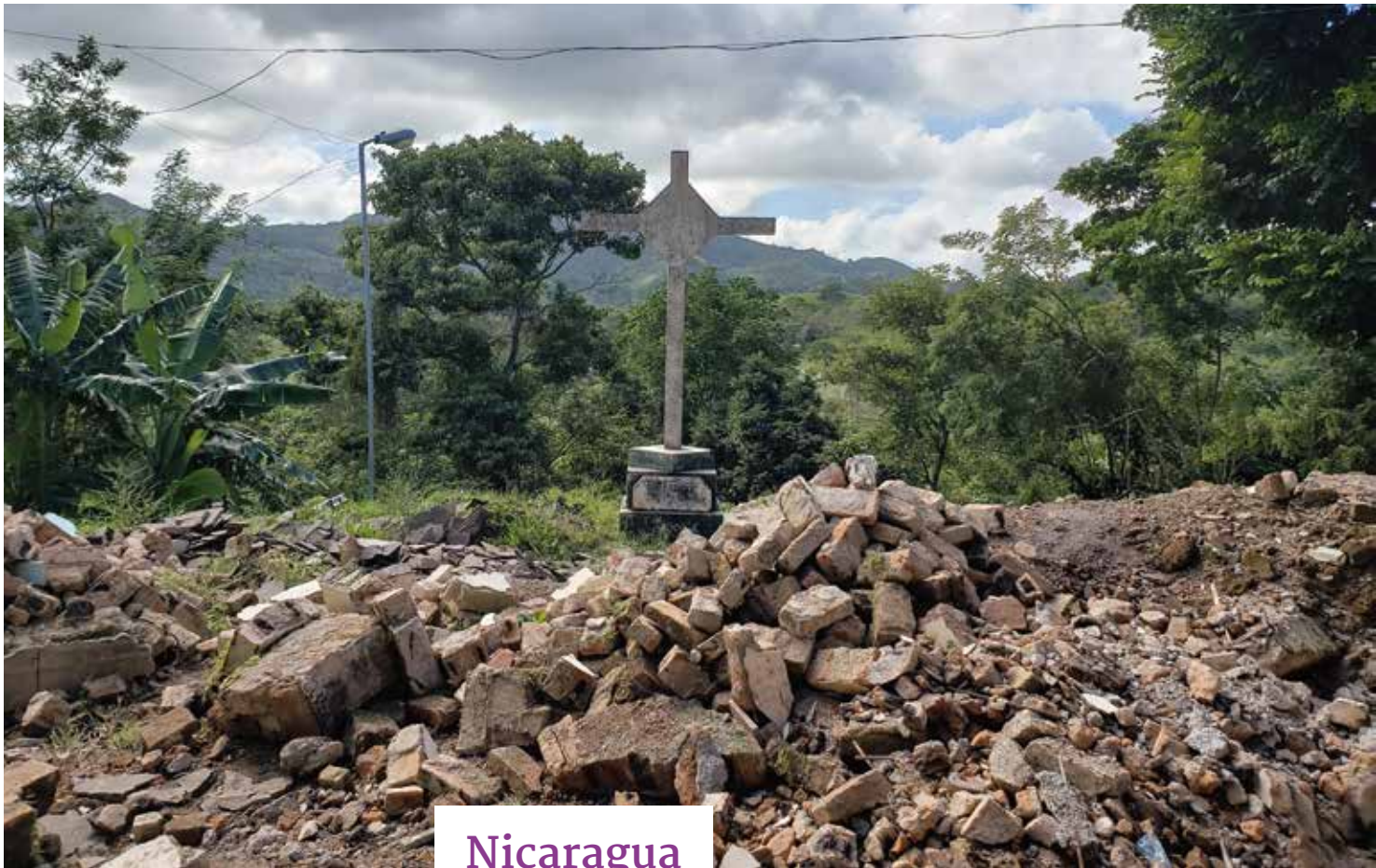


Training the nuns of Santa Teresita del Niño Jesús, Port-de-Paix, Haiti.

>> 13.1% of our total budget in 2019 was devoted to Latin America. <<

Our funding volume for Latin America totalled 9.94 million euros in 2019. Naturally, this aid cannot solve all

our support for the training of priests and religious or through building grants and material aid, whether religious literature or new vehicles – with every aid project, local churches reinforce the power of faith in their parishes and with it, the faithful's courage to face life.



Nicaragua

Number of projects

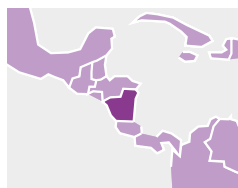
□ 44 Project applications
✓ 37 Funded projects

Type of projects

🔔 13 Construction/ reconstruction	📍 5 Means of transport	👤 6 Mass stipends
🆘 0 Emergency aid	📺 0 Media help	📖 3 Bibles & books
👤 6 Training of priests	👤 1 Existen- tial help	👤 3 Formation of faith

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



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

open up or erupt at any moment. In a figurative sense, this also applies to the political and social situation in Nicaragua. The consequences of the pension cuts announced in 2018 continued to be felt in 2019: thousands gathered in protests. There were also outbreaks of violence, with the military killing several hundred people over the past two years. ACN does not intervene in political issues, but our foundation

supports the Church in Nicaragua in mediating between the parties involved in conflicts.

After Haiti, Nicaragua is the poorest country in Latin America. Often it is only the Church that stands up for the poorest people. Their courageous commitment for the poor and weak gives many people new hope for an improvement of their living conditions.

In addition, the Church offered shelter from violence to thousands of young people during the dramatic crisis from April to July 2018. ACN understands the social role the Church plays in Nicaragua in addition

Masses are often celebrated under the simplest conditions.



On the right: The bishop of Matagalpa, Rolando José Álvarez Lagos, blesses a child.



A child re-enacts the violence he has experienced.



to its pastoral mission, and will continue to assist the local Church there, e.g. in the formation of priests. Although seminaries do not currently need to worry about filling positions, the young priesthood candidates cannot be adequately provided with the necessary food and learning materials. ACN is helping them.

Beyond helping seminarians, we also support the pastoral activities of the local Church. This includes the construction of community centres and the procurement of new vehicles. In total, about 40 requests for aid with a total volume of nearly half a million euros were approved for the Church in Nicaragua.

Father Francisco Tigerino, rector of the national interdiocesan seminary of Our Lady of Fatima, is grateful for the solidarity of ACN's benefactors: "What impresses me most is that we receive support from people located on the other side of the world, people we will certainly never meet. They do so because we are one Church, out of love for the kingdom of God. With their help and with God's help, we will continue to train people and thereby advance the work of the Church."

» We all know about the social role of the Church in Nicaragua. «

Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos in the ruins of the burned-down Caritas charity agency in Sébaco.





Venezuela

Number of projects

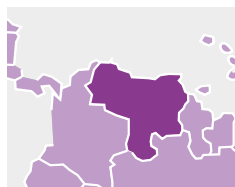
□ 203 ✓ 108

Type of projects

🔔 13 🎯 2 🏠 26
 ⚡ 5 🎤 0 📖 18
 👥 21 👤 13 👤 10

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



Hyperinflation and corruption continued to drive Venezuela's economy into the abyss in 2019. Millions

have already left the country. Nationwide protests in large parts of the population weakened the position of the ruler Nicolas Maduro. However, this did not change the fact that he is still in power. In this disastrous situation, the Church is often the only institution in which people still trust. But it

simply lacks the financial means to fulfil its tasks. Our aid to the Church in Venezuela is therefore first and foremost survival assistance.

Economic hardship is felt everywhere in Venezuela. The shelves are empty in shops. If there are any goods at all, they are only available for dollars. Inflation is astronomical; crime is boundless. Older people, children and the sick are dying due to a lack of medicine and electricity outages – even in hospitals. Meanwhile, Maduro has handed over



For seven years now, the Carmelite nuns of Chirgua have been building their convent without any support. ACN is now helping to fund the final phase of construction.

» In the greatest of all crises, the Church is the backbone of the people. «

ACN also supports initiatives to feed the poor in Venezuela, for example, with kitchen appliances.



control of the economy to his generals for exploitation. Thus only a small elite continues to profit from the wealth of the country, which has the largest oil reserves in the world, while the vast majority lives in destitution and hardship.

More than ever, the Venezuelan Church has become the backbone of the people. It is the institution that, despite all the tension, constantly urges a search for peaceful solutions and proclaims the message of love and hope. In doing so, it is urgently dependent on help from abroad. ACN is one of its most important partners in this mission.

In 2019, we received 200 requests for aid from Venezuela. Among them, 30 requests alone were for emergency aid, for example, to generate power through solar installations or to build wells for water production. We made half a million euros available in the form of Mass stipends for the existential help of

priests in need. For the first time, nuns also received pure survival assistance.

Unfortunately, as the economic and social hardships grow, so too do the religious doubts of the Venezuelans. A good third of about 1 million euros we used to help Venezuela in 2019 was therefore invested in pastoral projects to strengthen the faith of the people.



Pastoral care in a Venezuelan retirement home.



Brazil

Number of projects

□ 267 ✓ 197

Type of projects

🔔 24 🎯 18 🏠 30
 📍 2 🎤 1 📖 6
 👥 71 👤 28 👤 17

Head of Section

Ulrich Kny



Brazil is the largest country in South America and the ninth largest economy in the world. The country also

has the highest number of Catholics in the world. However, their percentage is dwindling: while 40 years ago, 90% of Brazilians were Catholic, current surveys show that only between 50 and 64% of the population of about 210 million is Catholic. This is due not least to the lack of young priests and insufficient pastoral care for the faithful –

particularly in the remote areas of the Amazon basin. This is precisely where our aid to the Church in Brazil comes in.

The Catholic Church is aware of the difficult position of the local Church in the Amazon region. From 6 to 27 October 2019, the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region took place in Rome. Church representatives discussed problems, such as the increasing clearing of the rain forests, the exploitation of mineral deposits, the situation of the indigenous population and especially pastoral care in these areas.

Like many settlements on the Amazon, the town of Tefe is mainly accessible by water.



Since the chapel on the Solimões River in the Amazon region is flooded, the faithful moved to the annexe on the riverbank.

» Although we face a harsh reality, hope still moves us. «

Brazilian Bishops' Conference



Adequate care for the faithful is still a great challenge due to the rough terrain, hot and humid climate and immense distances that need to be traversed. Many settlements are only accessible by water. It is not uncommon for the faithful to have to wait several months or even years to receive the sacraments. ACN therefore promotes the formation of priests and supports their trainers through Mass stipends and existential help. We also provide boats for pastoral care in the rainforest communities along the rivers.

The Church in Brazil is also concerned about the increasing spread of various cults. They promise their followers prosperity, success and health and are particularly popular with the poor. Ensuring greater proximity to the faithful and a strengthening of catechesis are indispensable if the Church does not want to lose even more believers. Here, too, our promotion of a new generation of priests is of major benefit to the Church.

The old wooden boat for the pastoral work, the Esperança, will be replaced by the new motorboat, the Fr. Werenfried, which will reduce the travel time to the small communities on the riverbank by two thirds.



Help for São Paulo's homeless

In São Paulo, around 25,000 people live on the streets. Since 2005, the lay missionaries of Mission Bethlehem have been caring for the city's homeless in an effort to get them out of the quagmire of drug addiction, violence and hopelessness. Among them are children

and the elderly. A hot meal, a shower and clothing are part of the first aid they receive there. But many also seek spiritual and mental nourishment. ACN has been supporting the facility for several years with evangelisation materials, including the distribution of YOUCAT.



Peru

Number of projects

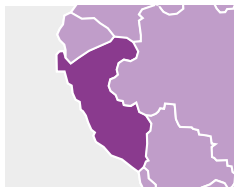
□ 101 ✓ 86

Type of projects

🔔 15 🎯 4 🏠 11
 📖 0 🎤 0 📄 11
 👥 26 👤 13 👤 6

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



Peru is the third largest country in South America in terms of surface area. A

majority of the 32 million Peruvians belong to indigenous tribes. The population is growing rapidly. 76% are members of the Catholic Church. While modest prosperity is developing in the cities, there is often abject poverty in rural areas and the mountains, leading to migration to urban regions. The increasing rural exodus often results in drug addiction and broken families. Here the local Church lacks sufficient pastoral workers to meet the needs of the faithful. ACN is therefore increasingly committed to supporting the next generation of priests in Peru.

The strong population growth and the increasing poverty in the country pose great challenges to the Peruvian Church. There are simply not enough vocations. If the number of priests stagnates, the faithful cannot be adequately cared for. The pastoral care being offered is particularly critical in the impassable, far-spread parishes of the mountainous regions and the Amazon. But there is also a lack of priests in the rapidly growing cities.



ACN helped the diocesan seminary Nuestra Señora del Carmen in Huaura to purchase 50 prayer books.

ACN also supported the parishes in Piura with 3,700 copies of the Latin American Bible.



ACN supports the livelihood of 31 nuns from the Congregation of the Servants of God's Plan who are undergoing training.



ACN therefore supports the training of priests in about 20 seminaries in the country. For only a new generation of priests can secure the spiritual, pastoral and clerical future of the local Church.

» We sponsor 20 seminaries in Peru. «

But catechists also play an important role in the proclamation of faith. Their education is also supported by ACN. In order to deepen the faith, we provide additional catechetical material to the parishes. We also support nuns who help the poor and weak under the most difficult conditions and often represent the only hope for the population.



Help for nuns

The Congregation of the Servants of God's Plan was founded in Lima in 1998. The nuns – mostly doctors, teachers and nurses – are primarily active in the proclamation of faith, but also care for the elderly and the needy. They have also founded schools for children with disabilities, for whom there is usually no state aid in Latin America.

In this way, the nuns make an important contribution to children developing their individual talents, to reducing social prejudices and to advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities in Peru. The congregation has many religious vocations and is regularly supported by ACN with training and existential help.



Haiti

Number of projects

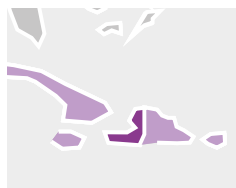
□ 132 ✓ 39

Type of projects

🔔 5 🎯 7 🕊️ 7
 📐 0 🎤 0 📖 0
 👤 5 👥 2 👤 13

Head of Section

Marco Mencaglia



Haiti is considered to be the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Natural disasters such as the devastating earthquake of 2010 or Hurricane Matthew in 2016 repeatedly cause severe devastation. This is compounded by corruption and political mismanagement. In view of the severe economic crisis and violent protests, the Catholic Church addressed an open letter to the incumbent government in September 2019, calling on it to fulfil its responsibility for the suffering population.

Bishop Désinord Jean,
vescovo di Hinche

Of its 10 million inhabitants, nearly 55% are Catholics. Despite the most adverse circumstances, the number of Catholics in the country is growing. New rectories are being opened in all ten dioceses. However, most of them do not have a church, so that the services must be held outdoors. ACN provides construction and renovation assistance.

Beyond that, we particularly support the training of priests and catechists. In addition to pastoral work, the priests also look after the social and material needs of the population. Especially in rural areas and in the outskirts of cities, priests are frequently the only point of contact for those in need. Most of them live in poverty themselves, and often they do not even have electricity in their homes. ACN supports destitute priests with Mass stipends.

The local Church is also very concerned about the cult of Voodoo, which was officially recognised as a religion in 2003 and is also widespread among the Christian population of Haiti. The Church is therefore endeavouring to strengthen its commitment to a sound proclamation of the faith.

» I would like to thank ACN and all the benefactors for their long-standing aid to Haiti. «



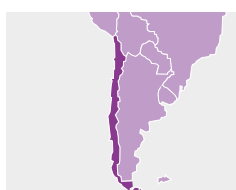
Eucharistic celebration in the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows.

The Chapel of St Michael the Archangel in the mountains outside Jacmel is an example of the condition of many churches in Haiti.

Insurgents broke into the Church of the Assumption during the riots in Santiago and smashed the furnishings.



Chile



In Chile, the Catholic Church has had to accept a great loss of trust in the wake of numerous abuse scandals in recent years.

Although official figures indicate that two-thirds of the 17.9 million Chileans are still Catholic, surveys reveal that the proportion of Catholics has dropped to 45%. Despite the crisis of confidence, many believers are still very committed to participating in church life. ACN supports the building of chapels, the training and further

education of priests and their support through Mass stipends in Chile. Catechetical material as well as editions of YOUCAT and DOCAT are also provided.

In autumn 2019, after a rise in prices for public transport, protests broke out in Chile decrying social inequality in the country, which then escalated into excessive violence. The Catholic Church was also the target of resentment and hatred from some groups of demonstrators. Between mid-October and the end of 2019, some 40 places of worship were damaged by vandalism and arson attacks.

Number of projects

46 21

Type of projects

4 0 5
0 0 2
4 1 5

Head of Section

Ulrich Kny

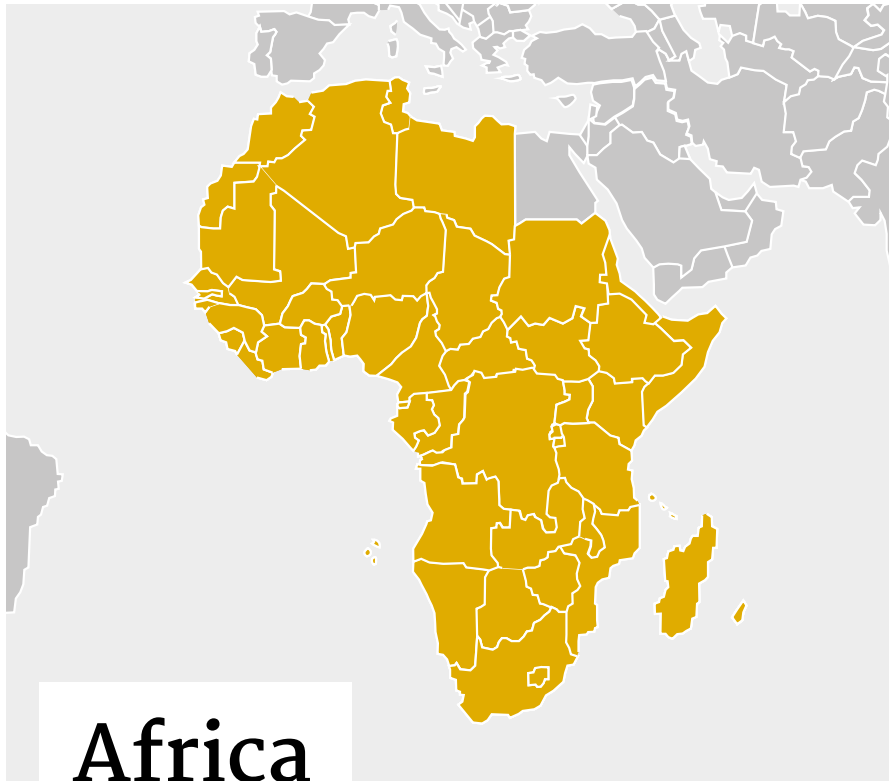


ACN was also affected by a serious attack on 8 November on the Church of the Assumption in the capital, Santiago. The church's priest, Pedro Narbona, is also the spiritual advisor to the Chilean national office of our foundation. The church was attacked by masked men; pews and holy images were thrown into the street, smashed and set on fire, and the walls were smeared with offensive graffiti. The Catholic Church in Chile publicly called for peace and reconciliation in the country.

>> We are gravely concerned about the violence that is also directed against the Church. <<

María Covarrubias,
President of ACN
Chile





In 2019, Africa set a sad record for the second time in a row. It is the continent with the highest number of murdered priests, religious and church workers. The mounting number of kidnappings and the increasing spread of Islamist terror are also alarming. The increase in violence was particularly dramatic in Burkina Faso. Christians are under increasing strain in many parts of Africa. Where they form a minority, they are discriminated against, persecuted and driven away. Therefore, the “land of the Sahara” was a priority region for ACN in 2019.

Despite the often catastrophic situation, Africa continues to be a continent of hope for the Catholic Church. With a total of 234 million Catholics, more than one-sixth of all Catholics worldwide live there. Every ninth priest and every fourth seminarian in the world is African. In times of famine, violence and political instability, it is always the Church that stands by the side of the population – and provides assistance where states fail. That is why our foundation views its task in supporting the African Church, not only in its pastoral mission, but also in its social and humanitarian commitment.

>> With 234 million Catholics, Africa continues to be a continent of hope for the Church. <<

ACN’s main focus in Africa is the education and training of priests, religious and the laity. High on our list of



Seminarians in the diocese of Ilorin, Nigeria.

priorities is also supporting initiatives that strengthen and protect families in crisis and conflict situations. We also help parishes purchase off-road vehicles so that pastoral workers can reach people living in remote areas or under the most difficult road conditions. Further aid is being provided for the construction of churches and chapels, which are a source of identity, especially in areas with a Catholic minority.



Mauritania

Number of projects

2
Project applications

3*
Funded projects

*including project applications from the previous year.

Type of projects

1
Construction/reconstruction

0
Means of transport

1
Mass stipends

0
Emergency aid

0
Media help

0
Bibles & books

0
Training of priests

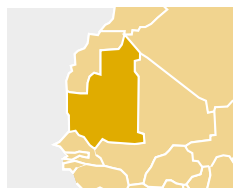
1
Existential help

0
Formation of faith

Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui

First Communion in a parish in Nouakchott.



The Islamic Republic of Mauritania in northwest Africa has a population of about 4.3 million and is one

of the poorest countries in the world. Since the 1970s, the desert has been spreading further and further. Many livestock breeders have lost their herds and migrated with their families to the slums of the cities. Due to climate change, the rising sea level is also causing many problems for people, and some coastal areas are already uninhabitable. The situation is also difficult for the Christian minority in the country. ACN's aid goes primarily to priests and nuns who live in existential need here.

Nearly 100% of the population profess the Islamic faith. There are only 4,000 Catholic Christians, who are exclusively foreigners. The bishop, priests and nuns of the country's only diocese come from 20 different European, Asian and African countries. Nevertheless, the work of the Catholic Church is appreciated by many Muslims. In Mauritania, 27 nuns care for pregnant women, the sick, migrants, prisoners and people with disabilities – nearly all of them Muslim.

» The priests and nuns here live in existential need. «

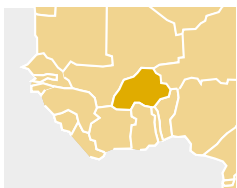
The nuns are also active in schools and educational institutions. Here they teach practical skills such as sewing, but also reading and writing to women who could not attend school. They also care for malnourished children, of whom there are about 40,000 in the capital Nouakchott alone. ACN supported the 27 nuns in 2019 with existential aid and the ten priests of the diocese with Mass stipends.

Missionary nun Hilda of the Franciscan Order in a clinic with a newborn.

Refugees can count on the help of religious sisters.



Burkina Faso



About a quarter of the population of Burkina Faso are Christians, and just over 60% of the 20 million

inhabitants are Muslims. The West African country has long been regarded as a model for peaceful coexistence between religions. While there were only isolated attacks in previous years, an explosion of violence broke out in 2019 with serious jihadist attacks on Christian communities. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled for their lives, schools have been closed and church life is now severely restricted. Three priests have already been murdered. ACN is standing by the local Church in this crisis.

The jihadist threat and violence particularly affect the north, the east and the Sahel zone. Bishop Laurent Birfuoré Dabiré of Dori even fears the eradication of Christians in Burkina Faso. Local Church representatives complain that the terrorists are being supplied with foreign weapons and report to ACN that some Muslim youths have joined the holy warriors mainly because they lack prospects in life, while for others it is an expression of their belief.

Pastoral care has come to a complete standstill in some areas due to the violent attacks. Priests and nuns can no longer move freely to care for the faithful in the villages; some parishes have been closed for security reasons. ACN would like to give hope to the priests and religious, in particular, and supports them with Mass stipends and existential aid. In 2019, we also continued to aid aspiring priests and the families of seminarians who are especially affected by the unstable situation in the country.

Number of projects

83 52

Type of projects

12 2 11
2 0 2
15 5 3

Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui

>> Christians in Burkina Faso are threatened with eradication. <<

Bishop Laurent Birfuoré Dabiré of Dori

Burial of Father Simeon Yampa and five believers after the terrorist attack in the Church of Dablo.





Ghana

Number of projects

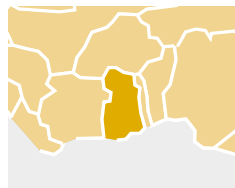
56 35

Type of projects

5 2 8
 0 0 0
 15 0 5

Head of Section

Kinga von Poschinger



The West African country Ghana has nearly 29 million inhabitants. A great majority of them, about

70%, are Christians. Most belong to Protestant communities. Only about 15% are Catholics. Especially in the north of the country, the Church suffers from a poor infrastructure, the spread of cults and a lack of young priests. ACN is therefore increasing its commitment to train priests and assists by providing Mass stipends to support the Catholic Church in Ghana on its way to a better future.

Northern and southern Ghana are marked by great differences. The north is closer to the Sahara and is therefore characterised by drought and poverty. Many people of working age migrate to the south, leaving children and the elderly behind. In contrast to the rest of the country, which is predominantly Christian, the north is predominantly inhabited by Muslims or members of tribal religions. Christians form only a very small minority there. Nevertheless, coexistence between the religious communities has so far remained peaceful.

ACN receives many requests for aid, particularly from the underdeveloped

Bishop's visit to Banbolenwuro, a small village in the diocese of Damongo.



The MASEL Sisters care for disabled children who are considered to be possessed by witches or demons by locals.

Father Martin during catechesis in the parish of Tinga.



north of the country. The Church there is facing numerous challenges. The road conditions are extremely bad and there are too few priests to care for the widely scattered believers. As in many African countries, the Church often takes on tasks where the state fails, including in health and education. However, the Church is aware that its core task is to proclaim the faith and this is a task to which it devotes itself with success. Especially among the followers of traditional African religions, many are interested in Christianity.

But where the Church has no presence, cults often spread, mostly financed from abroad. In order to secure the future of the Church, ACN therefore focuses on the training of much-needed priests. In addition, we help the priests who are already active with Mass stipends and enable them to participate in spiritual retreats so that they can recharge their batteries. After all, they perform their duties with great commitment and under the most difficult of conditions.

>> For many here, the Christian faith is a release from their fear of witchcraft and ghosts. <<

Kinga von Poschinger,
Head of Section





Nigeria

Number of projects

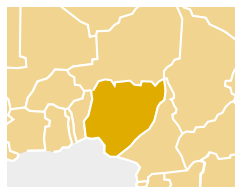
154 121

Type of projects

15 1 26
 1 0 1
 68 4 5

Head of Section

Kinga von Poschinger



With more than 190 million inhabitants, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Christians and

Muslims each make up nearly half of the population. In the predominantly Muslim north, the notorious Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram continues to carry out attacks and assaults on the Christian minority. In 2019, nu-

merous priests were kidnapped by the terrorists. But the violence suffered only creates stronger bonds between believers. ACN knows how desperately the Nigerian Church needs help in these difficult times. This is why we are active here with numerous aid projects.

Violent attacks have occurred time and again, not only in the north, but also in the country's central zone.



Eucharist celebration in the Archdiocese of Ibadan.



The Catholic Church of St Rita and the catechist house in Kaduna after a suicide attack by Boko Haram.

Here, heavily armed Muslim Fulani shepherds roam, some of whom are even more brutal than the Boko Haram extremists. Another problem is the increasing number of kidnappings. In the state of Enugu alone, nine priests were abducted in 2019. Representatives of the local Church fear that the intention behind the acts of violence could be to trigger a national conflict between the religious communities.

» The violence suffered has only strengthened Christians' faith. «

Archbishop Matthew Man-Oso
Ndagoso of Kaduna

They are reassured, however, that in the face of violence Muslims and Christians are intensifying their efforts for a fruitful interreligious dialogue. Nigerian bishops reported to ACN that believers are standing even closer together in their faith due to the violence suffered, and that the number of Catholics is rising. As a result, more parishes were founded and additional church services were offered in 2019. At the same time, the number of priestly and religious callings is also increasing.

Nevertheless, the local Church is dependent on help from abroad to fulfil its pastoral tasks, to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure and to assist those who are in mourning and are traumatised. ACN therefore primarily provides aid for the formation of priests, construction assistance and supports needy priests with Mass stipends. Spiritual retreats for priests have also been sponsored to strengthen their spirit in the face of difficult challenges and to give them the opportunity to refuel, both in mind and in spirit.



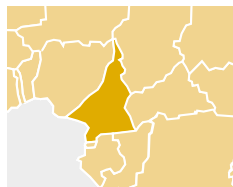
Moses Daniel has taught at the seminary of the eastern Nigerian diocese of Yola for ten years. Thanks to ACN's help, he was able to attend a four-week international course for

trainers in Rome this summer. He writes: "Participating in this course, I realised that I have to do more than I have ever done before. This programme really opened my eyes."



Cameroon

Victims of an attack by Boko Haram in Galalari in northern Cameroon.



Like Nigeria, neighbouring Cameroon also suffers from increasing outbreaks of

violence. In 2019, conflicts between the separatists of the English-speaking parts of the country and the French-speaking central government have further increased. So far, 2,000 people have been killed and 400,000 have had to flee their homes. The Catholic Church laments the abductions of priests and church personnel. Not without reason, Cameroon is therefore one of the countries in Africa that ACN supports most.

For a long time, the central African republic of Cameroon with its 24 million inhabitants was considered relatively stable in contrast to its crisis-ridden neighbours. However, what began in 2016 with protest marches against the marginalisation of the English-speaking population escalated into an ongoing armed conflict that is increasingly inhibiting social and economic life. In addition, the violence of the terrorist group Boko Haram has spilled over from Nigeria to Cameroon at the border in the north.

The Catholic Church, to which 38% of Cameroonians belong, raised its voice again in 2019 against violence and human rights violations in the country, which are committed by both state security forces and separatists. As a result, it is caught between the fronts in its efforts for peace and reconciliation and is under attack from both sides. ACN will not leave the local Church stranded in this situation. The focus of our help is on training future priests. Fortunately, there are many vocations, but the local Church does not have the resources to pay for their training without outside help.

Number of projects

149 91

Type of projects

17 1 12
0 2 8
35 11 5

Head of Section

Rafael d'Aqui

>> During the outbreaks of violence, our priests proved to be true shepherds for the people. <<

Bishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Bamenda

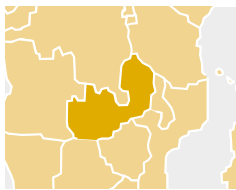
Auxiliary Bishop M. Bibi on his way to the new parish in Ilung.





Sister P. B. Luba was able to complete a language course to begin her missionary work with the help of ACN.

Zambia



The landlocked country of Zambia in southern Africa is one of the more stable countries of the continent.

Nevertheless, there are many problems here, such as great poverty, a poor infrastructure and the spread of AIDS and malaria. Of the country's 17 million inhabitants, 90% are Christians – the majority being Protestants. Only a fifth of the population is Catholic. The local Church is very concerned about the lack of young priests and the spread of cults. ACN therefore diligently supports seminaries, the livelihood of priests, the development of the Church infrastructure and the youth ministry.

The Church in Zambia urgently needs more priests, above all, to ensure pastoral care of parishes in widespread areas and to stop the spread of cults, which try to entice believers away in places where there are only a few Catholic pastoral workers. For this reason, ACN's priorities include the formation of priests and the development of the Church infrastructure. With the help

of our foundation, for example, the St Augustine seminary in Kabwe could be renovated in 2019.

>> The Church needs true witnesses to the Gospel. <<

Father J. Mulenga, responsible for seminaries at the Bishops' Conference of Zambia

In addition, those training priests at seminaries and needy diocesan priests were supported by Mass stipends. This aid is particularly important for the trainers, because they must be available for their seminarians at all times and have no additional sources of income, e.g. from side jobs in the parish.

We also feel it is important to promote youth pastoral care. For in a country with such a high rate of AIDS, many teenage pregnancies and broken families, it is important to provide an orientation to the youth and convey Christian values. For this reason, ACN continued to support the provision of books for children's and youth catechesis in 2019.

Number of projects

113 90

Type of projects

17 8 10
0 1 12
30 1 11

Head of Section

Toni Zender





Ethiopia

Number of projects

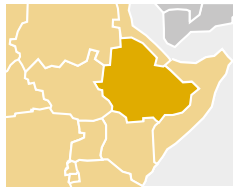
📁 106 ✅ 74

Type of projects

🔔 21 🎯 3 🏠 6
 📍 0 🎤 0 📖 1
 👤 19 👥 2 👨 22

Head of Section

Father Dr Andrzej Halemba



The country on the Horn of Africa is a land of many contrasts. Strong economic growth on the one hand;

great poverty on the other. Ethiopia has almost 109 million inhabitants and about 80 ethnic groups with very different cultures and languages. 58% are Orthodox Christians and only 2% are members of the Catholic faith. However, the proportion of Muslims is rising and currently stands at 34%. Islam is radicalising in some regions, and

there have been repeated attacks against Christian institutions. ACN supports the Church in many ways to strengthen its presence so that it can meet the increasing challenges.

There was also good news from Ethiopia in 2019. President Abiy Ahmed received the Nobel Peace Prize in December. He was primarily honoured for his commitment to the peace agreement with neighbouring Eritrea – a sensational change in the relationship between two states that had been enemies for decades.

Father Kenneth with newly married couples in local dress.



» Traditional Islam in Ethiopia is increasingly being superseded by radical fundamentalist currents. « Father Petros Berga

Nuns and priests on the way to the youth pastoral in the parish of Dawhan.



Mass in the Catholic parish of Dhadim.

Nevertheless, serious unrest broke out in October, which was also directed against the President. According to police reports, at least 67 people were killed in the riots. This was triggered by smouldering ethnic conflicts in the Oromia region around the capital Addis Ababa. The Church was not spared violence either. In outbreaks of violence by radical Islamists, Church institutions have already been repeatedly attacked.

But despite increasing threats, the Catholic communities are growing, especially because the local Church runs many schools, kindergartens and social institutions. There have been many baptisms, above all in areas of first evangelisation, where people still belong to traditional

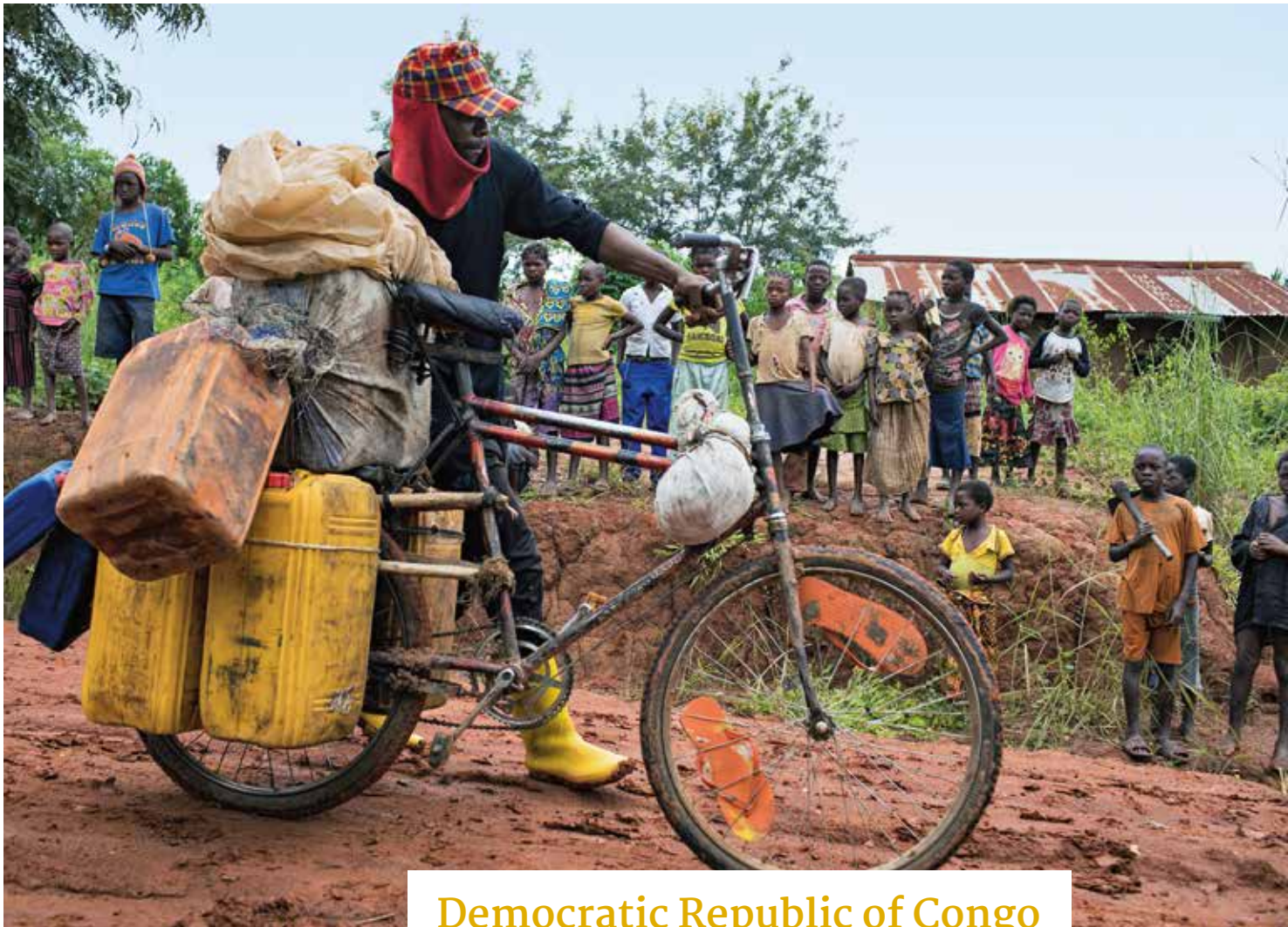
tribal religions. This is a positive development that is not least due to the help of ACN. We assist with grants for the construction of churches and chapels and the procurement of vehicles for pastoral care over vast areas.

But the focus of our aid is on people who proclaim the faith. In 2019, for example, we again supported many projects for the training and further education of priests, religious and the laity, as well as the implementation of pastoral programmes. Pastoral care for young people is also a matter very close to our hearts, for it gives hope to many young people and encourages them to make a contribution to the future of their country instead of emigrating.

In front of the new village chapel in the parish of Oromate, which facilitates first evangelisation in the area.



Pastoral care in the parish in Adwa.



Democratic Republic of Congo

Number of projects

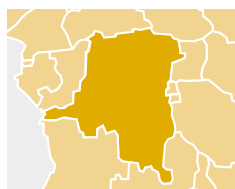
388 268

Type of projects

19 12 95
 0 4 3
 111 8 16

Head of Section

Christine du Coudray



The Democratic Republic of Congo is four times the size of France in area and has rich mineral resources, including gold, diamonds, ores and oil. Despite this wealth of natural resources, a majority of the 85 million inhabitants live in deep poverty because of greed and corruption in the political and economic spheres.

es, including gold, diamonds, ores and oil. Despite this wealth of natural resources, a majority of the 85 million inhabitants live in deep poverty because of greed and corruption in the political and economic spheres.

The change of government was the central event in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019. The Church had participated in the protests against long-time President Joseph Kabila in the run-up to the elections. And the protests were successful. The President dropped his candidacy. This was an important milestone in the fight against corruption and despotism in the political system. Since then, hopes have been resting on the new President Félix Tshisekedi.

>> What ACN offers is something no other organisation can provide. <<

In addition, there are armed conflicts between incessantly changing rebel groups. The Church often has to step in where the state fails in solving social, political and development problems. To fulfil its tasks, it was once again able to count on ACN's support in 2019.

In late November 2019, the bishops of the dioceses of Butembo Beni and Uvira addressed an open letter to the President to draw attention to the continuing violence and insecurity in the east of the country and to call on the government to finally take effective measures against it. The Church is an unmistakable voice in the Congo when it comes to pointing out grievances and promoting social change. This would be unthinkable without stable spiritual guidance and pastoral grassroots work by priests and religious, who often have to master their service under

Because there is no running water, it has to be fetched from a well.



the most difficult conditions. ACN not only helps them renovate what are frequently dilapidated rectories, but also provides them with vehicles for pastoral care. In addition, we provide funding for the training of future priests, religious and catechists.

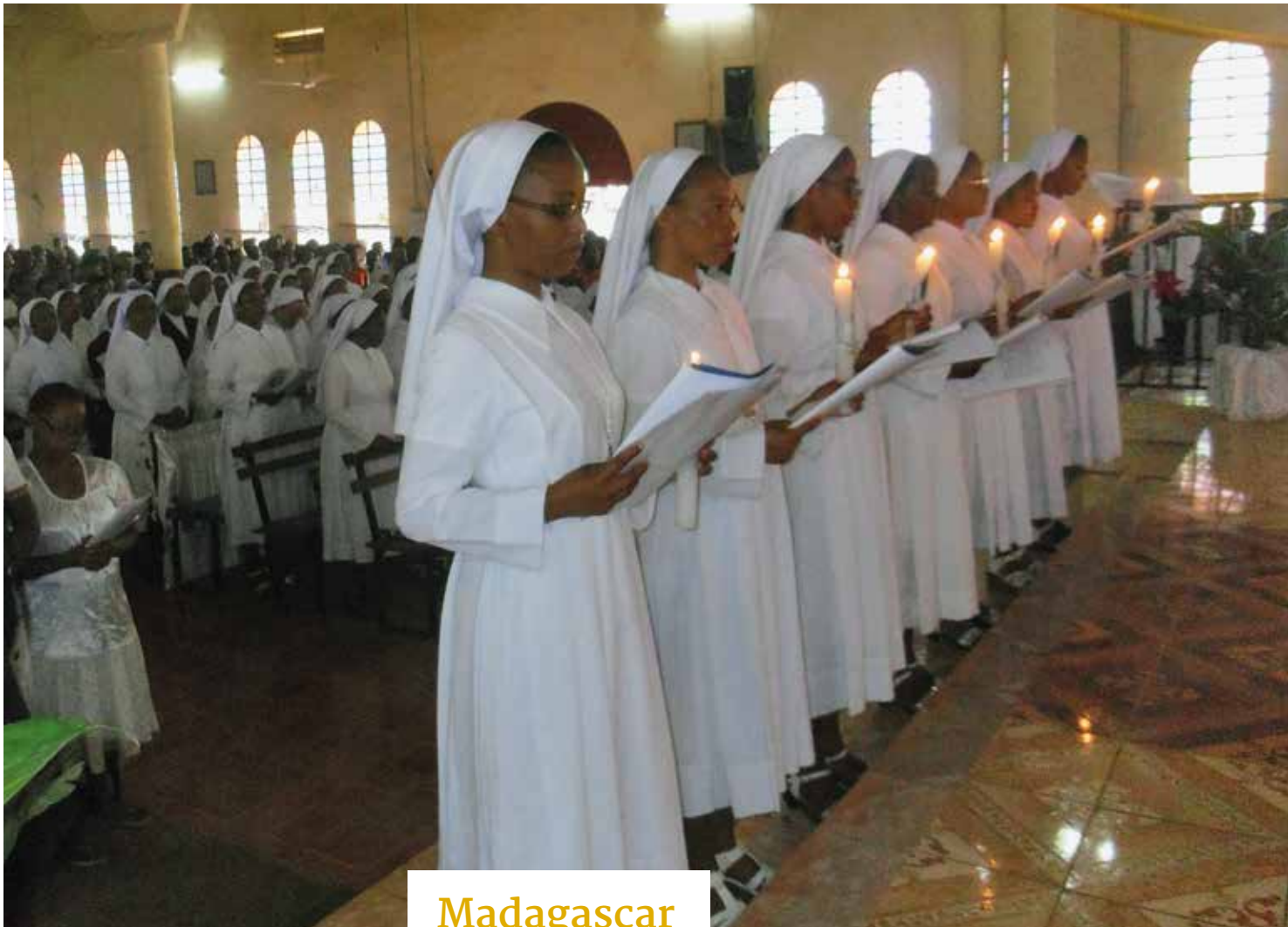
A sister of the daughters of Resurrection in the care of a malnourished child in Bukavu-Mirhi.



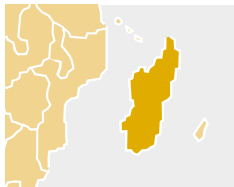
Support for 97 seminarians

In February 2017, Christ the King Seminary in Malole in the Archdiocese of Kananga in southern Congo was looted, ransacked and partially set on fire by rebels. With the help of ACN, the seminary has been re-

built. There are now 97 seminarians studying there – more than ever before! We supported their education with 8,000 euros in 2019. Another 7,200 euros went to teachers at the seminary in the form of Mass stipends.



Madagascar



Madagascar – situated off the southern coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean – is the second-largest island state in the world after Indonesia.

More than three-quarters of its 25.6 million inhabitants live in poverty – the country is thus one of the poorest in the world. Half of the population belongs to traditional African religions. Christians make up about 40% of the population, and of these, about 8 million are Catholics. Islam is on the rise – including some radical splinter groups that also

lead attacks on Christian institutions. Madagascar was therefore high on ACN’s priority list in 2019.

Ten years ago, only 1% of the population was Muslim; today this number has reached about 7% – with a rising trend. The local Church laments the fact that money from the Gulf States is being used to promote the spread of radical Islam and that violence has been on the increase since then. Thus 2019 saw increased attacks against Christians and Church institutions. As of late, many mosques have even been built in places where no Muslims have lived before.

Number of projects

84 87*

Type of projects

9 6 32
 0 0 0
 34 5 1

Head of Section

Christine du Coudray

*including project applications from the previous year.



A young religious from Madagascar is completing his training in Cameroon.

Training of 74 nuns in the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

» We thank all benefactors for their immense love for our priests. «

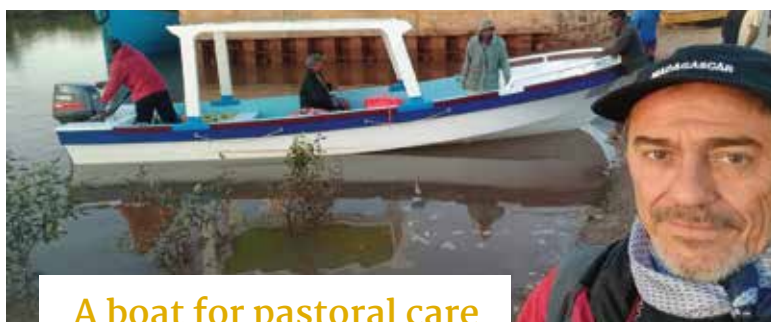
Bishop Raharilamboniaina of Morondava



Reception of Pope Francis in the Carmelite Monastery.

Moreover, non-Muslims are encouraged through financial incentives to convert to Islam in many places and women are paid to wear burkas. Politicians are reinforcing this development, as immigration from Muslim countries, especially Turkey, is strongly promoted by the state. However, the visit of Pope Francis in September 2019 was very encouraging for the Church and its believers in Madagascar. This was an important sign of hope for many Christians on the island who often feel cut off from the rest of the world. In order to be prepared to meet current challenges, evangelisation work is especially imperative to deepen the faith.

ACN supports the country's priests with Mass stipends, promotes the training of priests and religious and provides existential aid to contemplative nuns. As a result of poor health care and the outbreak of a measles epidemic, ACN was also instrumental in allowing 69 aspiring priests at the seminary in Antsiranana to receive measles vaccinations during the reporting year.



A boat for pastoral care

In mid-western Madagascar, ACN was able to provide 21,000 euros to the diocese of Maintirano to purchase a motorboat that is used for pastoral care along the rivers and coastline. The diocese spans approximately 450 kilometres from north to south. The bishop

and priests would be on the road for three days in a car, which would be considerably more expensive. In addition, some places are difficult to reach by land. Thanks to the boat, pastoral care for the faithful could be significantly intensified.





Middle East

Can there be peace in the Middle East? Many people no longer believe it can happen and are looking for a new home. But there are rays of hope, such as cease-fires, reconstruction and foreign aid. These are times in which wounds heal and hope revives. This is also true for Christians in the region. ACN has been active with aid projects for the Church here since the outbreak of war. In 2019 alone, 13.2 million euros were devoted to the Church in Syria and Iraq. A total of 16.8 million euros went to the Middle East.

When the guns fall silent and eyes can once again look upward, the full extent of destruction in the Middle East becomes visible. The view takes in landscapes of ruined areas, mountains of rubble, concrete debris and craters of torn-open earth. This frequently also reflects the state of people's souls. They are traumatised and most suffer incredible hardships, especially during the winter months.



The Syrian Catholic priest G. Jahola at the remains of Mar Benham Church in Bakhdida.

» The reconstruction of churches also restores the souls of the faithful. «


In the early years of the war, when Christians were struggling just to survive, ACN saved tens of thousands of Christians through emergency relief projects. This solidarity and compassion gave many of them the courage to return and rebuild their home. But millions of refugees and displaced

persons still remain in camps in neighbouring countries. Among them are many Christians. They too want to return to their homes and live their faith. And for that they need churches. In addition to emergency relief, ACN's focus is therefore increasingly on long-term support for the reconstruction of the destroyed church infrastructure, for churches create identity and strengthen the faith in a better future.



Syria

Number of projects

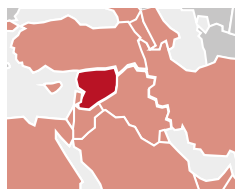
 194 Project applications
 132 Funded projects

Type of projects

 20 Construction/reconstruction
 2 Means of transport
 6 Mass stipends
 44 Emergency aid
 0 Media help
 0 Bibles & books
 3 Training of priests
 7 Existential help
 50 Formation of faith

Head of Section

Father Dr Andrzej Halemba



In nine years of civil war, some 522,000 people have died in Syria thus far. Almost twelve

million people have been displaced, two-thirds of the total population of the country. 6.7 million of these are internally displaced persons and 5.3 million are housed in camps in neighbouring countries or have left for Europe. Particularly tragic: around one million children have become

orphans as a result of the war, many of whom are of the Christian faith. In addition to numerous other aid projects, ACN is therefore particularly committed to the Christian children and youth in Syria.

The Syrian Christians were hit hardest by the civil war. Of the 1.5 million who lived in the country before the war, only a third are still in the country. The Emeritus Patriarch of the Greek Melkite Catholic Church, Gregory III Laham, summarises the situation with these words: "We are

The destroyed old town of Homs.





martyrs because we are witnesses of Christ." Despite all the hardship, the remaining 500,000 Christians would like to stay in their homeland. ACN is helping them. 7.6 million euros went to Christians in Syria last year. Of this sum, 3.5 million euros were devoted directly to charitable aid, such as food parcels. One of the projects close to the heart of ACN is the relief action "A Drop of Milk". For in Syria, only a few families can afford to buy basic foods. ACN has supported this campaign for Christian families in the war-torn city

of Aleppo for four years. In 2019, we provided 240,000 euros to this project alone.

A further focus of our aid to Syria involves new construction and reconstruction projects. The cost of construction aid has risen rapidly during the war. Nevertheless, this is a good sign. For habitable houses and flats are long-lasting and promise a brighter future. In total, 500 houses and flats have already been renovated with the help of ACN. Our foundation

>> Only a few families can afford basic foods like milk. <<



Restoration of the Maronite Cathedral of St Elias in Aleppo.



>> Education is the best ground to cultivate understanding and peace. <<

provided 1 million euros in 2019 and the project will continue in 2020.

But education also stands for hope and a better future. In the Middle East conflict, it is the key to a non-violent coexistence of opposing convictions and therefore the basis for a peaceful life together. Christians in the Middle East attach importance to a good education. Not only because it offers them better chances on the job market, but

also because Christians who attend university avoid being drafted into the army. But education costs money. Together with ten Christian churches, ACN launched an ambitious programme in Aleppo last year. Under the motto “Praying plus studying” 7,340 students received 20 euros per month for eight months (one academic year). In addition to the aid money, the programme also provides for student counselling and spiritual guidance.



ACN supported 10,885 primary school children with materials.

ACN provided rent subsidies for G. Mansour and his family.

Thanks to ACN, Syrian and Iraqi refugee children can attend the Saint Rita School in Lebanon.



Support for children in Aleppo

Violence. Hunger. Trauma. The suffering and misery of children in the Syrian war knows no bounds, especially in the completely bombed-out city of Aleppo. One of the initiatives ACN is promoting there is “Let Me Live My Childhood”. This initiative is designed to help children between the ages of 3 and 15 develop their skills and rediscover their

needs in a spirit of unity and mutual support. We already sponsored the project in 2018 and were able to help 400 children once again last year. With a budget of 13,000 euros, we covered the costs of transport, food, sweaters, inpatient care and entrance fees for recreational activities, including outings to the swimming pool and cinema.



Iraq

Number of projects

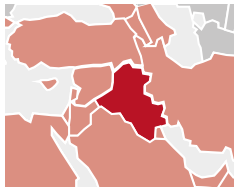
84 50

Type of projects

25 0 3
 7 0 0
 2 4 9

Head of Section

Father Dr Andrzej Halemba



Iraq has been left with nothing. The country is struggling to rise from the rubble left behind by

the Islamic State during the years of siege. But corruption in government and administration is making reconstruction efforts difficult. Two out of three Iraqis are unemployed. Six million people are dependent on outside support. ACN provides aid directly on site. We approved a total aid budget

of 5.6 million euros for Iraq in 2019. Thanks to this aid, many Christians can return to their former homeland.

ACN's main focus in Iraq is the reconstruction of churches, monasteries, schools, kindergartens and parish centres. In 2019, our total budget for construction assistance in Iraq was 5.6 million euros. This is long-term aid that hardly anyone else is providing. It creates stability, prospects and, last but not least, jobs through the construction and renovation measures.

>> We are pleased about every Christian who returns to Iraq. <<



The cemetery in Karemlash, destroyed by IS rebels.

In the streets of Karemlash.



>> If Christians from all over the world hadn't helped us, there would be no one left here. << Father Georges Jahola

But nothing gives the Christians in Iraq more confidence than the reconstruction of their churches, which were destroyed by the IS. This also includes our construction aid for the renovation of the Al-Tahira Church in Bakhdida, the largest church in Iraq. Not only churches, but schools too have resumed daily classes. Pastor Georges Jahola describes the current situation as follows: "Of course, not everything is positive yet. The problems in our country are enormous. One thing is certain: if Christians from all over the

world hadn't been so generous in helping our people, there would be no one left here."

Not only the reconstruction of churches, but also the rebuilding of destroyed housing is a central concern of ACN in Iraq. As a co-initiator of the "Nineveh Reconstruction Committee", we have funded the restoration of 2,086 homes on the Nineveh Plains with 6.43 million euros in recent years, which is more than one-third of all the homes rebuilt in the region.





» **Thousands of Christians have already been able to return to their homes.** «

This makes the Nineveh project the largest reconstruction programme ever undertaken in Iraq. Especially in Bakhda, the largest Christian city in the country, ACN has enabled the return of thousands of families who have enthusiastically resumed church life through catechism classes, women's groups, youth work and radio broadcasts.

A portion of our construction assistance was used to renovate church halls where weddings and other celebra-

tions are held. Many families could not otherwise afford such celebrations. Projects like these also serve to rebuild social cohesion in parishes and encourage people to return to their homes, for many refugees have found shelter with relatives and friends. Among these are Christians. They come from Bartella, Tesqopa, Karemlash, Bashiqa or Bahzani and eagerly await the right opportunity to return to their homeland. When one realises that at the end of the civil war and the reign of IS terror only 10%

New construction in Bakhda.



At night in
Karemlash.

During reconstruction of
the Saint Joseph Centre.



of the once 1.5 million Iraqi Christians live in the country, one can clearly see how today's Christian Church in Iraq has been bled dry. Nevertheless, there is a new glimmer of hope among the faithful. Bishop Warda puts it in a nutshell: "We are a Church of martyrs, but every martyrdom is followed by a resurrection."



Al-Tahira Church shines in new splendour

The destruction of the Al-Tahira Church in Bakhdida by IS rebels was the moral nadir of the occupation period for many Christians. Before fleeing, the terrorists had piled up and set fire to benches, confessionals and all the furniture. All that remained were the bare, charred walls. Many believers gathered daily for worship in the remains of the church, which as the largest Christian

church was the pride of the city. ACN allocated a budget of 510,000 euros to renovate the church interior in 2019. The Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Petros Mouche, told ACN: "The Al-Tahira Church was built in 1932 by the people of Bakhdida. We want the church to remain a Christian symbol, and with its new splendour, to encourage residents of the city to stay."





Western/Eastern Europe

For decades, ACN has been committed to supporting the Church in need in the countries of Eastern Europe. The Church there still faces great challenges. Whether it is the weak state of the economy, efforts to recover expropriated buildings or the critical lack of personnel in the Church, atheistic communism left a huge vacuum in society and people seek orientation. This means there is an enormous need for pastoral care, counselling and guidance. This applies equally to the refugees in Western Europe. Therefore, ACN's first priority is to promote the education and training of priests, religious and the laity.

Even though many found it hard to believe, ACN's founder, Father Werenfried van Straaten, was convinced of the approaching end of communism long before the Fall of the Wall and actively planned for this day. The 30th anniversary of the fall of the Wall in 2019 was therefore also an occasion of great joy for ACN, because political change in the former Eastern bloc countries meant the regaining of religious freedom – just as Father Werenfried had hoped for. Much has already been set up and put in motion in local churches over the past decades – not least as a result of the aid provided by our foundation. In this way, ACN has supported the interests of the Church in Eastern Europe with approximately 500 million euros since the Fall of the Wall.

Especially in Eastern European countries where the Catholic Church is in the minority, the local

churches continue to depend on foreign aid. ACN not only supports the education and training of priests, but also supports urgent renovation and construction work on church buildings that were once expropriated by the communists. In this way, we are making an important contribution to the restoration of a well-functioning infrastructure for the local churches.

>> Since the Fall of the Wall, we have supported the Church in Eastern Europe with half a billion euros. <<

In addition, we help priests and nuns who care for people in large areas by providing vehicles. But we also continue to be active in Western Europe. Here, ACN is particularly involved in the pastoral care of refugees and supports initiatives for the formation of faith.



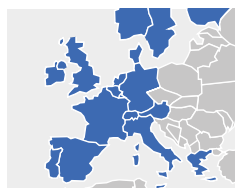
Refugees in Western Europe

“Father Domenico encouraged us to take control of our destiny.” M. J. Khalil and H. Othman, Iraqi refugees.

Head of Section
Peter Humeniuk

» **Our commitment to the Christian refugees in Europe will not cease.** «

Iraqi refugee boy with a children’s Bible in the Chaldean Catholic parish “Apostles Mar Addai and Mar Mari” in Essen, Germany.



Even if the flow of refugees to Western Europe has slowed down, one can certainly not

speak of a relaxed situation. ACN has therefore increased its commitment to Christian refugees in recent years. Many are traumatised by persecution, discrimination and war. They not only need sustenance and accommodation, their souls also need food and shelter. Those who suffer wish for pastoral care and long for active participation in the life of the Church, since faith is an essential part of their identity.

Refugees who have found refuge in Western Europe are initially confronted with a language barrier, which often leads to them feeling isolated from society and alone in their parishes. In order to break down these barriers, ACN has intensified its pastoral care services for refugees. In addition, our foundation provides Bibles and spiritual literature in the refugees’ native languages.

In addition to our involvement in refugee work, we also support the Church in the West with new evangelisation initiatives in particular. After all, structural upheavals such as the declining number of believers, the ageing of society, the decrease in spiritual vocations and the dwindling knowledge of faith are bleeding the Church dry. ACN supports Catholic media work, but also conferences and events which focus on Christian values and strengthen the faith. Contemplative monasteries, priest training and initiatives that appeal to young people and thus bring new momentum to parishes are also supported. It is not unusual for spiritual vocations to arise from these projects.



ACN supports the pastoral activities of the Dominican Sisters in Liepāja, Latvia.

Number of projects

26 Project applications
 16 Funded projects

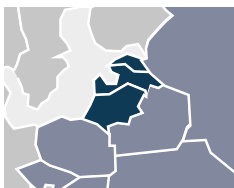
Type of projects

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

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk

Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia



After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia became independent

in 1991 and have been members of the European Union since 2004. As the southernmost and largest of the three Baltic states, Lithuania, with its 2.8 million inhabitants, is the only country of the former Soviet Union that has a Catholic majority of 80%, while Catholics are in the minority in Estonia and Latvia. In the Baltic States, ACN is particularly active in the areas of Catholic media relations and the training of priests, as well as child and youth work in the parishes.

In the Soviet era, several generations grew up without any faith formation whatsoever. Today many people are still in search of spiritual orientation. Low-threshold initiatives are important means of answering their questions. The media, for example, can be used for this purpose. To this end, ACN has supported the Catholic radio station Mažoji Studija (small studio) in Vilnius, Lithuania since 1993; the station makes an important contribution to evangelism.

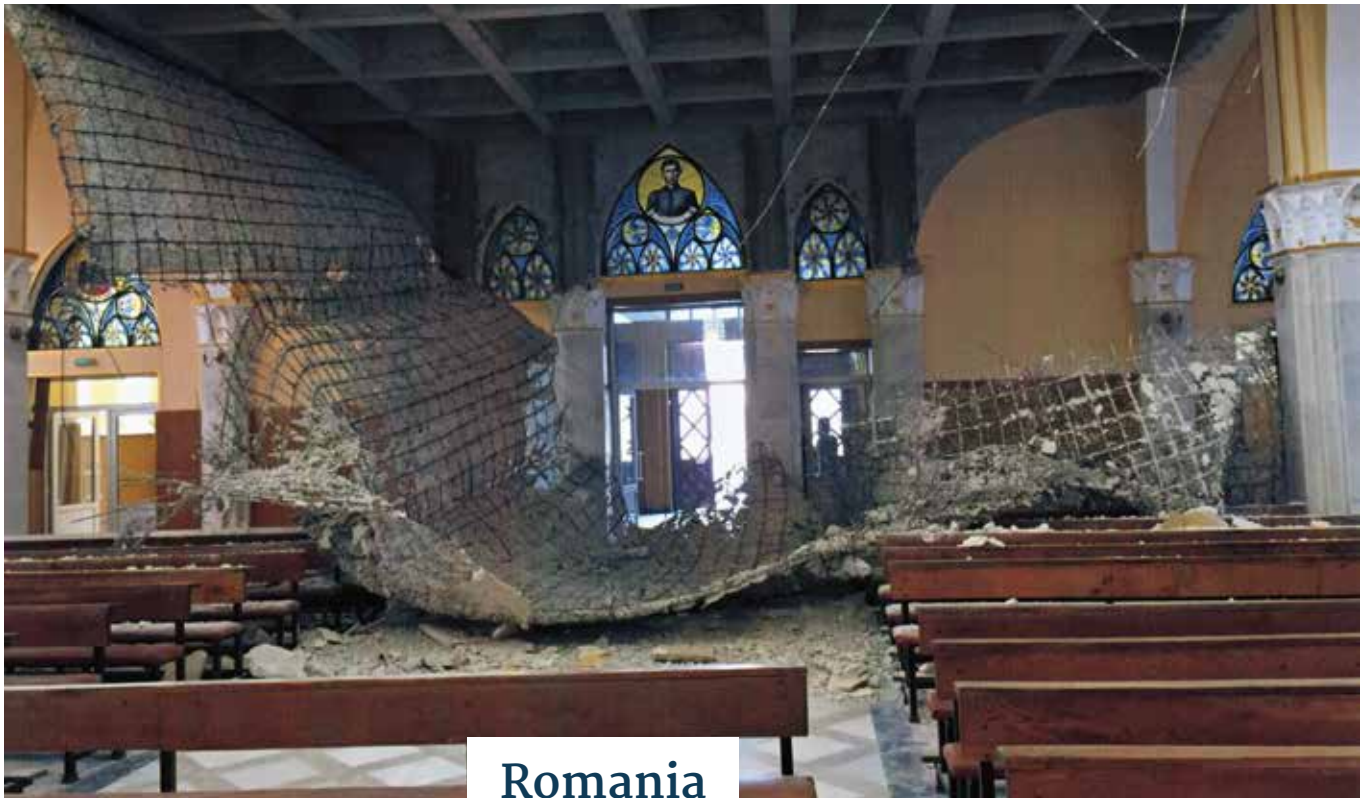
In Latvia, Catholics make up a quarter of some 1.9 million inhabitants. The largest denomination is Lutheran with 34% of the population. During the reporting period, ACN supported the training of nuns, helped with renovations and sponsored the production of a documentary film about Bishop Sloskans, who was imprisoned for his faith during the Soviet era and had to perform forced labour under the harshest conditions. The later friend and companion of ACN is a role model for many through his life story.

In Estonia, Catholics are a very small minority of less than 2%. The largest Christian denomination is made up of Orthodox Christians – mainly ethnic Russians – at 16%, followed by Lutherans at just under 10%. Here ACN has primarily supported construction projects and sponsored priests with Mass stipends. ACN is also committed to helping children and young people in the Baltic States, where we regularly sponsor Christian summer camps.

>> Many people seek spiritual orientation here. <<

In the Catholic radio studio Mažoji Studija.





Romania

Renovation of the "Coborârea Sfântului Duh" church in Adjudeeni.



Although Romania has been an EU member since 2007, the country is still marked by a weak economy,

unemployment and corruption.

The consequence: of the country's 19.5 million inhabitants, many young people, in particular, are leaving the country due to a lack of prospects. The Romanian Catholic Church, already a minority religious community with scarcely 6% of the population, has not been left unscathed by the difficult situation. ACN primarily supports the Romanian Church with construction and renovation assistance, spiritual guidance, training future priests and family pastoral care.

Number of projects

□ 111 ✓ 71

Type of projects

🔔 40	🎯 10	👤 8
📐 0	🎤 0	📖 0
👥 8	👤 2	👤 3

First baptism in the recently completed rectory in Curtuiuşeni.



86% of Romanians belong to the Orthodox Church. During the communist era, all churches were severely persecuted. The small local Catholic Church lacks the financial means to invest in what is often an outdated infrastructure or to purchase new vehicles.

Another important concern is the promotion of priestly vocations. In addition to providing budgets for construction and renovation work, funding for the training of priests and religious is therefore one of the

most urgent aid measures for ACN in Romania. And this has been successful. The number of vocations at the Greek Catholic seminary in Oradea, for example, which ACN has supported since 1993, is gratifyingly high. 54 young men are currently undergoing their training there, which was co-financed by ACN with 32,400 euros in 2019. The increase in priestly vocations is due in no small part to the increased commitment of the dioceses to family pastoral care. After all, stable families which are firmly rooted in faith are fertile ground for religious vocations. These initiatives are also supported by ACN.

>> We would not be able to fulfil our task without help from abroad. << Father Anton Cioba, Rector of the Oradea Seminary

The visit of Pope Francis, who travelled through the country from 31 May to 2 June 2019, also gave Romanian Catholics new courage and confidence. He met with Patriarch Daniel of Bucharest and other high dignitaries of the Orthodox Church at that time.



Ukraine

213 seminarians of the interdiocesan seminary "Sv. Yosafat" in Ivano-Frankivsk were supported by ACN.

Number of projects

□ 363 ✓ 293

Type of projects

🔔 41 🎯 29 🕯️ 55
 📍 2 🎤 5 📖 5
 👤 78 👤 38 👤 40

Head of Section

Magda Kaczmarek



70 years of communism have left their mark on Ukrainian society. Corruption, lack of prospects,

economic crisis and war in the east of the country have led to younger, well-educated people, in particular, leaving the country. The Catholic Church is in the minority in Ukraine and has difficulty coping without assistance from abroad. ACN supports the local Church in pastoral care, faith initiatives, media relations and the training of priests.

Of the 44 million Ukrainians, just under 10% are Catholic. At the same time, the Catholic Church is represented here with two liturgical rite churches. Most Ukrainian Catholics belong to the Greek Catholic Church, which celebrates its services using the Byzantine rite. 1.5 million are Roman Catholics.

A central concern of the Church is family support. The general lack of prospects often leads to the break-up of marriages and families. This causes an increase in alcohol and drug abuse and higher emigration rates for the younger generation. Meanwhile, more than two-thirds of the children here grow up without a father. In addition, around 300 unborn children are aborted

every day. These conditions urgently call for the strengthening of family pastoral care. This is why ACN also sponsored the Catholic Family Congress in 2019, which provided important momentum for family pastoral care. Furthermore, the Catholic media outlets Radio Voskressinnya, Zhyve.TV, EWTN and Radio Maria were again supported financially during the reporting year. The stations spread the word of God and offer spiritual orientation to many seekers.

The number of priestly and religious vocations in the Ukraine remains gratifyingly high. In 2019, ACN again sponsored training in numerous seminaries and monasteries. The latter are also supported by our foundation through subsidies for living expenses. First and foremost, it is the nuns who make an indispensable contribution by taking care of those seeking advice, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities and neglected children.



Seminarians supported children by offering catechesis.

>> There is a lack of hope in society and a lack of love in families. <<

Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Apostolic Nuncio in the Ukraine



Russia

Number of projects

□ 102 ✓ 110*

Type of projects

🔔 31 🎯 10 🏠 6
 📄 0 🗣️ 7 📖 2
 👥 15 👤 8 👤 31

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk

*including project applications from the previous year.



Catholics are a minority in Russia. So it is all the more gratifying that the voice of the Catholic Church is increasingly gaining awareness in society. Not least because of the historic meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill in 2016, which gave new momentum to the exchange between Catholic and Orthodox believers in Russia. 2019 was once again a good year for the Catholic-

Orthodox dialogue. ACN has been actively committed to this dialogue for nearly 30 years.

>> We are not just partners, but friends! <<

Hieromonk Stefan Igumnov,
 Secretary of the Moscow
 Patriarchate's Department for
 External Church Relations



Procession on the occasion of the completion of the pastoral centre in Tomsk.

Our foundation is the initiator of an ecumenical working group that takes up important topics from the joint statement of the Church leaders and translates them into concrete projects. One of the goals of the ecumenical working group, in which ACN is also a member, is to intensify aid for Christians in the Middle East. Other working group projects are dedicated to improving pastoral care for the mentally ill, helping mothers in crisis situations and supporting addicts. The deepening

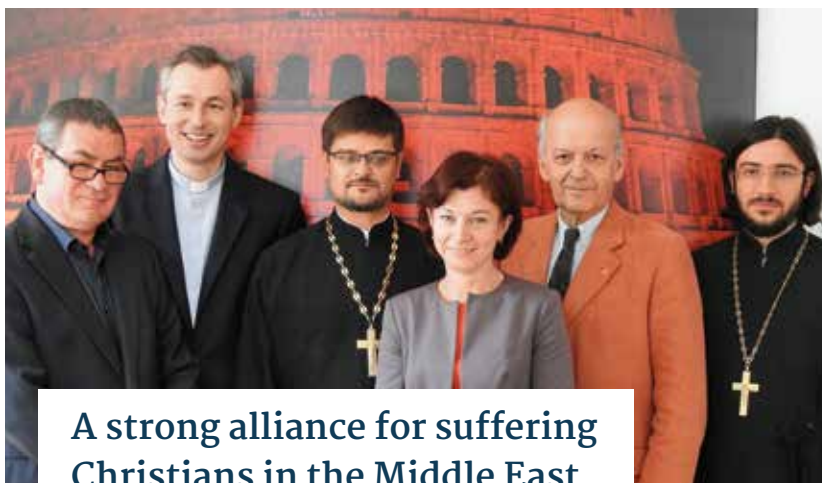
ACN sponsored the correspondence degree course of a student from the “Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth”.

ACN financed the purchase of a vehicle to maintain pastoral care for distant parishes in Surgut and Noyabrsk.



of dialogue also includes ecumenical media projects that provide objective information about the two religious communities.

Despite the positive development of this interdenominational dialogue, the Catholic Church in Russia continues to depend on foreign aid due to its minority status. There are only about 200 Catholic parishes in the country and the faithful are scattered over large areas. The diocese of St. Joseph alone, with its base in Irkutsk, is larger than the USA with an area spread over 10 million square kilometres. ACN helps finance vehicles in order to maintain the mobility of priests and religious in these vast areas. Other funding priorities include aid for construction and renovations, training of priests, sisters and the laity, as well as material aid and Mass stipends.



A strong alliance for suffering Christians in the Middle East

The fruitful cooperation between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches is currently reflected in joint aid to the Middle East. In July 2019, a delegation from the Moscow Patriarchate visited ACN’s international headquarters in Königstein in the Taunus

Mountains, Germany, to discuss joint aid projects for Christians in Syria and Iraq. The goal of the project is to give young people of all denominations in the Middle East better prospects for the future. The cooperation is to be further intensified in the coming years.





Asia/Oceania

The region of Asia and Oceania covers a vast area, characterised by the most diverse peoples, religions, climatic conditions and social challenges. Climate change, in particular, is taking its toll here in many places, as evidenced by more natural disasters, greater crop losses and a further increase in poverty and rural exodus. The Christian Church suffers in large parts of the region, mainly due to its minority status. ACN helps local churches fulfil their diverse tasks and supports them in organising and maintaining their infrastructure and training their pastoral workers and staff.

Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists form the major faith communities in Asia. Christians have always been in the minority and often suffer from discrimination and disadvantages. Take India, for example: here it is primarily nationalist Hindu groups that make life difficult for Christians. Even violent attacks on Christian parishes or believers are not uncommon. In the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, on the other hand, the Church still struggles today with the reconstruction of ecclesiastical structures after the collapse of communism.



ACN supports priests in northeast India, among others, with Mass stipends.

also making the tasks of the Church in Asia and Oceania more difficult. For this reason, many local churches increasingly focus on pastoral care activities for families and youth. ACN supports them in this endeavour, and also in initiatives that serve the interfaith dialogue. In addition, we support the construction and renovation of church buildings, the training of priests, religious and the laity, the provision of catechetical materials and the purchase of vehicles for pastoral care.



>> Faith holds families together and offers a foothold to those who have been uprooted. <<

But the increasing disintegration of families and the uprooting and disorientation of young people are



Kyrgyzstan

Number of projects

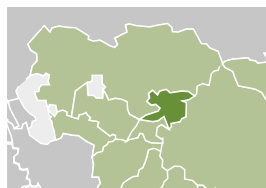
 6 Project applications
 6 Funded projects

Type of projects

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

Head of Section

Peter Humeniuk



Kyrgyzstan was a Soviet republic until 1991. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country became independent. Only about 6.3 million people belonging to different ethnic groups live on an area of almost 200,000 square kilometres. 75% of them are Muslim and 20% are Orthodox. The few Catholics in the country mostly have Polish, Ukrainian or German roots. In order to strengthen the presence of the small Catholic communities, ACN supports them with vehicles, existential help, Mass stipends and construction assistance.

A large part of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous and some places are difficult to reach. There are three regular Catholic parishes in the country serving a total of 20 small communities. Only six priests, one monk and five nuns are employed in the Apostolic Administration of Kyrgyzstan. In addition to pastoral work in the parishes, the Catholic Church of Kyrgyzstan also runs facilities for disabled children, orphans and alcoholics.

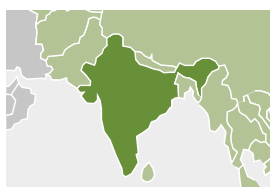
>> For the priests, no distance is too far to reach the faithful. <<



The long, hard winters with avalanches and snowstorms are particularly dangerous for the priests. Nevertheless, they take on any journey, even if only one Catholic family lives in a village or the faithful are isolated from the rest of society on completely remote farms. Reliable off-road vehicles are indispensable for this endeavour. ACN therefore approved the financing of such vehicles during the reporting period. In addition, nuns were granted material support and the priests received Mass stipends. Further funds have flowed into the maintenance and development of the Church infrastructure.



India



With more than 1.3 billion inhabitants, India has the second-largest

population in the world. 80% of Indians are Hindus and 14.2% are Muslims. While the proportion of Christians is 2.3%, the Catholic Church in India has 21 million believers. However, a growing radical Hinduism makes it difficult for religious and ethnic minorities to assert themselves in the country. The local Church faces discrimination and attacks. Our foundation supports the Church, especially in the poor north and northeast of the country.

After the re-election of the Hindu nationalist ruling party under Prime Minister Modi, the situation for religious and ethnic minorities in India further worsened in 2019. In the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, for example, a Jesuit college was ravaged by radical Hindus. The local Church lives in fear. Laws such as the anti-conversion law, which prohibits the conversion of Hindus to other religions, further exacerbate the minority issue. The law is already in force in eight of 29 federal states.

However, the growing threat does not stop most Christians from actively participating in Church life. The high number of priestly and religious vocations is also pleasing. Yet despite the enormous economic growth, poverty and underdevelopment remain high in many parts of India.

>> Radical Hindus threaten Christian life in India. <<

In many places, the Church infrastructure is still being built up. Here we help the local Church with vehicles for pastoral care, provide training assistance for priests, religious and the laity, promote programmes for deepening the faith and support the establishment and maintenance of ecclesiastical institutions.



Number of projects

708 496

Type of projects

81 53 118
4 0 11
136 6 87

Heads of Section

Véronique Vogel
Reinhard Backes

ACN supports the training of novices and junior nuns in Vellore.





Pakistan

Number of projects

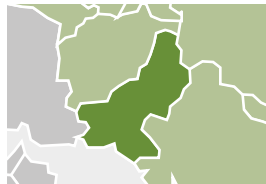
80 90*

Type of projects

29 12 6
 2 4 5
 9 1 22

Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



Nearly 97% of some 207 million Pakistanis are Muslims. Christians make up only

about 2% of the country's population. Although corruption and extremism have recently diminished somewhat, religious minorities continue to be socially excluded, discriminated against and are often even victims of violent attacks. ACN has accompanied the Church of Paki-

stan for many years on its path to a better future. Also in 2019, many aid applications were approved, resulting in active project assistance.

After the election of Arif-ur-Rehman Alvi as the new president in 2018, the social conflicts in Pakistan have eased somewhat. Unfortunately, this cannot be said of the situation of religious minorities in the country. Christians are often socially disadvantaged and treated as second-class citizens. The negative portrayal of non-Muslims in

*including project applications from the previous year.

ACN supports the training of catechists at the Khushpur Training Centre.



>> The Christian community in Pakistan is deeply rooted in its faith. <<

Bishop Samson Shukardin of Hyderabad



Christians in the village of Bethlehem near Mirpur Khas.

textbooks only exacerbates the problem. In this way, Muslims are already conditioned to the exclusion of people of different faiths from childhood on. One of the biggest problems, however, is the “anti-blasphemy law”, which provides for severe penalties, including death, for allegedly insulting Islam. Christians, in particular, are often indiscriminately accused of blasphemy by Muslims.



But there are also glimmers of hope. In 2019, for example, the sentence against the Christian woman Asia Bibi, accused of blasphemy, was overturned at the last moment after she spent ten years on death row – she was allowed to leave the country. However, other victims of the law are still in prison. The local Church also complains that young girls are forced to marry and convert to Islam through kidnappings.

The faith of the Christians in Pakistan remains unshakeable. The churches are full and the Christian communities

are developing dynamically. A growing role is played by the laity, who are active as catechists. ACN supports their training and promotes various pastoral programmes to strengthen the faith, e.g. in the youth ministry. The “Year of Youth” proclaimed by the Church in Pakistan got underway in November 2019. In addition, we support the local Church with construction projects and the purchase of vehicles, and also help priests through Mass stipends.

Church protection by local police.





Philippines

Number of projects

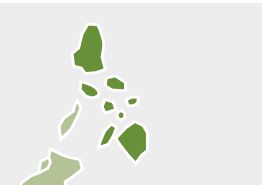
85 63

Type of projects

16 0 9
 0 2 1
 17 4 14

Head of Section

Reinhard Backes



More than 80% of the 100 million inhabitants of the Philippines are

Catholic. This makes the archipelagic country in the Pacific Ocean the only predominantly Christian country in Asia. Social inequality, human rights violations and Islamist terror on the Mindanao archipelago repeatedly pose great challenges to society. Here the Church is often the only authority that dares to raise its

voice against the political leadership. ACN supports the local Church in this endeavour, for it not only gives believers a spiritual home, but also the courage and hope for a better future.

Time and again, the Filipino Church has come into conflict with the government. For example, by demanding that human rights and human dignity be respected, including for prisoners, drug addicts and drug dealers. The latter are often executed without trial on the orders of President Rodrigo Duterte.

» In the southern part of the Philippines, many Christians are persecuted and discriminated against. «

Monsignor Romeo Saniel, Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Jolo



Schoolchildren in Makati City participate in ACN's "One Million Children Praying the Rosary" initiative.

Rector P. J. Nacua in the bombed-out Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Jolo.



The priests and bishops agree: in order to overcome social inequality and increasing materialism, and to properly deal with the challenges of the modern world, a new inner compass of values and a deepening of faith are needed. In this undertaking, the Church also relies on the youth. For example, at the YOUCAT Congress, which was held in November 2019 in Iloilo City and was sponsored by ACN. We enabled 300 young people from poor parishes to participate in the congress.

with 35,000 euros. We also support the interfaith initiative "Youth for Peace", in which Christian and Muslim students work together to help refugees who fled the city of Marawi in 2017 after major attacks by Islamists.

A flash point in the Philippines is the southern archipelago of Mindanao, where many Muslims live and where Islamist terrorist groups would like to establish an Islamic state. Time and again there are attacks – including on Christian institutions. In January 2019, a bomb attack took place in Jolo Cathedral during Sunday Mass, in which 20 people died and over 100 worshippers were injured. ACN funded the restoration of the cathedral roof

Schoolchildren in Tibungco, Davao City, praying the rosary.





Sri Lanka

Number of projects

□ 56 ✓ 36

Type of projects

🔔 13 🌐 1 🏠 7
 📍 1 🎤 0 📖 0
 👥 4 👤 1 👤 9

Head of Section

Véronique Vogel

Statue stained with the blood of victims in St Sebastian's Church, Katuwapitiya.



About 70% of Sri Lanka's 21 million inhabitants are Buddhists. Just under

13% are Hindus, 10% are Muslims and 7.4% are mainly Catholic Christians. A civil war raged in the island state until 2009, leaving deep scars in society. In 2019, the local Church suffered predominantly from radical Islamic terrorist attacks. Despite the violence, the local Church is actively working for the reconciliation of the religious communities in the country. ACN supports them with concrete project assistance.

A series of suicide attacks in 2019 cast a dark shadow over Sri Lanka's Catholic communities. The attacks occurred on Easter Sunday in two Catholic churches and one Protestant church, as well as in three hotels. The horrific result: more

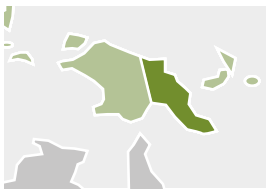
than 250 dead and over 500 injured. Most of the victims were in the well-filled churches where Easter Masses were being celebrated at the time of the attacks. An Islamist group claimed responsibility for the attacks. The fear of new attacks is great and has deeply unsettled the Christian communities.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Colombo reacted immediately after the terrorist attacks with emergency aid measures for the injured and relatives of those who were killed. However, the traumatised survivors and bereaved relatives are in need of long-term care. The Church would therefore like to support those affected with trauma therapy and counselling for as long as they need it. Especially the children who survived the attacks need assistance to regain confidence in life. ACN supported the Church during the reporting year with 82,000 euros to train 300 counsellors who can competently assist the affected families.

» People admire the fact that the Catholics affected by the terror remained peaceful. « Priest Claude Nonis



Papua New Guinea



Papua New Guinea has about 8 million inhabitants. The Catholic Church

has only been represented here for a few generations and today, with more than 2 million believers, it forms a quarter of the population. The country is in upheaval. On the one hand, many regions are still underdeveloped, and on the other, digitisation and globalisation have also reached Papua New Guinea. The Church provides an orientation to the people and accompanies them in all their hardships. ACN helps them with everything from promoting the youth ministry to training assistance for the next generation of priests.

The challenges facing the pastoral work of the local Church are great: in the largest and most populous state of Oceania, a myriad of different languages are spoken. Many parishes are remote and the infrastructure is often primitive. On top of this, many people feel that they are being left behind by progress. Priests, religious and well-educated lay people are indispensable for coping with the upheaval.

Caught between tradition and modernity, the youth of Papua New Guinea, in particular, is looking for orientation. The Church wants to help young people to properly articulate their questions and concerns. For this purpose, a promising project was started in 2019 with the “Year of the Laity”, which also

>> Many people feel that they are being left behind by progress. <<

presents the youth with numerous opportunities. ACN supported, among other things, the Eucharistic Congress, which took place in the diocese of Alotau-Sideia in October 2019. The goals were to deepen the faith and to train youth group leaders and other lay people involved in the youth ministry. Last year, we were once again able to support programmes for continuing education and deepening the faith of priests. ACN also provided training assistance for seminarians, as well as financial aid for vehicles that are urgently needed for pastoral care in what are predominantly vast parishes.

Number of projects

58 37

Type of projects

5 9 6
0 0 0
8 2 7

Head of Section

Irene Eschmann

Religious service in the parish of St Theresa in Vokeo.





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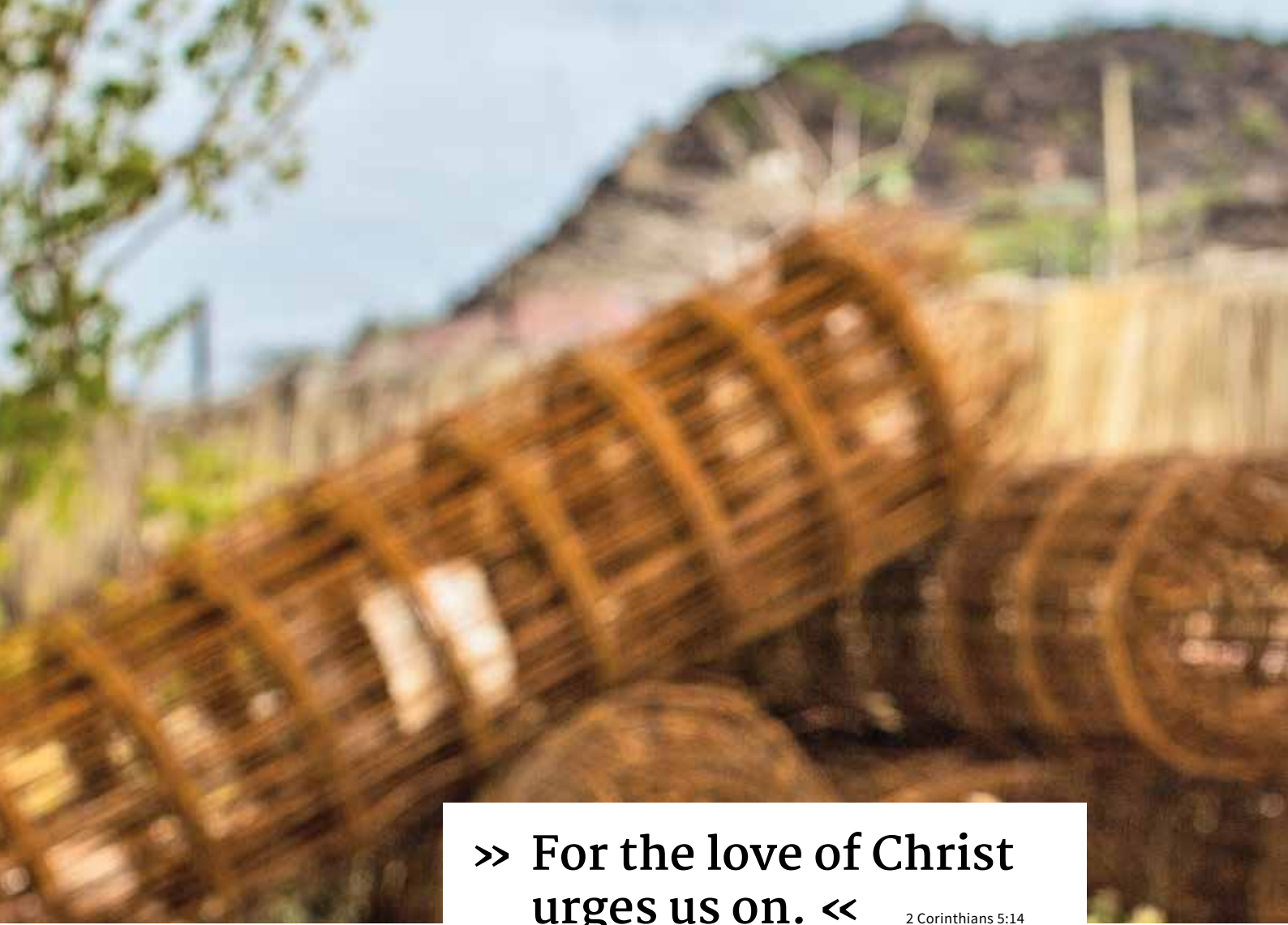
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>> For the love of Christ urges us on. <<

2 Corinthians 5:14

Our mission

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

Our vision

A world in which Christianity can thrive everywhere.

Our guidelines

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



Our values



Faith and Christian love

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



Prayer

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



Pastoral commitment

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



Unity

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



Service

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



Openness

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



Accountability

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



Trust

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



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

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

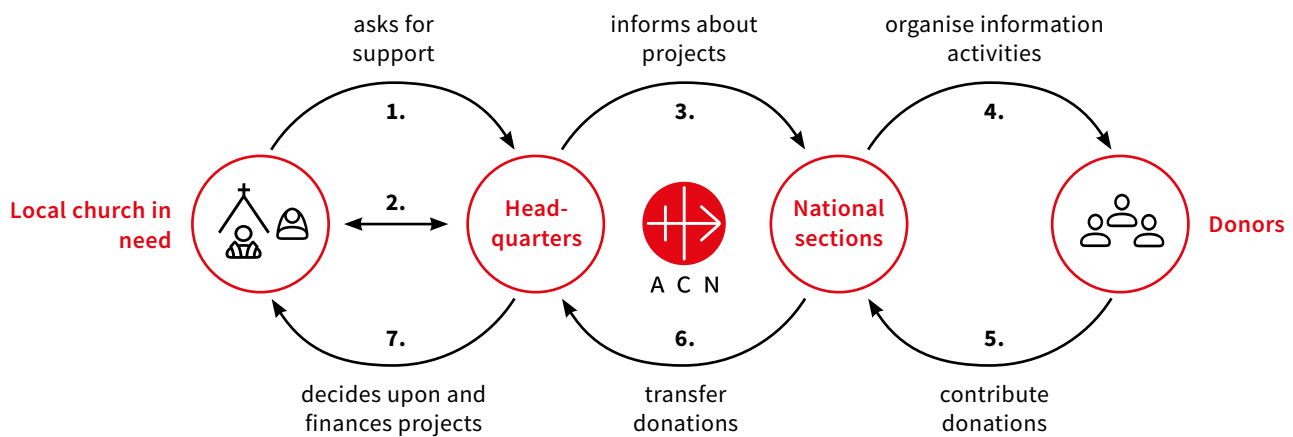
It is our moral duty to channel the donations we receive with the utmost care. For it is our mission to promote ecclesial and spiritual communion between those who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ and those who possess a compassionate and generous heart. And we will remain faithful to this credo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

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

Clear organisational structures between our headquarters, our global national offices and our project partners ensure that the entire process, extending from project application and needs assessment to project approval and funds provision, can be designed conscientiously and efficiently. As a rule, only three months elapse between the time that an aid application has been received and our decision to approve or reject it.



Donation cycle



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

2. The head of section for the region analyses the project. If necessary, he or she then asks for further information. Within a maximum of three months,

ACN headquarters confirms whether the project has been approved or not.

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

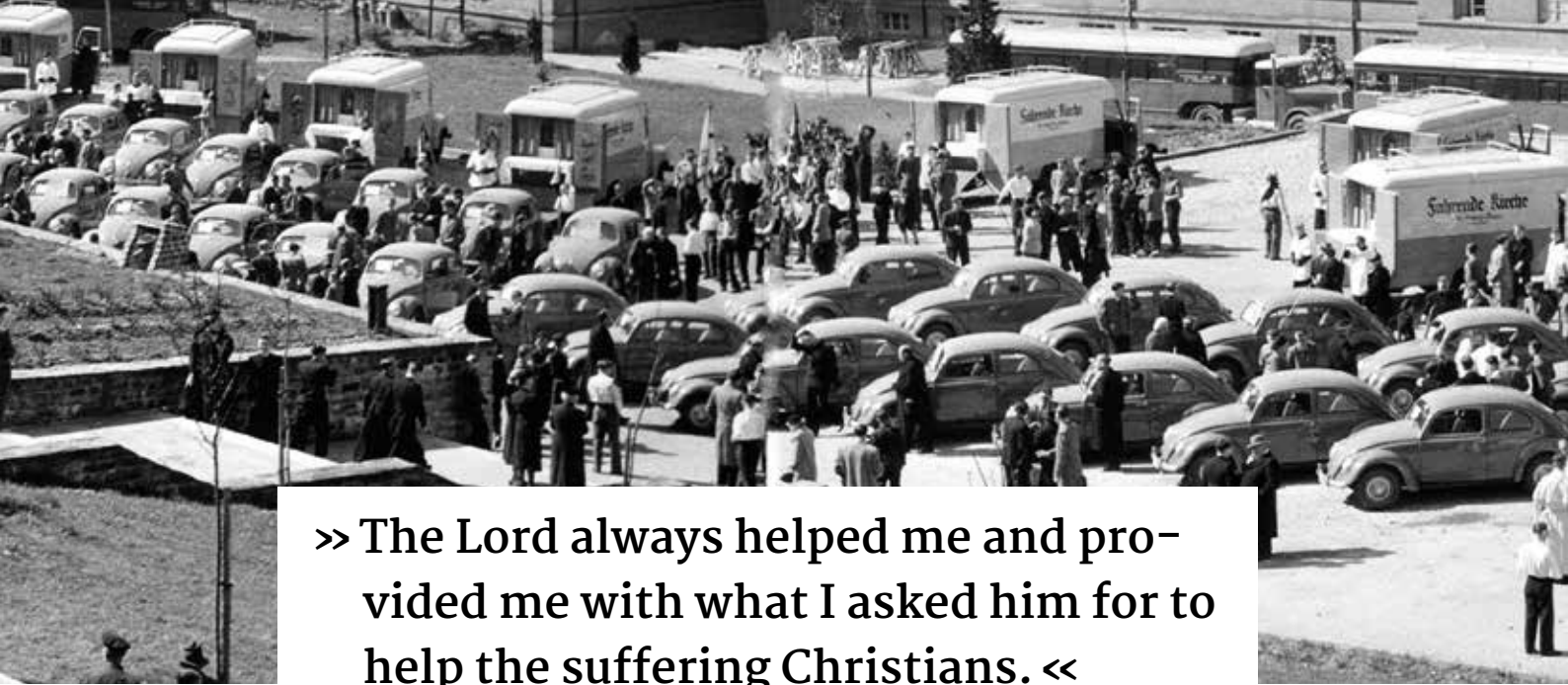
3. ACN headquarters informs the national offices about local fundraising projects and financing through benefactors.

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

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

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

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



» The Lord always helped me and provided me with what I asked him for to help the suffering Christians. «

Father Werenfried van Straaten, founder of Aid to the Church in Need

A glimpse into history reveals the lasting impact that our founder Father Werenfried van Straaten still has today. In his spirit, we remain active worldwide

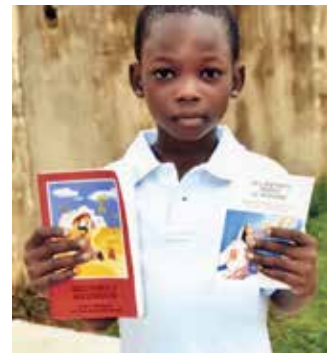
in helping the cause of persecuted and suffering Christians. This will continue to remain true in the future.



1947 Father Werenfried van Straaten calls on the people of Belgium and the Netherlands to help displaced Germans, including 3,000 priests (hence the original name “Ost-priesterhilfe”). This aid to former enemies was a unique act of reconciliation.

1975 Relocation of the international headquarters of Aid to the Church in Need from Rome to Königstein/Taunus

1979 Start of the “Children’s Bible” project. The Bible has since been translated into 191 languages; more than 51 million copies have been published and distributed to date



1950 Start of the “Chapel Truck Initiative” – 35 trucks are converted into “mobile chapels” for persons displaced from their homeland

1984 Recognition of Aid to the Church in Need by the Holy See as a Universal Public Association of Pontifical Right

1952 Start of aid for the persecuted Church behind the “Iron Curtain”

1953 Foundation of the International Building Order to construct houses and churches for the poor

1989 Political turning point in Eastern Europe, aid for reconstruction and new evangelisation in the former Eastern Bloc countries

1956 After the Hungarian uprising, the local Church is assisted

1961 Start of the Asian Assistance Fund and first encounter of Father Werenfried with Mother Teresa in the “House of the Dying” in Calcutta

1992 Start of the project for reconciliation with the Russian Orthodox Church

1997 50th anniversary of Aid to the Church in Need

1962 Father Werenfried participates in the Second Vatican Council; start of aid to Latin America

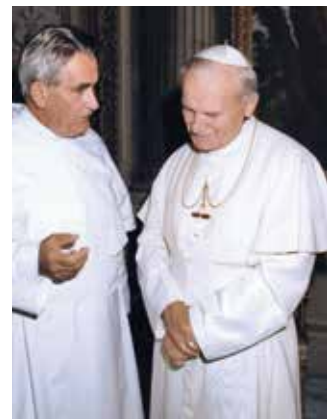
2003 Father Werenfried dies on 31 January at the age of 90 in his place of residence, Bad Soden/Taunus

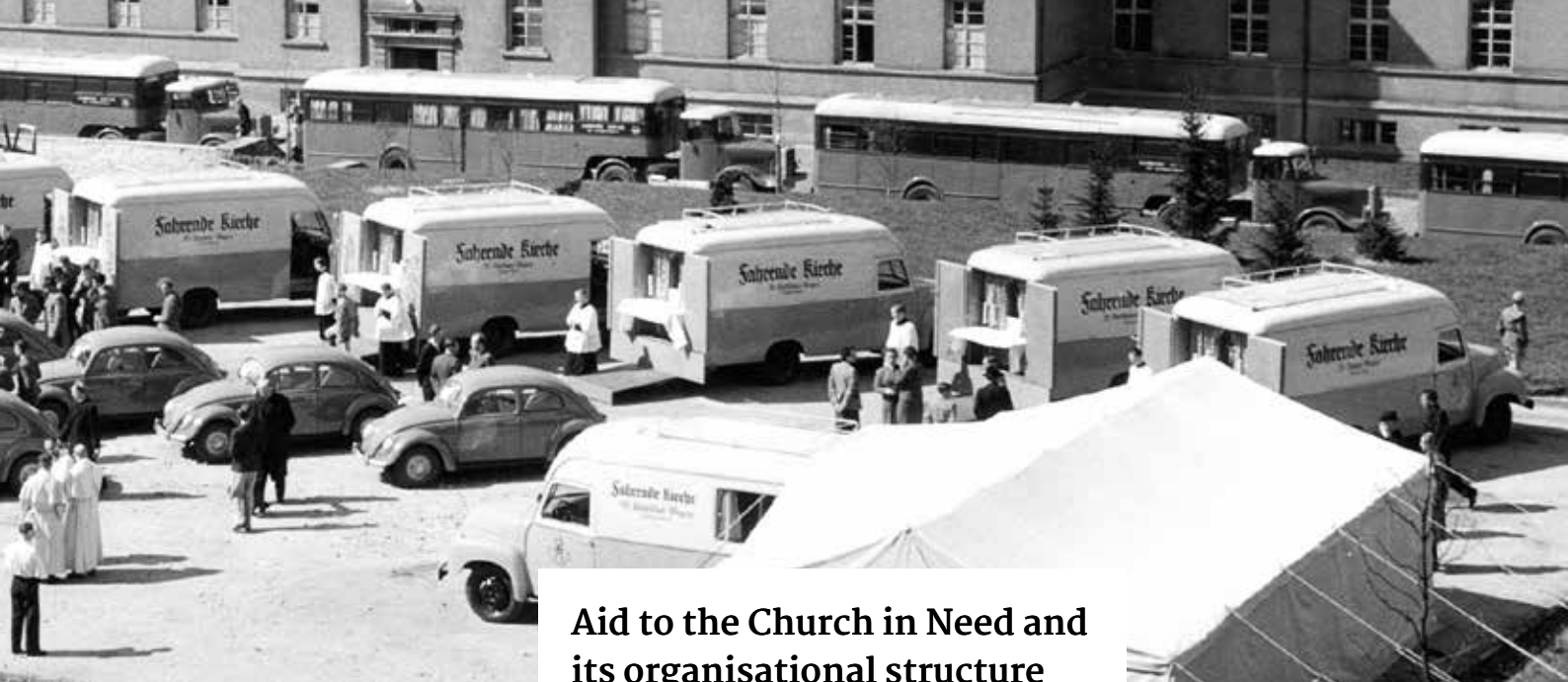
1965 Start of aid in Africa

2007 Pope Benedict XVI asks ACN to strengthen its commitment in the Middle East

1966 The congregation of the “Daughters of the Resurrection” is founded; the first educational facilities for young African women are constructed in the Congo

2011 Elevation of Aid to the Church in Need to a Foundation of Pontifical Right by Pope Benedict XVI





Aid to the Church in Need and its organisational structure

Mauro Cardinal
Piacenza
President



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

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

Thomas
Heine-Geldern
Executive President



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

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

Philipp Ozores
Secretary General



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

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



Father
Martin Barta
International
Ecclesiastical Assistant



Regina Lynch
Director of Projects



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Public Affairs and
Religious Freedom

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Church in Need

ACN INTERNATIONAL



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